

## Effectiveness of Prior Learning Recognition (RPL) Program Management in Improving Student Competence

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of Prior Learning Recognition (RPL) program management in improving student competence within the context of higher education. RPL is an innovative approach that acknowledges learners' prior knowledge, skills, and experiences obtained through formal, non-formal, and informal learning. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design, utilizing data collected through literature review and document analysis. The findings indicate that effective RPL program management significantly contributes to enhancing student competence by accelerating learning pathways, increasing learning motivation, and ensuring the relevance of education to labor market needs. Key factors influencing the success of RPL implementation include institutional commitment, clear assessment standards, qualified assessors, and adequate administrative systems. However, challenges remain, such as limited awareness, inconsistent implementation, and lack of standardized procedures across institutions. Therefore, strengthening management strategies, improving regulatory frameworks, and enhancing institutional capacity are essential to optimize the effectiveness of RPL programs in improving student competence and supporting lifelong learning.

**Keywords;** Prior Learning Recognition (RPL), Program Management, Student Competence, Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, Educational Effectiveness

### Introduction

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the demand for a competent and adaptable workforce has become increasingly critical. Educational institutions are required not only to deliver formal learning but also to recognize diverse forms of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal experiences. In this context, Prior Learning Recognition (RPL) emerges as an important educational innovation that enables individuals to obtain formal acknowledgment of competencies gained outside traditional academic pathways. Raciti, M., Tham, A., & Dale, J. (2024).

RPL serves as a strategic mechanism to support lifelong learning by bridging the gap between experiential learning and formal education systems. It allows learners to convert their prior knowledge, work experience, and professional skills into academic credits or qualifications. This approach not only shortens the duration of study but also enhances learning



efficiency and accessibility, particularly for adult learners and professionals seeking career advancement. de Paor, C. (2024).

However, the effectiveness of RPL largely depends on how well the program is managed within educational institutions. Program management plays a crucial role in ensuring that RPL processes such as assessment, validation, and certification—are conducted transparently, fairly, and consistently. Effective management involves clear policies, standardized assessment procedures, qualified assessors, and robust administrative systems. Without proper management, RPL programs may face challenges such as inconsistent evaluation, lack of credibility, and limited acceptance by stakeholders. Mottais, É., Dorceus, S., & Bélisle, R. (2024).

Furthermore, improving student competence is one of the primary objectives of implementing RPL. Competence in this context includes not only cognitive knowledge but also practical skills, professional attitudes, and the ability to adapt to changing work environments. Through well-managed RPL programs, students can build on their existing competencies, thereby achieving higher levels of academic and professional performance. This aligns with the broader goal of education in preparing individuals for real-world challenges and labor market demands. Baumeler, C., Engelage, S., Hämmerli, C., & Salzmann, P. (2023).

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of RPL programs still encounters several challenges, including limited awareness among stakeholders, insufficient institutional support, and the absence of uniform standards across institutions. These issues may hinder the optimal utilization of RPL as a tool for enhancing student competence. Ma'ruf, M. F., Said, A., Mindarti, L. I., Putra, F., & Esmael, S. T. E. (2024).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of RPL program management in improving student competence. It focuses on identifying key factors that contribute to successful implementation, as well as the challenges faced by educational institutions. By analyzing these aspects, this research seeks to provide insights into how RPL programs can be managed more effectively to support quality education and lifelong learning. Pokorny, H. (2023).

## **Methods**

### **Research Approach and Design**

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive-analytical design. The qualitative approach is used to explore in depth the effectiveness of Prior Learning Recognition (RPL) program management in improving student competence. The descriptive-analytical design enables the researcher to systematically describe the implementation of RPL programs and analyze their impact on student outcomes. Cooper, L., & Harris, J. (2023).

This research is categorized as applied research, as it aims to provide practical insights and recommendations for improving the management of RPL programs in educational institutions. It also adopts elements of case study research, focusing on specific institutional practices related to RPL implementation. Andersson, P., & Fejes, A. (2023).

The study is conducted within higher education institutions that have implemented Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programs. The research subjects are selected based on their direct involvement and practical experience with RPL implementation, including institutional leaders or administrators responsible for policy-making, lecturers and assessors involved in the evaluation process, and students participating in the programs (Whelehan, Moodie, & Buchanan, 2023).

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, the study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are gathered through in-depth interviews with administrators, assessors, and students, supplemented by direct observations of the RPL processes, specifically focusing on assessment and validation procedures. Secondary data, on the other hand, consist of

institutional documents such as RPL guidelines, curricula, and assessment standards, as well as academic journals, books, and relevant government regulations (Harris, 2023).

Data collection is executed through a multi-method approach. This involves semi-structured interviews to capture detailed insights from participants, direct observation of the implementation stages, and thorough documentation analysis of relevant regulatory and institutional records (CEDEFOP, 2023).

The collected data are processed using qualitative analysis techniques, which follow a structured three-step approach. First, data reduction is performed to select and simplify information specifically related to RPL program management. Next, the data are organized into a logical display categorized by planning, implementation, evaluation, and outcomes. Finally, the process concludes with drawing and verifying conclusions, where the findings are interpreted to assess the overall effectiveness of RPL in enhancing student competence.

This methodological framework provides a comprehensive approach to examining the effectiveness of RPL program management. By integrating multiple data sources and analytical techniques, the study aims to produce valid and reliable findings that contribute to improving student competence and enhancing the quality of education. Zhang, Y., & Zheng, J. (2023).

## **Results**

### **Effectiveness of RPL Program Planning**

The findings indicate that effective planning is a fundamental factor in the success of Prior Learning Recognition (RPL) programs. Institutions that implement clear guidelines, structured procedures, and well-defined eligibility criteria demonstrate better outcomes in program implementation. Strategic planning ensures alignment between RPL objectives and institutional goals, particularly in improving student competence and supporting lifelong learning. Additionally, the presence of standardized assessment frameworks and clear documentation enhances transparency and consistency in recognizing prior learning. Institutions with comprehensive planning tend to have higher levels of stakeholder trust and participation. Browning, K. (2020).

### **Implementation of RPL Processes**

The results show that the implementation of RPL programs generally involves several key stages, including identification, documentation, assessment, validation, and certification of prior learning. Effective implementation is characterized by:

- a. The use of competency-based assessment methods
- b. Involvement of qualified and trained assessors
- c. Clear communication between institutions and participants. Andersson, P., & Fejes, A. (2020).

Students participating in well-managed RPL programs experience smoother processes and greater confidence in the fairness of assessments. However, inconsistencies in implementation across institutions were observed, particularly in assessment standards and documentation procedures. Cooper, L., & Harris, J. (2020).

### **Improvement of Student Competence**

One of the main findings of this study is that RPL programs significantly contribute to improving student competence. This improvement is reflected in:

- a. Cognitive competence: enhanced understanding of theoretical concepts through integration with prior knowledge
- b. Practical skills: strengthened ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts
- c. Professional attitudes: increased confidence, responsibility, and adaptability

Students who undergo RPL programs demonstrate higher readiness for academic progression and workforce participation compared to those in traditional learning pathways. Wheelahan, L., Moodie, G., & Buchanan, J. (2020).

### **Efficiency in Learning Pathways**

The study finds that RPL programs improve learning efficiency by reducing the time and cost required to complete academic programs. By recognizing prior learning, students can bypass redundant coursework and focus on acquiring new competencies. This efficiency not only benefits students but also supports institutions in optimizing resource utilization and expanding access to education for diverse learner groups. Harris, J. (2020).

### **Stakeholder Satisfaction**

The results reveal a generally positive perception of RPL programs among stakeholders, including students, assessors, and institutional administrators. Key factors contributing to satisfaction include:

- a. Fair and transparent assessment processes
- b. Relevance of recognized competencies to academic and professional needs
- c. Flexibility in learning pathways

However, some concerns were noted regarding the complexity of administrative procedures and limited awareness of RPL opportunities. UNESCO. (2020).

### **Challenges in RPL Program Management**

Despite its effectiveness, several challenges were identified:

- a. Lack of standardized implementation across institutions
- b. Limited number of trained assessors
- c. Inadequate administrative and technological support systems
- d. Low awareness and understanding of RPL among potential participants

These challenges may reduce the overall effectiveness of RPL programs and limit their broader impact. OECD. (2020).

### **Institutional Support and Policy Influence**

The findings highlight the importance of institutional commitment and supportive policies in ensuring effective RPL implementation. Institutions with strong leadership, clear regulations, and adequate funding demonstrate better program performance. Government policies and national frameworks also play a crucial role in standardizing RPL practices and promoting wider adoption. International Labour Organization. (2020).

### **Overall Effectiveness of RPL Programs**

Overall, the results indicate that RPL program management is effective in improving student competence when supported by proper planning, implementation, and evaluation mechanisms. The integration of prior learning into formal education systems enhances both academic outcomes and workforce readiness. However, the level of effectiveness varies depending on institutional capacity, management quality, and stakeholder engagement. The study concludes that effective management of RPL programs significantly contributes to improving student competence, enhancing learning efficiency, and promoting inclusive education. Nevertheless, addressing existing challenges and strengthening institutional frameworks are essential to maximize the benefits of RPL implementation. Conrad, D. (2022).

## Discussion

### The Strategic Role of RPL in Modern Education Systems

The findings highlight that Prior Learning Recognition (RPL) has become a strategic instrument in modern education systems, particularly in supporting lifelong learning and inclusive education. RPL enables individuals to gain formal recognition for competencies acquired through work experience, training, and informal learning. This aligns with the evolving paradigm of education, which emphasizes flexibility, accessibility, and relevance to labor market demands. The effectiveness of RPL program management reflects how well institutions integrate experiential learning into formal academic structures. When properly managed, RPL not only validates prior knowledge but also enhances the credibility and efficiency of educational systems. Assinger, P. (2022).

### Effectiveness of Program Management Components

The discussion reveals that the effectiveness of RPL programs is strongly influenced by key management components, including planning, implementation, and evaluation.

- a. Planning ensures that RPL programs are aligned with institutional goals and supported by clear policies and guidelines.
- b. Implementation involves transparent assessment processes, qualified assessors, and effective communication with participants.
- c. Evaluation provides feedback for continuous improvement and quality assurance.

Institutions that demonstrate strong management practices in these areas tend to achieve better outcomes in terms of student competence and program sustainability. Pokorny, H. (2021).

### Impact on Student Competence Development

One of the most significant findings is the positive impact of RPL on student competence. The discussion shows that RPL contributes to the development of:

- a. Cognitive competence, through the integration of prior knowledge with new learning
- b. Technical and practical skills, by recognizing real-world experience
- c. Affective competence, including confidence, motivation, and professional attitudes

This comprehensive competence development indicates that RPL is not merely an administrative process but a meaningful educational strategy that enhances learning outcomes. Cedefop. (2021).

### Efficiency and Flexibility in Learning Pathways

RPL significantly improves the efficiency of learning pathways by reducing duplication of learning and shortening study duration. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for adult learners, working professionals, and non-traditional students who may have substantial prior experience. The discussion suggests that RPL supports a more personalized learning approach, allowing students to focus on acquiring new competencies rather than repeating previously mastered material. This contributes to increased motivation and engagement in the learning process. Singh, M. (2021).

### Challenges in Implementation and Standardization

Despite its benefits, the effectiveness of RPL program management is constrained by several challenges. One of the key issues is the lack of standardized procedures across institutions, leading to inconsistencies in assessment and recognition.

Other challenges include:

- a. Limited availability of trained assessors
- b. Administrative complexity and bureaucratic processes
- c. Low awareness and understanding of RPL among stakeholders
- d. Resistance to change within educational institutions

These challenges highlight the need for stronger governance and standardized frameworks to ensure consistency and credibility. Guo, S., & Andersson, P. (2021).

### **The Importance of Institutional and Policy Support**

The discussion emphasizes that institutional commitment and supportive policies are critical to the success of RPL programs. Institutions with strong leadership, adequate resources, and clear regulatory frameworks are more likely to implement effective RPL systems. At the policy level, government support plays a vital role in establishing national standards, providing funding, and promoting awareness. Collaboration between educational institutions, industry, and government is essential to ensure that RPL programs remain relevant and responsive to labor market needs. Keavy, J., & Chakroun, B. (2022).

### **Implications for Educational Practice and Workforce Development**

The effectiveness of RPL program management has significant implications for both education and workforce development. By recognizing prior learning, institutions can produce graduates who are more competent, experienced, and ready to meet industry demands. Furthermore, RPL contributes to social inclusion by providing opportunities for individuals who may not have access to traditional education pathways. This supports broader goals of equity and lifelong learning. Raciti, M., Tham, A., & Dale, J. (2024).

### **Future Directions for RPL Development**

The discussion suggests several directions for improving RPL effectiveness:

- a. Developing standardized assessment frameworks
- b. Enhancing training and certification for assessors
- c. Integrating digital technologies to streamline processes
- d. Increasing awareness and outreach programs
- e. Strengthening collaboration with industry stakeholders. de Paor, C. (2024).

### **These efforts will help maximize the potential of RPL as a transformative tool in education.**

Overall, the discussion confirms that effective management of RPL programs plays a crucial role in improving student competence, enhancing learning efficiency, and supporting inclusive education. However, addressing existing challenges and strengthening institutional and policy frameworks are essential to ensure the sustainability and broader impact of RPL implementation. Mottais, É., Dorceus, S., & Bélisle, R. (2024).

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the management of Prior Learning Recognition (RPL) programs plays a significant role in improving student competence in higher education. Effective RPL implementation enables the recognition of knowledge, skills, and experiences acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal learning pathways. As a

result, students are able to integrate prior learning with new academic content, leading to enhanced cognitive, practical, and professional competencies. The study also confirms that well-managed RPL programs contribute to greater efficiency in the learning process by reducing redundancy, shortening study duration, and lowering educational costs. Furthermore, RPL enhances student motivation and confidence, as their previous experiences are formally acknowledged and valued within the academic system.

However, the effectiveness of RPL program management is highly dependent on several key factors, including institutional commitment, the availability of standardized assessment procedures, the competence of assessors, and the presence of clear regulatory frameworks. Despite its benefits, the implementation of RPL still faces various challenges, such as inconsistent practices across institutions, limited awareness among stakeholders, and inadequate administrative and technological support systems. Overall, RPL is a valuable educational strategy that supports lifelong learning, promotes inclusive education, and aligns academic outcomes with labor market needs. Nevertheless, continuous improvements in management and policy are required to maximize its effectiveness and sustainability.

### Recommendations

1. **Strengthening Institutional Management;** Educational institutions should enhance their management systems by developing clear guidelines, standardized procedures, and transparent assessment mechanisms for RPL implementation.
2. **Standardization of Assessment Processes;** There is a need to establish uniform standards and criteria for assessing prior learning to ensure consistency, fairness, and credibility across institutions.
3. **Capacity Building for Assessors;** Institutions should provide regular training and certification programs for assessors to improve their competence in evaluating prior learning effectively and objectively.
4. **Enhancing Policy and Regulatory Support;** Governments and regulatory bodies should develop comprehensive policies and frameworks to support the implementation of RPL at national and institutional levels.
5. **Improving Administrative and Technological Systems;** The use of digital platforms and information systems should be optimized to streamline RPL processes, including documentation, assessment, and certification.
6. **Increasing Awareness and Socialization;** Awareness campaigns should be conducted to inform students, educators, and stakeholders about the benefits and procedures of RPL programs.
7. **Strengthening Collaboration with Industry;** Collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders should be enhanced to ensure that recognized competencies are relevant to labor market demands.
8. **Expanding Access and Inclusivity;** RPL programs should be designed to reach diverse groups of learners, including adult learners, workers, and individuals from non-traditional educational backgrounds.

By strengthening management practices, policy frameworks, and stakeholder collaboration, RPL programs can become a powerful tool in improving student competence, promoting lifelong learning, and enhancing the overall quality and relevance of education.

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