ACQF-II Project

African Continental
Qualifications Framework

Ghana

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Policy Document

Output 2.1

Version 2.0 (20/08/2024)

Drafted: Patrick Werquin

Reviewers: Eduarda Castel-Branco

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

A Level	Advanced Level
ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AELL	Adult Education and Lifelong Learning
AU	African Union
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
CBT	Competency-based Training
COTVET	Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
CTVET	Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ENABEL	Belgian Development Agency
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ETF	European Training Foundation
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GhNQF	Ghana National Qualifications Framework
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
GTEC	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
GTVP	Ghana TVET Voucher Project
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
JHS	Junior High School
LLL	Lifelong learning
LUX DEV	Aid and Development Agency of Luxembourg
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NTVETQF	National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework
NTVETQFC	National TVET Qualifications Framework Committee
TVETQF	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework
PSET	Post-school Education and Training
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
QA	Quality assurance
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning

SHS	Senior High School
SSB	Sector Skills Body
TQF	Transnational Qualifications Framework
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
WB	World Bank
WBL	Work-based learning
WEL	Workplace Experience Learning

1. Preamble

Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) and the Commission for TVET (CTVET) cooperate with the project "Supporting implementation of the ACQF" (ACQF-II) in development of three major and interconnected policy documents: the comprehensive and integrated National Qualifications Framework Policy, the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Policy. This process started on 26 February 2024, at the stakeholders' workshop in Accra and is planned to be concluded until November 2024.

The Ghana Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy builds on the Ghana National Qualifications Framework (GhNQF), and therefore also on the Ghana Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS). Ghana RPL Policy will enhance the coherence and cohesion of practices supporting all learners able to demonstrate learning outcomes, however and wherever acquired, in their achieving of a qualification. This chapter sets the scene regarding the content of this policy document.

1.1. General Aim of this Policy Document

This document contains the policy for the RPL system to be elaborated and implemented in Ghana. It defines the scope, objectives, principles, main phases, and key technical orientations for the harmonised RPL system in Ghana, consistent with the GhNQF and friendly to other related national policies such as the CATS. RPL concerns the identification, documentation, assessment, and certification of peoples' acquired learning outcomes, independently of the context in which they were acquired (i.e., formal, non-formal, informal).

Ghana has one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. Its economy heavily relies on manufacturing and exportation of high value-added goods and natural resources. Ghana therefore needs a competent and qualified workforce in a time of great transformations of work and technologies, requiring agile and new forms of reskilling and upskilling, learning by experience, and access to all types of recognition of learning outcomes. In addition, the development of skills and competences and the awarding of qualifications go beyond initial education and training and, therefore, lifelong learning is central to the continuous development of the country. In this context, all forms of lifelong learning are relevant and the parity of esteem among them is fundamental for also keep social peace.

RPL is not new in Ghana, but there is no common nationally harmonised RPL policy. Diverse practices and approaches have been in application in different parts of the education and training system, especially in the tertiary education system. This common national RPL Policy will fill this gap and enable a deeper and wider roll out of the potentialities of the ESQF for the people, policy makers, socio-economic partners and the government as a whole.

1.2. Purpose of the Policy

RPL is not a second chance of education or training. The purpose of the RPL policy is rather to provide opportunities for a second chance for achieving a qualification to all learners in Ghana that have acquired learning outcomes that are not yet documented in a document such as a qualification, a part qualification or credits toward a qualification. RPL aims to:

-   Recognise that all forms of learning – whether taking place in a formal, non-formal, or informal context – have value to the extent that the corresponding learning outcomes meet existing standards (qualification standards, or occupational standards adapted to an assessment procedure).

- Recognise that all learning outcomes meeting these standards should be given currency for individuals to reap the corresponding benefits, first and foremost in the labour market, and also in the society at large.

- Enhance learner's progression into and among GhNQF qualifications even for those without a qualification achieved in the initial education and training system.

- Stipulate broad guidelines regarding RPL implementation in Ghana, for effective policy implementation, including initial piloting.

- Provide a solid basis to pave the way for future improvements of the RPL system in Ghana in the context of the GhNQF and the ACQF.

1.3. Scope of the Policy: RPL, giving currency to all learning outcomes, especially those acquired in non-formal and informal contexts

This policy covers all education and training sectors that issue GhNQF qualifications, and labour market occupations that use these qualifications for recruitment, promotion in employment, and/or occupational mobility. This include self-employment, as a qualification is evidence for the skills and competences possessed by self-employed workers looking for customers just as well as a qualification is evidence for skills and competences of a potential recruit when employers look for workers/employees.

RPL is a promising link to connect the world of education and the world of work. Therefore, the terminology used in the RPL policy is meant to be broad and applicable to both these two worlds. The vision is that the different stakeholders in Ghana should agree on the concepts – e.g., on their breadth and scope – rather than on the terms. To that extent, the RPL policy benefits from the work on the GhNQF that introduced a common language for all stakeholders in the worlds of work and education. The glossary that has currency in Ghana and the ACQF glossary are provided in an appendix to this policy document.

1.4. Users of the Policy

This policy document explicitly targets all the stakeholders operating in any field related to RPL, either at a conceptual level or at a practical one. This includes organisations registered for awarding qualifications – typically education and training providers, including higher education institutions –, learners and public bodies interested in qualifications – e.g., sectoral ministries –, employers, industry sectors stakeholders, quality assurance authorities and other regulatory bodies who may use this policy as a guide to the best way to mobilise RPL for helping individuals accessing the formal education and training system, resuming studies and/or (re)entering the labour market. In a nutshell, this policy targets all individuals and bodies interested in giving value and currency to all learning outcomes, however and wherever acquired.

1.5. Monitoring of the Implementation of the Policy

The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) and Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET), with the assistance of the accrediting authorities in each education and training sector are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the use of this policy in their respective sector.

2. Context and Recent Reforms in the Qualifications Domain in Ghana

This chapter presents the context for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to be situated in the context of the work on the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) and of Ghana National Qualifications Framework (GhNQF).

2.1. General Context

RPL is at the top of the policy and research agendas in many African countries, and beyond. The foundational elements related to RPL have already been presented in the ACQF context (AU, 2022; ACQF, 2022). They all put forward the consistency that exists between RPL, NQF and CATS, and with key policy dimensions such as labour market needs, lifelong learning, equity, and social inclusion.

This policy document uses these foundational ACQF documents to provide a contextualised policy document for the purpose of envisioning the forthcoming RPL system in Ghana. It provides rules, guidelines, principles, and procedures adapted to the context of Ghana for setting in motion a sustainable, efficient, and effective RPL system.

2.2. Recent reforms in the qualification domain in Ghana

Reforms relevant to the NQF and qualifications system reform include a conversion of TVET curricula from more "traditional" principles, or bases, to Competency-based Training (CBT), implementation of Workplace Experience Learning (WEL, a.k.a. Work-based Learning), and expansion of RPL.

2.2.1. Ghana's Current National Qualifications Framework

Ghana's current qualifications framework applies only to the TVET sector. No qualifications are yet registered or in place for the upper four levels (i.e., tertiary education). The current qualifications framework is coordinated by the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET). It comprises eight levels and two descriptors: Knowledge, and Skills & Attitudes. Qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes only.

This qualifications framework was established by law in 2012. It incorporates the qualification types such as National Proficiency, National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, and Technology Bachelor's, Technology Master's and Technology Doctorate. Qualifications available or registered in the framework are limited to these types. At the time of the drafting, four levels of the framework are operational. These are National Proficiency I & II and National Certificate I & II (i.e., Levels 1 to 4).

Providers, if they wish to have the qualifications they offer placed in the framework, should – as directed by the Government – offer programmes based on Competency-based Training (CBT) for these qualifications.

2.2.2. Ghana's New National Qualifications Framework

The planned new qualifications framework is a comprehensive qualifications framework. It will span all levels and types of qualification, absorbing the existing TVET qualifications framework, and seek to link TVET qualifications with those from general education and higher education. The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) is already coordinating development of the new NQF, in collaboration with Continuing-TVET.

Ghana's NQF should be an organising system and a unifying force in the country's education and training system and labour market. Essentially, the new NQF is intended to facilitate integration of the different education and training sub-sectors and build pathways between them.

Currently, there is fragmentation, as qualifications from the various education sub-sectors are not linked, impeding horizontal learning progression. At root, qualifications awarded by different institutions, even where they use learning outcomes, are too disparate to be comparable. Employers have difficulty understanding applicants' qualifications, so hindering recruitment and candidate placement. Common or linked sets of level descriptors should, conversely, increase comparability and make it easier for institutions, providers, and employers to understand qualifications.

Employers also believe that provision and associated qualifications are insufficient for their needs. There is also unwillingness in some education sectors to give formal recognition through validation processes i.e., leading to a qualification, or credit for experiential or prior learning, including skills acquired in non-formal and/or informal contexts.

The vision is that the new approach in Ghana regarding the qualifications framework should also, as the TVET qualifications framework has sought to do, provide a reference point for quality assurance, improve the quality of qualifications and the quality of education and training more broadly, promote competence-based learning and assessment, and, especially, support lifelong learning by aiding access, participation and progression and making the qualification system transparent.

The vision of an effective qualifications framework contributing to improving the qualifications system and promoting lifelong learning is extremely relevant in the context of the work carried out and the ideas developed in the context of the ACQF II.

In practice, a ten-level structure is foreseen for the comprehensive GhNQF. This new framework will be entirely based on learning outcomes – as is the current TVET qualifications framework – and all qualifications and programmes should be written in terms of learning outcomes.

This will make all qualifications RPL friendly.

2.3.   RPL already in the TVET sub-sector

Ghana already has a functioning RPL system but it is limited to TVET. Indeed, CTVET developed an RPL policy following the establishment of the National TVET Qualifications Framework. It is the TVET framework that provides the structure for the RPL system which recognises and certifies skills acquired in non-formal or informal contexts.

Applicants can seek a qualification for the learning outcomes they acquired, or some other form of recognition of their prior learning, such as exemptions from parts of programmes, for award of part qualifications. Currently, these pathways are available for some trade areas in types National Proficiency I and II, which are at Levels 1 and 2 of the current TVET QF. Assessors may recommend, on assessment of the applicant, award of the full qualification in question, award of some credits toward this qualification or, if the applicant needs to provide more evidence, additional learning before applying again for the same application. Acceptable categories of evidence or achievement/attainment at the date of application include completion of units or modules, film, documentation demonstrating workplace achievements, appraisal reports by managers and/or practical demonstrations.

There is some limitation on timing imposed on applicants. At the time of the drafting, applicants must seek validation and recognition during defined "time windows".

CVET provides guidance to TVET providers and other stakeholders on applying RPL processes and promotes its use.

Since RPL applies only in TVET, even successful RPL applicants wishing to apply for places on programmes at higher education institutions, or seeking award of HE qualifications, cannot seek access or certification via validation processes which would assess their learning outcomes acquired outside the formal learning system, or which have not already been formally certified.

2.4.   Idiosyncrasies of the Ghanaian System

There are several features of the Ghanaian system that are very conducive to promote and also implement an RPL system.

First and foremost, Ghana has implemented a competence-based approach – called the Competency-based Training (CBT) for quite some time (since 2007) and this is a necessary condition for RPL to be implemented

in practice. This is because assessment in the context of RPL cannot be based on an input-based curriculum since, precisely, the RPL applicants learned outside of the formal education and training system and therefore never followed a curriculum. Nevertheless, they do have learning outcomes, and skills/competences, from their experience and if the curriculum is described in terms of learning outcomes, or skills/competences, then assessors can verify that the expected skills/competences are possessed or not. The CBT is typically an RPL-friendly approach, and this is a real opportunity for Ghana to speed up the RPL implementation process.

By the same token, the implementation of the CBT has led to the existence of a pool of informal sector workers (sometimes called master craftspersons[1]) that harbour apprentices for the on-the-job learning part of their apprenticeship. These informal sector workers themselves may not have a qualification that matches their actual level of learning outcomes, and skills/competences. It is therefore an interesting opportunity for Ghana to achieve two aims at once by also suggesting to informal sector workers to engage in an RPL process, and definitely increase the overall level of qualification of the entire labour force in Ghana.

And precisely, another characteristic of the Ghanaian system that will contribute to promote an RPL approach is the heavy needs that the economy has for a workforce that can display a high level of qualification, in addition to the skills and competences they already have but which may not be visible. This is due to the nature of the Ghanaian economy that heavily relies on the production of manufactured goods and exports.

3. Policy Issues – Rationale for RPL in Ghana

This chapter presents a diagnosis (policy issues) of the general situation in Ghana in relation to education, training, and the labour market in order to provide a rationale for developing an RPL system, broad in scope and inclusive in nature.

3.1. RPL as Part of the Eco-system GhNQF and CATS

In Ghana in general, and in GTEC in particular, there is a clear vision that the CATS and the RPL system are meant to feed into the development of the GhNQF. There is deep understanding that the three constructs will reinforce one another, therefore improving the readability of the National Qualifications System, and the transparency of the education and training system. In the particular case of RPL, an operational national qualifications framework will help all potential applicants to more easily choose a qualification to achieve through RPL.

There is also a high degree of awareness in Ghana that:

- A national qualifications framework has a crucial role to structure the education and training system.

- The value of qualifications is high, and a qualification oftentimes corresponds to a right to practice a trade.

- A qualification is the mirror of skills and competences and will help develop industry sectors, especially those oriented toward export.

In addition, the approach followed in Ghana in relation to the CBT is friendly to the establishment of an RPL system because the RPL assessment typically relies on assessing what applicants know and can do at

---

[1] To the extent that master craftsperson means a worker who is experienced and highly skilled in a particular craft, thanks to years of learning on the job, generally rising from apprentice to journeyman to master.

the time of the assessment rather than on how long, where, and with whom they have acquired their learning outcomes. By definition, the CBT approach is also based on defining the curriculum through what learners will have to know and be able to do at the end of the programme, as opposed to an input-based approach whereby it is the number of hours spent learning different subject matters that is used.

All the orientations taken by Ghana are very conducive to establishing a convincing RPL system. The value of RPL is well understood since it will give currency to existing individuals' skills and competences that are not yet substantiated in a qualification, or any form of credential.

The Learning outcomes principle underpinning the GhNQF, and its qualifications is an indispensable pillar for the conceptualisation and application of RPL.

3.2.   Qualifications vs. Skills

Skills and competences refer to what people know or can do and how they mobilise their knowledge, skills and competences to achievement a result, especially in an occupational context, at the workplace as it were. A qualification is a document describing these abilities. Qualifications populate the qualifications framework, which is a classification device. In Ghana, the mismatch between what individuals know and can do and the qualification they hold is an issue, especially in the labour market.

This happens for self-learners who have invested in skills and competences, most of the time through practice, but have no document to substantiate them. There is strong evidence that self-learning – a.k.a. non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) – is massive in Ghana and that skills/competences are plenty, which means that individuals (workers in particular) have skills and competences but cannot reap the full benefits from them because their skills and competences are not made visible in a qualification. Conversely, this is an issue for employers than may not be able to bid for international or high-level contracts and markets because they cannot substantiate the skills/competence level of their workforce.

Overall, this is an issue for Ghana as a whole since the country is heavily oriented toward exports of high added value and manufactured goods.

3.3.   Lack of Access to Education and Training Opportunities. Overall Low Completion Rates

In Ghana, there is a large proportion of children who are not of the appropriate age when attending kindergarten and primary education (the Gross enrolment rates are above 100% but the Net ones are much lower). One of the reasons for this is late enrolment in kindergarten or primary, but the more prevailing reason is the number of children repeating. Repeater rates are estimated to be as high as 16% in some of the primary grades.

Formal TVET remains a second choice – only 2% of students opt for formal TVET programmes. Attendance rates are very low in the TVET system. The TVET centre are ill equipped, whether in terms of heavy-duty machinery, tool, and even raw material. The existing TVET institutions, whether public or private, do not have the capacity to enrol more than 5 to 7% of lower secondary education (Junior).

Female learners are under-represented on formal TVET programmes.

Finally, many TVET teachers and trainers do not possess a qualification related to the subject-matter they are teaching to formal TVET learners. Statistics about assessment show high failure rates among learners in the formal TVET system. For example, only 30% of learners on average pass the Technician I examinations.

All these results place RPL in a position to be a credible option for individuals to achieve a qualification that would have currency in the labour market, because based on a real learning process at the workplace, with

machinery, tools, and raw material, as well as with a competent – even if not necessary holding a qualification – informal sector worker.

3.4. RPL for Informal Sector Workers

Not holding a qualification faithfully describing the skills one possesses, especially among workers, is a critical issue in Ghana. As a matter of fact, not only young people learning for an occupation and benefiting from informal apprenticeship in the informal economy to learn the skills necessary to a trade, are concerned. Oftentimes, the informal sector workers that take apprentices do not possess a qualification either.

This is somewhat hindering the RPL system to develop as needed because informal sector workers – by far the largest group among workers – are not satisfied with a process by which only their apprentices would be awarded a qualification based on their learning during their period with the informal sector worker. It is a matter a social status and informal sector worker taking apprentices cannot accept that the learners they welcome eventually achieve a higher qualification than them. It is also a matter of business, because informal sector workers may be worried that an unfair competition takes place when the learners they have trained become independent once they are awarded a qualification.

A promising avenue for Ghana is to involve informal sector workers taking apprentices in the RPL process. Ideally, they would even aim for a qualification somewhat higher – at least one level up – than the qualification awarded to their apprentices.

3.5. RPL for Early Dropouts from the Formal Initial Education and Training System

The RPL approach also provides an opportunity for individuals that dropped out from initial education and training [too] early in their life, i.e., before achieving the first level of the national qualifications framework typically. These individuals may not have all the learning outcomes that are necessary to achieve a qualification, but they certainly possess some learning outcomes.

The opportunity that exists here is to use the RPL tool for identifying these learning outcomes and there evaluate whether there is an opportunity to award some credits or even a part qualification to young people who dropped out of initial education and training and do not have a long enough working experience to have acquired all the learning outcomes to achieve a full-fledged qualification. In other word, RPL may be seen here as a tool for helping early dropouts to go back on tracks and restart a learning career, either in the formal system or in the non-formal and informal one. It is a sizeable group in Ghana and the RPL tool would help these young people to position themselves in relation to a qualification.

3.6. Lack of Awareness of Alternative Routes to Qualifications

In the Ghana context where a qualification would, at the same time, mean new opportunities in the lifelong learning system and be a visa for work, for a better work and/or for opportunities of promotion, it is critical that there is perfect awareness of the existence of RPL in the broad public.

Many individuals may not be aware of the RPL process. For instance, if the RPL develop mainly the capital city or in large cities, individuals in remote areas may not receive proper information.

By the same token, individuals aiming for a tertiary education qualification may not be made aware of this opportunity in the higher education institutions.

A communication strategy is a necessary condition for raising awareness. It would be an opportunity to also communicate about the benefits RPL.

There is no point having a comprehensive high quality RPL system for individuals with learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally if there is no perfect information regarding this opportunity.

3.7.   Limited Access to RPL (only in the TVET Sector)

In Ghana, at the time of the drafting, RPL exists only in the TVET sector, i.e., Levels 1-4 of the NTVETQF. There has been interesting work developed under the auspices of the COTVET (2016) and then under the CTVET (2022). They spell out the RPL process in a convincing way:

- To ensure parity of qualifications, the same assessment instrument and methodologies used for formal (CBT) assessments will be the same for RPL candidates; the only differences will be the learning contexts and learners' characteristics.

- CTVET shall establish a rigorous assessment methodology to ensure that only competent candidates are awarded certificates.

- Portfolios will be at the centre of all assessments, particularly for individuals in the informal sector or those having a limited formal education.

- A combination of the portfolio, trade test, panel interview and other creative means of extracting evidence shall be employed to ensure that all assessments meet the set standards for the level of complexity.

- All physical evidence presented as part of an assessment must be kept for not less than 5 years. Digital and soft evidence must be kept for a minimum of 20 years.

3.8.   Quality and Consistency of Assessment

From the previous work, by CTVET in particular (2022), it is clear that there are concerns in Ghana about the quality and consistency of RPL assessments, including variations in assessment methods, criteria, and qualification standards across different institutions or [team of] assessors.

There is a need to develop guidelines or frameworks to ensure the reliability and validity of RPL assessments, and the recognition of the outcomes of this process (e.g., full-fledge qualification, partial qualification, credits).

At the time of the drafting, it is the CTVET that ensures that quality assurance processes that address the specificities of the RPL process (including applications, assessment, and reporting and management systems) are implemented; and that administrative and support systems, both prior and after RPL assessment, are in place.

Quality and consistency of assessment is conducive to a rapid and convincing implementation of the RPL system because two applicants with the same profile would perform in the same way in the RPL process in two different regions of Ghana.

3.9.   Recognition by Employers and Institutions

Despite the quality assurance that is always associated with the RPL process, individuals obtaining recognition through the awarding of a qualification (or similar outcomes) at the end of the RPL process may still face challenges in having this newly acquired qualification accepted as a proof of skills/competences by key stakeholders, and employers or education and training institution in particular (i.e., societal recognition).

There is a need to explore strategies to enhance the recognition of qualification awarded at the end of an RPL process in the labour market and the education and training system.

3.10. Alignment with Industry Needs

RPL processes using qualification standards inherited from the formal education and training system, they may not necessarily align with the evolving needs of industry sectors, leading to mismatches between recognised learning outcomes and actual labour market expectations.

There is a need for the RPL stakeholders to work hands in hands with the stakeholders of the formal education and training so that qualification standards are updated on a regular basis to improve the alignment between qualification content and industry needs to enhance the relevance and value of qualification awarded at the end of an RPL process.

RPL is an unprecedented opportunity for Ghana to feed back into the formal lifelong learning in order to improve it because RPL is by construction uniting the world of education and the world of work and therefore using the best of the two worlds.

3.11. Professional Development for RPL Guidance Officers and Assessors

A high-quality workforce is a key condition for RPL to develop harmoniously. In Ghana, there may be a lack of trained guidance officers, assessors and verifiers that would have the necessary expertise. Guidance officers provide guidance before, during and after the RPL process. Assessors conduct RPL assessments. Verifiers are randomly checking the RPL process and its results.

A final problem statement could therefore focus on the elaboration of professional development programmes or resources for RPL professionals to enhance their skills in assessing prior learning outcomes.

4. Benefits of RPL for Individuals, Employers and for Ghana

This chapter presents the main benefits of the RPL policy development intervention in Ghana. The benefits of RPL exist at several levels (individual, employer, education and training provider, country) and the main ones are presented here. They are organised by stakeholders, but most benefits are in fact relevant for several stakeholders at the same time.

4.1. Benefits for Individuals

RPL can facilitate recognition of learning outcomes because they become documented in relation to qualification standards. If individuals have the desire to become occupationally and/or geographically mobile, RPL makes it easier. This is particularly important in occupations where skills and competences are transferable and recognised globally, and across borders in particular.

RPL provides an opportunity to successful applicants to achieve a qualification, without having to go through the traditional education and training formal system, whether initial or continuous. RPL is another route to qualification for those who already have acquired learning outcomes. It is beneficial for individuals because it is an opportunity to make their learning outcomes visible in a rather effective (focus on acquired learning outcomes toward a specific qualification) and efficient way (shorter duration).

Achieving a qualification and making their learning outcomes visible is twice useful for individuals, for finding a job or a better job (promotion, decent work) and/or for resuming formal learning. RPL also allows self-workers to demonstrate their skills and competences to potential customers, therefore allowing them de develop their business, and contribute as well to the economy. Therefore, RPL has double currency for individuals, in the labour market and as a stepping stone in the lifelong learning system.

It is particularly relevant for individuals because Ghana has a large informal economy in which individuals acquire learning outcomes without them being necessarily recognised through a qualification. The informal economy is composed of the informal sector of the economy, and also of the group of individuals that work

in the formal sector of the economy without a formal contract. In addition, the typical target group – individuals with learning outcomes but no documents to substantiate them – does not have the time to enrol into the formal learning system. RPL is therefore particularly beneficial for individuals because it is an opportunity for them to shorten the necessary time to achieve a qualification. It is also useful for those who already have a qualification but want to change occupation and can validate transversal learning outcomes.

In addition, the motivation for individuals to resume formal studies is generally low, especially for those with a poor track history in the initial education and training system, and because they have to learn skills may to learn knowledge, skills and competences they already possess. RPL is therefore attractive to those with poor motivation to resume formal learning because it consists of assessing learning outcomes without any additional formal learning in the first place. Top-up learning may prove necessary if individuals do not meet the qualifications standards after the assessment, but it is not generally considered as a requirement.

RPL being a positive approach, whereby what is being put forward is what individual applicants know and can do, it also provides self-esteem, which is a predictor of increased motivation for further learning or for finding a [better] job.

RPL is relevant for certain groups of the population that may have suffer from discrimination of, or lack of inclusiveness in, the formal education and training system. In Ghana, the low enrolment of girls in the education system maybe partly addressed by RPL, which can be seen as a tool for redressing initial discrimination. RPL being a second chance of qualification, it provides an opportunity to all the groups of the population that have suffered exclusion of the formal initial education and training system in their youth, and still have acquired learning outcomes.

RPL helps remove barriers to access to qualifications, making them more accessible for adults, working professionals, and those with learning experiences that are not associated with the formal learning system.

4.2.   Benefits for Employers

RPL allows to shortcut education and training formal programmes, therefore allowing employers to save time and cost when they need to upgrade the level of qualification of their workforce, for example to bid for public contracts, large(r) contracts and/or to satisfy industry licensing arrangement to operate on a given market. Harmonisation with partner countries (e.g., from ECOWAS, AU) will also be facilitated.

RPL acknowledges and accommodates different learning styles, recognising that individuals acquire learning outcomes through various means beyond traditional classroom settings. It will therefore facilitate the task of employers to best identify and use the skills and competences of their employees, for example for a better job matching within their enterprise. RPL provides a way of effectively and efficiently utilising skills already in the enterprise's workforce.

RPL enables skill gaps to be identified, providing a sound basis for learning needs analysis and career planning. It fosters a learning culture within the enterprise since it builds confidence to undertake further learning activities. It also motivates employees.

4.3.   Benefits for Ghana

Because it is beneficial for individuals and employers, RPL is necessary beneficial for Ghana, as a country. RPL indeed brings about a greater social inclusion and social equity by acknowledging and valuing the diverse learning experiences of individuals, irrespective of their socio-economic background, and by providing currency to the corresponding learning outcomes.

It increases the employability of the population and helps boost the economy. It creates the opportunity for more people to be employed in the formal sector. It reduces qualification shortages. It increases labour mobility. It allows redress and transformation.

RPL allows for a more dynamic and responsive education and training system by aligning qualifications with the evolving needs of industry sectors and occupations.

RPL promotes inclusivity by recognising the diverse range of learning experiences and learning pathways individuals may have followed. It acknowledges the value of self-learning and experiential learning regardless of where or how the corresponding learning outcomes were acquired, thus promoting diversity in education and training systems. RPL acknowledges the learning outcomes of individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences.

It ensures that individuals are equipped with the most relevant and up-to-date skills and competences, so that it prepares the future of the labour market in Ghana (e.g., innovation, skills and competences, twin transition (digital and green)).

4.4. Benefits for Specific Target Groups – The Value of RPL for Early School Leavers and Women

Ghana has a very young population. In 2021 (Census), the population is composed of 35% of children less than 14, and of 38% of individuals between 15 and 35. Among them, 29% do not complete primary education, 53% do not complete lower secondary education, and 65% do not complete upper secondary education (UNICEF).

Ghana cannot rely on the skills this population possesses, and this is hindering the development of the population and of the economy. RPL will be promoted as a tool for identifying the learning outcomes this population has and will be used to promote resumption of learning for those who were not given any second chance until then.

They will be able to build on the learning outcomes non-formally and informally acquired and therefore RPL will help build self-esteem and motivation to learn and invest in skills.

Finally, RPL is of high relevance for women who, oftentimes, acquire a lot of competences in taking care of their family and/or raising children – e.g., maintaining a budget, problem solving, addressing conflicts, autonomy and responsibility – because those are skill highly sought after by employers. Ghana will pay explicit attention to create or renovate qualification standards so that women may enter the RPL system for achieving a qualification that matches their skill and the expectations of employers.

5. Policy Statements

This chapter outline the main principles, procedures, and guidelines for recognising individuals' prior learning experiences, regardless of where or how the corresponding learning outcomes were acquired. It insists on which should be the typical target group.

5.1. Target Groups of the RPL Policy

The target group of the RPL policy in Ghana is composed of the individuals with learning outcomes – however acquired – but no document to substantiate them, typically a qualification, a part qualification or credits toward a qualification.

Therefore RPL mainly benefit young adults and adult self-learners. It provides an opportunity for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, or those with non-traditional learning experiences, to have their learning outcomes from experience assessed, validated, and recognised.

By definition of what RPL is about, no minimal qualification level is required, and applicants may enrol into the RPL process and aim for any level even if they do not already have a qualification at the level immediately below.

5.2. Targeted Education and Training Sectors

All education and training sectors are open to RPL, from general education to technical vocational education and training and to higher education.

There is no exception provided the aimed qualification if registered with the GhNQF.

5.3. Fairness and Equity

Ghana recognises and values diverse learning experiences and acknowledges that individuals may acquire learning outcomes in all existing learning environment, whether formal, non-formal, or informal.

Ghana is committed to ensuring fairness and equity in the assessment and recognition of prior learning outcomes process, for all individuals seeking validation and recognition, with no discrimination whatsoever.

5.4. Inclusiveness

Attention will be given in particular to vulnerable groups (e.g., migrants, returning migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, people with disabilities) with discrepancies between their actual level of skills and the qualification they actually possess (or not).

RPL will facilitate gender mainstreaming, to the extent that it will allow access to all qualifications and all occupations regardless of gender.

RPL aims at being fully inclusive to the extent that it provides a second chance of qualification for all. RPL is not a second chance of learning in the first place, but it is a convince way to provide individuals that would learn to achieve a qualification, whatever the context in which they learnt.

5.5. Transparent Assessment Procedures

The assessment procedures for validating and recognising all prior learning outcomes will be transparent, accessible, and clearly communicated to all applicants.

Applicants will have access to information regarding the types of evidence accepted, assessment criteria, and the appeals procedure.

5.6. Validation of Learning Outcomes against Standards

Prior learning outcomes are validated against widely agreed pre-defined standards. Ideally, these standards are qualification standards so that they contain will the necessary information (e.g., criteria for assessing, pass rate). For recently appeared occupations, they could be amended occupational standards, so that assessment is made possible, e.g., by adding criteria for evaluation, which are usually not included in occupational standards.

This assessment and validation process will be conducted by assessors, who are experts in the field and may come from the world of education, the world of work and/or the world of RPL. Ideally, there would be a group of three assessors, each one representing one of this world.

5.7. Individualised Assessment

Each applicant's prior learning will be assessed on an individual basis, taking into account their unique experiences, contexts, and the relevance of their learning outcomes – however acquired – to the qualification being sought.

Collective assessment may be organised under particular circumstances – e.g., if a written test is foreseen, typically in the higher education – but the RPL process remains first and foremost an individual endeavour, and the assessment should be individualised.

5.8.   Recognition of Diverse Learning Experiences

A broad range of learning experiences is accepted for assessment in the context of RPL. This includes work experience, volunteering, self-directed study, military service, work for not-for profit organisation, and activity in the private sphere.

All pieces of evidence will be accepted to substantiate the skills and competences acquired non-formally and informally.

The case of young people who dropped out early from initial education and training is emphasized above. It is of particular relevance for Ghana.

5.9.   Quality Assurance

In order to maintain high standards in the assessment, validation and recognition processes, the RPL will be regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure consistency, reliability, and validity.

5.10.   Appeals Process

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their prior learning assessment and validation will have the right to appeal.

The assessors remain the only decision makers in relation to the final decision of awarding a qualification, a part qualification, exemptions, and/or credits toward a qualification. Therefore, the appeals process may only concern technical or administrative aspects of the assessment process. It will be clearly outlined, and applicants will have access to support and guidance throughout the process.

5.11.   Continued Professional Development of Assessors

Assessors involved in the assessment, validation and recognition of prior learning outcomes will receive appropriate training, professional development, and ongoing support to ensure they have the necessary skills and competences to conduct assessments effectively and fairly, with consistence over time.

5.12.   Promotion of RPL (communication)

RPL will be amplified and actively promoted so that all layers of the population are aware, and properly informed, about this opportunity to facilitate access to formal education and training, enhance workforce skills and competences, and to promoting lifelong learning opportunities.

5.13.   Collaboration with Stakeholders

All relevant stakeholders, including but not limiting[2] to employers, industry bodies, community organisations, and education and training providers (whether public or private), will be invited early in the process of designing the RPL system, in order to ensure that the RPL policies and procedures are responsive to the needs of, in particular, learners and of the labour market.

---

[2] See Section 6.3.1 for a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders.

6. RPL Policy – A Comprehensive View

6.1. Principles of RPL Policy

This section presents the broad and operational principles of the Ghana RPL Policy.

6.1.1. Broad Principles of RPL Policy

RPL practices need to be based on agreed principles and values of human development, the GhNQF, the Ghana CATS and lifelong learning. RPL should:

- Be inclusive, equitable and sensitive to the social context of applicants. It should also take into consideration factors such as informal learning backgrounds and historical disadvantages and barriers.

- Be learner-centred and developmental adopting a non-deficit approach to learning outcomes. Applicants must be credited for what they know and can do, and not penalised for what they do not know or cannot do. Although assessment is central, RPL is also a learning process.

- Complement rather than compete with formal education and training. The two systems (education/training and RPL) are co-dependent and need to be addressed simultaneously, e.g., through the development of new qualifications relevant to the labour-market and RPL friendly. The Ghana Policy document should clearly state for example that "RPL is an important partner for the growing provision of quality education and training for all'.

- Protect the integrity of qualifications standards, the qualifications system and education/training institutions.

- Be oriented to qualifications that have currency and value in society, especially in the labour market for employers.

- Enshrine consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure that practices develop in line with information related to labour market needs…

  and helps develop a sense of ownership.

- Encourage the development of the TVET and HE systems, whilst evaluating its own impact on society and the economy and its articulation with other parts of the education system and industry.

- Encourage the registration of all qualifications capable of award via RPL on the GhNQF.

- Be set at the same standard as formal education and training provision.

- Promote qualifications and credit for unit standards issued on the basis of the training and the RPL system to have the same currency and value.

6.1.2. Operating Principles for RPL

The optimal functioning of a labour market requires individuals with skills and competences. Qualifications, registered on the GhNQF, signal that the owner has demonstrated skills and competences in specific occupational activities. In the context of the GhNQF, RPL can be used to:

- Obtain full qualifications that have currency in society as a whole and the labour market in particular.

- Obtain partial qualifications in the form of unit standards or credits, which can be augmented to full qualification in an agreed time period.

- Gain access to a learning programme (as an alternative to entry requirements based solely on educational attainment in the formal system).

- Gain exemption from part of a training programme.

The following principles represent *prerequisites* for the effective implementation of RPL and are based on an acceptance that RPL carries implications beyond its own boundaries:

- Qualifications (or similar tools such as credits toward a qualification) and skill/competence-based unit standards form the nexus of RPL.

- Industry involvement and commitment to the development of qualifications and unit standards that truly reflect the human resource development requirements of the Ghana economy.

- Education and training (especially VET, but also higher education) provision will need updating in terms of infrastructure, qualifications, curricula and programmes, teaching quality, relevance to the needs of industry, modes of provision, assessment, and entry and exit points.

- RPL will need to have a clear workplace focus, whilst also encouraging further learning and acquisition of learning outcomes relevant to a qualification.

- Employers will need to plan for workforce development based on RPL and take account of demands for increased remuneration that are likely to result from successful RPL. Employers will need to make all the necessary step that they also increase their profit thanks to the increased level of qualification of their workforce.

- The relationship between skill/competence-based unit standards and existing education and training curricula and delivery needs to be very clearly conceptualised in standards.

- All RPL providers (e.g., employers, colleges, private training organisations) will need to be NQF-accredited and equipped with guidelines, procedures and documentation to manage RPL in accordance with national imperatives, e.g., applications, mentoring and advice, timelines, fees, assessment strategies and methods, recording results, quality assurance, and perhaps appeals.

- Capacity will be needed on different levels – not only in industry, but also in education, training and skills and competences development, guidance system, well-trained accredited assessors drawn from existing bodies in industry and education, and mentors.

- High quality support materials for RPL will be needed, e.g., application processes, guidelines for portfolio preparation, assessment instruments and materials, as well as evidence requirements.

- RPL will need a firm financial base. This will require the Ghana Government to develop funding models and allocate resources for RPL within which providers can develop and implement their own funding strategies.

6.2. The RPL Process – Operationalisation

This section presents the operationalisation of the RPL process for individual applicants.

6.2.1. Overview

Whilst RPL can vary according to purpose – e.g., whether summative or formative, whether for access or credit at different levels and in different sectors – a general process flow should be delineated; from documented learning outcomes, to assessment, to certification, and to the delivery of a qualification (or similar: e.g., credits, exemptions of part of a curriculum/programme).

The RPL process is composed of different phases as follows:

- Preliminary step: Information and guidance

- Identification of learning outcomes

- Documentation of learning outcomes

- Assessment of learning outcomes

- Certification of learning outcomes

The coherence and articulation between phases are essential for the preparation and progress of the candidate. RPL is individual-centred and reliable information is key to guide candidates towards well-grounded perspectives, support their path through assessment and certification and provide advice concerning further learning pathways and outcomes. For most candidates, RPL is a matter of self-esteem and a demonstration of capability to take a new opportunity, which cannot to be missed or failed.

6.2.2. Definition

RPL is a process by which any set of consistent learning outcomes of an individual, however acquired – i.e. formally, non-formally and/or informally – are given currency through the awarding of an officially recognised document clearly stating what the candidate knows and is able to do (a qualification typically, but not necessarily), and the extent to which they are mastered by the candidate (level of qualification); after a thorough quality assured assessment process against predefined [preferably widely agreed] standards that provide a set of criteria, and a norm, for assessing these learning outcomes.

In short RPL, is a process by which all the learning outcomes of an individual candidate are assessed against predefined standards, and a document is awarded to successful applicants.

RPL is a process to make learning outcomes visible if they are consistent with a clearly identified objective – e.g., a qualification, credits toward a qualification, exemption for access, exemption of part of a curriculum/programme – so that these learning outcomes may be used by the owner.

RPL is therefore first and foremost an assessment process. It aims at identifying, documenting, validating and recognising outcomes from relevant prior learning gained through life (including formal, non-formal and/or informal), for the purpose of recognising life achievements against a given set of standards.

The learning outcomes have to be consistent with each other so that they may be reasonably grouped in order to constitute the building blocks to characterise a learning outcome or a set of learning outcomes, so that the candidate may set a course toward the labour market (occupation) or toward further learning (another qualification than the qualification awarded in the context of RPL). In an RPL process, the learning outcomes cannot be taken in isolation but are assessed globally. A candidate that would display learning outcomes from several experiences in different, unconnected fields, would probably not succeed and should be screen out during the eligibility phase.

6.2.3. Key Contextual Operationalisation Steps

The different stages an individual candidate goes though when engaging in RPL may be summarised in six steps of unequal duration:

- Initial information and guidance, and decision to apply. The process begins with providing potential applicants with comprehensive information about the RPL process. This includes the benefits, requirements, and potential outcomes of participating in RPL. Guidance is offered to help individuals decide whether to pursue RPL and understand what evidence of prior learning outcomes will be required.

- Administrative registration of the individual applicant by the RPL authority. Once individuals decide to apply, they must undergo an administrative registration process. This involves filling out

forms and providing initial documentation. The registration phase ensures that all candidates are formally recognised and that their applications are processed efficiently.

- Pre-screening by the RPL authority (eligibility). After administrative registration, the RPL authority conducts a pre-screening, or short assessment, to determine the eligibility of candidates. This step ensures that only those with relevant prior learning outcomes are allowed to proceed to the final assessment phase. It includes reviewing the candidate's portfolio and conducting interviews if necessary.

- Preparatory work by the applicant for final assessment (including for instance elaborating a portfolio of competences). Eligible candidates are then guided through the process of preparing for the final assessment. This may involve assembling a portfolio of competences, gathering supporting further documentation, or undergoing preparatory training and/or guidance. The goal is to ensure that candidates are fully prepared for the assessment process.

- Assessment as such (or final assessment, including assessors reviewing all the pieces of evidence and the material provided by the applicant)[3]. This is the core of the RPL process, where candidates' prior learning outcomes are assessed against [widely accepted and used] predefined standards. The assessment can include a variety of methods, such as practical tests, observations in the workplace, written exams, or professional interviews. The assessment is designed to be rigorous yet fair, ensuring that candidates meet the required standards.

- Validation and certification. Successful candidates receive formal recognition of their learning outcomes, which can be in the form of a qualification, part qualification, or credits towards a qualification, among others. This certification is crucial as it provides the official documentation that candidates can use to advance their careers or further their education and training.

Some of these stages may be organised in parallel, for example the "preparatory work for final assessment" by the applicant and the "review of the pieces of evidence provided by the applicant". The full RPL process is presented in Tale 1.

Table 1. Operationalisation of the RPL Process for Candidates

Stages	Purposes
Initial information and guidance	Greeting learners (potential applicants)
	Information and guidance to the potential applicant (comprehensive, with information about the benefits, the process and its potential duration)
	Identification of the evidence to substantiate claim for application (partly with RPL staff)
	Decision of the individual to apply
Administrative registration	Provision of the administrative form
	Guidance 1 (light)
	Handover of the administrative form by the applicant
	Waiting time (Decision to accept the application by the RPL staff)
Application screening and eligibility	Guidance 2 (intermediate, including advice about evidence gathering)
	Handover of the eligibility portfolio
	Eligibility interview
	Waiting time (Decision to send the applicant to the assessment by RPL staff)
Preparation of the final assessment	Understanding what the final assessment is about
	Elaborating a portfolio of competences, and/or documenting learning outcomes
Assessment (of learning outcomes and competences)	Guidance 3 (comprehensive, especially concerning the preparation to the assessment)
	Handover of the portfolio of [self-analysed] competences.
	Waiting time (Analysis of the portfolio of competences by assessor(s))

---

[3] The full process is about assessment, but it is convenient to call this particular stage "assessment" as well, because this where this is where it all comes together. For the sake of clarity, this document will call this stage "final assessment".

	Waiting time (Convening notice send to applicants)
	Supplementary assessment (see Box 11)
	Interview with the panel of assessors
Certification (of competences)	Waiting time (Validation of the learning outcomes and competences)
	Waiting time (Making and stamping of the qualification) – Recording of outcome
	Awarding of a qualification to successful applicants.
	Explaining the reasons for failure to unsuccessful applicants. Suggestions for further practice, or formal education and training (top up learning).

6.2.4. The Key Step – Assessment

Assessment is the pivotal component of the RPL process, determining whether an individual's prior learning outcomes meet the standards required for formal recognition, and the awarding of a qualification typically. This section underscores the importance of developing a robust and flexible assessment framework that can accommodate the diverse experiences and learning contexts of RPL candidates. The final assessment is the major phased of RPL and this assessment may rely on several non-mutually exclusive approaches:

- Portfolio of competences.

- Practical test in a simulated working environment.

- Observation in a real working environment.

- Written examinations, including essays.

- Oral Examinations.

- Interview(s).

- Professional conversation or interview with the assessor(s).

- Challenge test.

- Case study, with a narrative.

- A combination of any of the above (typically a practical hand-on test with a conversation with the assessors at the same time).

- Final jury/panel (always advisable regardless of the options chosen from the above).

Not all approaches are suitable for all target groups: illiterate people may not be able to build a portfolio of competences, unless Ghana opts for the modern and suitable approach to allow recording of all kinds (e.g., sounds, photographs, video, drawings). The concept of e-Portfolio is a promising avenue that Ghana will implementation in due course.

The goal of the assessment process is to provide a fair and accurate measure of a candidate's learning outcomes, however acquired, and therefore ensuring that those who receive a qualification through RPL are truly qualified and capable. Key elements must therefore be born in mind:

- Diverse Assessment Methods. To accurately capture the varied learning experiences of candidates, the assessment process should employ multiple methods. This is why several approaches are proposed above. They can range from practical demonstrations, where candidates showcase their skills in a real or simulated work environment, to portfolio assessments that compile evidence of past learning. Written examinations and professional interviews may also be used, especially for assessing theoretical knowledge.

- Training and Calibration of Assessors. Assessors play a crucial role in the RPL process, and it is essential that they are well-trained and equipped to contribute to assess a wide range of learning outcomes. They

are not the only decision makers because there is always a panel of assessors (generally three) but they contribute in an important way. Regular training ensures that assessors maintain high standards of fairness and consistency. Calibration exercises, where assessors align their assessment criteria and judgment, help ensure that assessments are uniform across different regions and contexts.

- Fair and Transparent Process. Transparency is key to the credibility of the RPL process. Candidates should be fully informed about the assessment criteria, the methods that will be used, and how their results will be determined. This transparency not only builds trust but also helps candidates better prepare for the final assessment.

6.3.   Roles and Responsibilities of Main Role-players in relation to RPL

This section identifies broadly and then in detail all the stakeholders in the RPL system and propose their role and responsibilities. The successful implementation of RPL indeed relies on the active participation and collaboration of various stakeholders, each with distinct roles and responsibilities. The main ones are:

- Government Agencies. These include ministries related to education, labour, and TVET. Their role is to develop and enforce policies that support RPL, allocate resources, and ensure that the RPL system aligns with national education and employment goals.

- Educational Institutions. Training centres – and in the future universities and colleges – are responsible for implementing the RPL processes within their activities. This involves providing guidance to candidates, conducting pre-screening and final assessments, and ensuring that the quality of RPL outcomes matches that of traditional educational and training pathways.

- Employers and Industry Bodies. Employers play a key role by recognising and valuing the qualifications obtained through RPL. They should also provide opportunities for employees and workers in general to participate in RPL and may even contribute to the assessment process by offering workplace evaluations or feedback.

- Community Organizations and non-governmental organisations. These organisations can help raise awareness about RPL, especially among marginalised groups. They can also provide support services, such as helping candidates prepare their portfolios of competences or navigate the application process.

- RPL Practitioners. This group includes among others guidance officers, assessors, and moderators (see ACQF "Handbook for RPL Practitioners"). They are on the front lines of the RPL process, providing direct support to candidates, conducting pre- and final assessments, and ensuring the overall quality and fairness of the entire process.

The next subsections list the stakeholders in detail and describe their role.

6.3.1.   RPL stakeholders

The list of potential stakeholders is composed of the following. They should all be informed about the steps being made in relation to RPL and invited to comment on them.

Government Ministries

- Labour

- Education

- Labour and Vocational Training,

- Tertiary education

- Research

- Immigration
- Social Services
- Defence
- Industry

Employers

- Small Business Owners
- Industries
- Human Resource Departments
- Managers
- Entrepreneurs

Workers

- Employed
- Underemployed
- Unemployed
- Un-certified workers in the workplace
- Certified workers in the workplace

Students/Learners

- Families (parents organisations)
- Persons with Disabilities

Sector Council

Unions / Syndicates / Organised Labour

- Shop Stewards
- Union Leaders

Education

- Junior
- Senior
- Tertiary
- Polytechnics
- Tertiary education

- Private Education Institutions
- Apprenticeship / Artisans
- On the job training providers

TVET

- Training centres

Associations

- Professional Associations
- Technological Associations

Certification Boards and Regulatory Bodies

RPL Facilitators

- Advisors
- Assessors
- Portfolio Facilitators
- Content Experts

Career Counselling

- Guidance Counsellors
- Employment

Traditional Knowledge Keepers

Advocacy Groups/Associations

Interpreters/Associations

Universities

- Deans
- Admissions

Researchers

Consultants

Military

Prisons

6.3.2. Key RPL Stakeholders

The key RPL stakeholders, and their role, are:

- Employers – Create an environment that is conducive to RPL.
- RPL Providers – Provide RPL services that comply with statutory requirements.
- RPL Applicants – Participate in the RPL process and provide appropriate evidence to prove learning outcomes.
- RPL guidance officers – Support applicants.
- RPL Assessors – Subject specialists in occupational fields and members of the teaching force.

6.3.3. The Role of the Authority Overseeing RPL

The different steps the Authority in charge of RPL should take to establish an RPL system may include:

- Establish a communication policy, inform about objectives and benefits, and reach out to the most in need stakeholders, whether they be individuals, employers, or organisations.
- Fundraising.
- Organise the social dialogue, promote RPL among the stakeholders and organise a sense of ownership (for further commitment to accept the qualifications that will be awarded to future successful RPL candidates).
- Integrate universities and education stakeholders in the policy framework.
- Design the institutional framework (e.g., identify harbouring institution for the RPL system).
- Identify priority needs.
- Gauge commitment among stakeholders, and promote those who are definitely in.
- Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).
- Create regulatory tools.
- Decide on eligibility criteria (to have the right to apply for assessment).
- Decide on assessment methods, with quality assurance.
- Decide on final outcomes of the RPL process (exemptions, credits, qualification, part qualification, certificate).
- Consult and decide on pilots (preferably low hanging fruits, to attract investors and more stakeholders).
- Organise pilots, preferably vertical pilot to evaluate the full chain of actions, either sector targeted or holistic according to the priority needs.

- Train staff and RPL practitioners, advisors, and assessors in the first place.

- Identify top up education and training options, for unsuccessful RPL applicants that needs additional learning to meet the qualification standards.

- Elaborate learning outcomes and standards, following and initial assessment of the adequacy of learning outcomes for an RPL process (many programmes claim they are based on learning outcomes, but they are not actually learning outcomes – time consuming in the latter case).

- Prepare, create or adapt, tools, resources, materials and processes (e.g., information leaflets, assessor's manual or guidance procedures, applicants booklets, assessment procedures and tools, assessment standards…).

- Evaluate impact on formal education and training system (e.g., modularisation, curriculum).

- Compile results from the Monitoring and Evaluation of the pilots.

- Organising the debate among key stakeholders for improving the RPL system.

- Feed back into the RPL system.

- Decide on a critical mass for implementing in a sector.

- Scale up.

- Learn from further Monitoring and Evaluation and feed back into the RPL system.

- Improve the education and training system so that it complements the RPL system (e.g., modular provision of formal education and training so that unsuccessful applicants may organise their top-up education and training).

- If at all possible, feed back into the formal TVET sector so that all TVET stakeholders benefit from the way the assessment is organised for learning outcomes acquired through experience.

Not all stages are equally important, nor they are all necessary. This list is built as a checklist for policy makers to select from. Some stages are more time consuming than other. Finally some are of paramount importance for the success of RPL. For instance, the preparation of a well-trained RPL workforce is key to success.

These different steps of the public action are not to be confused with the pathway of individual applicants must follow when engaging in RPL. For the sake of simplicity, the former is designated as the "supply" and the latter as the "demand" in this Policy document.

What the government has to do (the supply) and what the individual applicants have to do (the demand) are not to be confused, e.g., "fund raising" or "communication" should appear as key steps in the RPL process, but no individual candidate needs to know about those issues. Rather, they need to have a clear view of what they will have to go through in order to complete their RPL journey (Section 6.2.3).

6.4.   Moderation in RPL

The role of moderators (internal and external) is to sample and verify that all aspects of RPL adhere to accepted standards and principles. To instil confidence over time, all RPL activities will need to comply with Ghana quality assurance and accreditation requirements as set out in existing policy documents. However, over-regulation of RPL can stifle creativity and innovation, especially in the early stages of the RPL system. Therefore a light touch will be applied at the outset for notions of quality to be derived from contextual practice, rather than being imposed upon it.

Nevertheless, moderation is essential to maintaining the integrity and consistency of the RPL process. And two sets of moderators can be mobilised, internal and external moderators:

- Internal Moderation. Conducted within institutions, internal moderation ensures that assessments are conducted fairly and consistently across different candidates and programmes. Internal moderators review the assessment process, provide feedback to assessors, and make sure that all assessments adhere to the institution's standards, especially qualification standards.

- External Moderation. External moderators provide an independent review of the RPL process. Their role is to verify that assessments are being conducted in line with national standards and that the outcomes are consistent across different institutions and regions. External moderation helps to build trust in the RPL system by ensuring that all candidates are treated equitably.

Regular training and updates for moderators are essential to keep them informed of best practices and any changes in RPL policies and procedures. This continuous improvement process helps ensure that the RPL system remains fair, credible, and effective over time.

6.5. Implementation Strategy for RPL

Implementing RPL on a national scale requires a well-planned and flexible strategy. This section outlines the key characteristics of the strategy and the phases involved, first rather broadly and then in detail. The broad expected key characteristics are:

- Pragmatic and Incremental Approach. The strategy should be realistic, focusing on what can be achieved in the short term while laying the groundwork for long-term success. An incremental approach allows for gradual scaling up of the RPL system, starting with pilot programmes that can be rolled out as the system matures.

- Iterative Process. Implementation should be viewed as a continuous learning process. Regular feedback and [concomitant] evaluation are crucial for making adjustments and improvements. This iterative approach ensures that the RPL system can adapt to changing needs and conditions, especially in the regional context (ECOWAS, and also African Union).

- Stakeholder Engagement. Building consensus among stakeholders is essential for the success of RPL. The strategy should include mechanisms for involving all relevant parties, from government agencies and education and training institutions to employers and community organisations. This broad-based support helps ensure that the RPL system is sustainable and widely accepted.

The following sub-sections provide list some desirable traits of the strategy.

6.5.1. Characteristics of the Strategy

Although policy is relatively fixed in time, an implementation strategy evolves. However, the following characteristics should typify the RPL implementation strategy. It should be:

- Pragmatic

- Incremental

- Iterative

- Enabling and consensus building

6.5.2. Principles Governing the Strategy – Getting and Keeping Everybody on Board

The principles governing the strategy are:

- Pragmatic – Realistic – Fit-for-purpose – Implementable.

- Iterative – Continuous Learning Informing Forward Movement.

- Enabling and Consensus-Oriented.

- Implications of Growing RPL in Ghana.

6.5.3. Session Road Map – Phased Action Plan

The road map may be designed around the following phases:

- Phase 1: Scoping, model building and Preparing the Environment:

    o Phase 1a: Scoping Existing Practices.

    o Phase 1b. Model building and preparing the environment.

- Phase 2. Establishing an institutional framework (a legislative and a regulatory framework) and a governance system.

- Phase 3. Modelling RPL (assessment, quality assurance, standards, introduction of ICT).

- Phase 4. Developing guidelines (especially for practitioners) and monitoring and evaluation system.

- Phase 5. Piloting (vertical pilots).

- Phase 6. Scaling up for the entire country (implementation plan and timelines.

6.6. Risks and opportunities

This section examines the potential challenges and benefits associated with the implementation of RPL. In short:

- Risks. Potential risks include lack of commitment from stakeholders, insufficient resources, and resistance to change. There is also the risk that RPL qualifications might not be fully recognised by employers or educational institutions – or the society at large – which could undermine the system's credibility and limit its expansion.

- Opportunities. On the other hand, RPL presents numerous opportunities, such as enhancing social inclusion by providing pathways to formal qualifications – especially for marginalised groups – improving employability by formally recognising all the skills of workers and promoting lifelong learning. The section encourages stakeholders to proactively address risks while maximising the opportunities that RPL offers.

The following subsections provide a list of potential risks – for which a mitigation strategy should be developed – and opportunities.

6.6.1. Risks

In the case of Ghana, the potential risks are:

- Contradictory intent of agencies (incoherent policy, obstacles to cohesion).

- Lack of commitment of stakeholders.

- Conflicting stakeholders.

- Delay in publishing legal texts (laws, bylaws, regulations).

- RPL staff (assessors, guidance officers) not convinced nor properly trained, or burden on staff.

- RPL stigma.

- Strong attachment of the population to formal education and training.

6.6.2. Opportunities

The opportunities for the RPL system are plenty in Ghana, and they relate in particular to:

- Fighting poverty.

- Addressing migration issues, including returning migrations.

- Optimal skills and competences utilisation.

- Increased the size of the formal economy.

- Promote lifelong learning.

- Long term impact (e.g., confidence, self-esteem, as such and as predictors of future employment and economic development).

- Double currency of RPL qualifications, in the formal education and training system and in the labour market (for occupational mobility, geographical mobility, promotion, pay raise, decent work).

6.7. Monitoring and Evaluation

This final section underlines the importance of establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for RPL. The key points include:

- Objectives and Indicators. The M&E framework should be built around clear objectives and measurable indicators that track the progress and effectiveness of the RPL system. These indicators might include the number of participants, pass rates, candidate satisfaction, and the impact of RPL on employability, self-esteem, well-being and further personal – as opposed to occupational – development.

- Data Collection and Analysis. Consistent and systematic data collection is essential for evaluating the RPL process. There is no evaluation without monitoring, i.e., data collection. This data should be analysed to provide insights into the system's performance and to identify areas for improvement.

- Continuous Improvement. The M&E process should feed into a cycle of continuous improvement, where findings are used to refine the RPL system. This ensures that the system remains effective and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.

Therefore, a M&E system will be proposed with:

- Objectives and indicators

- Monitoring and evaluation relevant to the RPL system and approach, interoperable with the M&E of the GhNQF.

- Data for monitoring.

- Monitoring for evaluation.

- Opportunities for statistical/econometric modelling, provided data have been collected.

Main sources – National and International

ACQF. Ghana National Qualifications Framework, Baseline Analysis.

Commission for TVE, https://ctvet.gov.gh/

COTVET (Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training) and DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency), 2016. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) Policy.

CTVET (Commission for Technical Vocational Education and Training), Ghana TVET Report, CTVET, 2021.

CTVET (Commission for Technical Vocational Education and Training), 2022. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) Policy. https://ctvet.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/20220322_RPL-Policy-Document_VALIDATED.pdf

Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). Presentation at the launch of ACQF-II, 12 July 2023, in Addis Ababa.

Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, GTEC - Ghana (nab.gov.gh)

Ministry of Education, Ghana, Home - Ministry of Education Ghana (moe.gov.gh)

Ministry of Education, Ghana, Education Strategy Plan 2018-2030, Ministry of Education, 2018.

UNESCO, https://uis.unesco.org/en/country/gh

UNESCO report on the TVET QF, prepared by UNESCO for the fifth edition of the Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks, published in 2023 by UNESCO, UNESCO-UIL, Cedefop and ETF.

VET II Toolbox II, Mapping Opportunities Report, Ghana https://vettoolbox.eu/

Appendices

Appendix A. Glossary of Terms (from ACQF)

Source: ACQF. 2021. Thematic Brief 1. Concepts and definitions. https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-1-concepts-and-definitions

Certificate

An official document, issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following a standard assessment procedure.

Competence

Competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

Credential

Formal certification issued for successful achievement of a defined set of outcomes – for example, successful completion of a course in recognition of having achieved particular awareness, knowledge, skills or attitude competences; successful completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Credit

'Credit' means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes.

'Credit transfer' means the process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credit in one context to have it valued and recognised in another context.

Employability

The degree of adaptability an individual demonstrates in finding and keeping a job, and updating occupational skills; relates to portable competences and qualifications that enhance an individual's capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed policy, plan or programme, including its design, implementation and results. It aims to assess the relevance and fulfilment of objectives and strategies with the intention of informing decision-making. 'Formative' evaluation relates to ongoing activities and helps guide implementation. 'Summative' evaluation assesses the results of a particular initiative, after completion.

Formal education and training

Education or training provided in educational institutions, such as schools, universities, colleges, or off-the-job in a workplace, usually involving direction from a teacher or instructor.

Formative assessment

A range of formal, non-formal and informal ongoing assessment procedures used to focus teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment, or which are required for the purpose of a year mark.

Guidance and counselling

A range of activities designed to help individuals make educational, vocational or personal decisions and carry them out before and after they enter the labour market.

Informal learning

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning in most cases is unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.

Knowledge

Knowledge is central to any discussion of learning and may be understood as the way in which individuals and societies apply meaning to experience. It can therefore be seen broadly as the information, understanding, skills, values and attitudes acquired through learning. As such, knowledge is linked inextricably to the cultural, social, environmental and institutional contexts in which it is created and reproduced.

Learning outcomes

Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Micro-credential

A micro-credential is a proof the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent standards.

Monitoring

Monitoring is the continuous and systematic collection of data on specific indicators in order to provide the main actors of an ongoing development intervention with indications as to the extent of progress and the achievement of objectives (in relation to allocated resources).

Non-formal learning

Planned learning activities, not explicitly designated as learning, towards the achievement of a qualification or part qualification; often associated with learning that results in improved workplace practice.

Prior learning

The knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired through previously unrecognised training or experience.

Qualification

Means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

Qualifications framework

'A policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

Qualifications system

This includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, QA processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent. One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications.

Recognition

'Formal recognition of learning outcomes' means the process of granting official status by a competent authority to acquired learning outcomes for purposes of further studies or employment, through (i) the award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles); (ii) the validation of non-formal and informal learning; (iii) the grant of equivalence, credit or waivers.

Recognition of prior learning

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process through which formal, non-formal and informal learning is measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system or workplace. (Source: National Policy for the Implementation of RPL: par 30).

The aim is to make it possible to obtain formal recognition for knowledge gained throughout life, such as in workplaces and own reading or experiences. The RPL process also entails providing support to a candidate to ensure that knowledge is discovered and displayed in terms of a relevant qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Skills

A bundle of knowledge, attributes and capacities that can be learnt and that enable individuals to successfully and consistently perform an activity or task and can be built upon and extended through learning.

Validation of learning outcomes

Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against pre-defined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes

'Validation of non-formal and informal learning' means the process of confirmation by a competent authority that an individual has acquired learning outcomes acquired in non- formal and informal learning settings measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases: identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual, documentation to make visible the individual's experiences, a formal assessment of those experiences and certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification.

Appendix B. Glossary of Terms (from Ghana)

Source: CTVET (Commission for Technical Vocational Education and Training), 2002. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) Policy. https://ctvet.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/20220322_RPL-Policy-Document_VALIDATED.pdf

Access:

An entry to education and training of a particular qualification or part qualification or entry to a final external summative assessment.

Applicant:

A person whose performance is being assessed by an assessor registered with a relevant institution.

Assessment:

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence of learner performance, upon which an assessor judges whether, or the extent to which, a learner has met the performance requirements of the learning outcome laid in a particular unit and then making a decision, based on these judgements whether a learner has achieved the learning outcome as a whole.

Assessor:

A person accredited by CTVET per established criteria to conduct internal and/or external assessments for approved occupational qualifications and part qualifications.

Certificate:

An officially recognised qualification or award gained upon completion of an accredited programme of study.

Certificate of Competence:

Is where a learner undertakes a unit or selected number of unit (s) of a programme.

Credit:

The value given within a learning programme for achieved learning.

Credit Transfer:

Credit earned in one programme being accepted by providers delivering other programmes.

Disadvantage Groups:

Persons living with disability, migrants, refugees and those from poor rural areas.

Formal learning:

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment and that is explicitly designated as such and leads to the awarding of a qualification or part qualification on the NTVETQF.

Full Qualification:

It is the qualification received after going through a full programme at any level of the NTVETQF.

Informal learning:

Learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life or leisure.

Learning:

The acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in a particular occupation or trade.

Learning outcomes:

A statement of measurable learning that describes what a candidate should know and/or be able to do as a result of learning.

Lifelong learning:

Learning that takes place in all contexts of life.

Monitoring and Evaluation(M&E):

A continuous process of the review of quality that can be conducted internally and /or externally to recommend quality improvements.

Mainstream:

Refers to those who are involved in formal training and assessment.

Non-Formal learning

Learning taking place in activities not exclusively designated as learning activities, but which contain an important learning element.

Portfolio:

A guided collection of evidence or time that can be used by an RPL candidate in support of his or her application for RPL assessment. (Objects, pictures, videos, written testimonials and any other as per the assessment guide).

Professional designation

A title or status conferred by a professional body in recognition of a person's expertise and right to practice in an occupational field using a certain rank.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process of evaluating prior skills and knowledge acquired through formal, informal or non-formal learning against some predetermined qualification standard in order to formally recognise them.

RPL Practitioner:

A person that functions in one or more aspects of RPL provision, including policy development, advising, portfolio course design and facilitation, assessment and moderation, administration, monitoring and evaluation, research and development.

Tracer Study

A standardised survey of graduates from educational institutions, which takes place sometime after graduation or the end of the training.

TVET Provider:

An accredited training provider that delivers learning programmes leading to full qualification or part qualifications on the NTVETQF.

Greening TVET principles

It is a term used to describe the efforts to foster the culture of sustainable practices in TVET and facilitate the transition to climate-resilient societies, greater resource efficiency, and a circular economy.