UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Thesis Presented for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Adult Education

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Knowledge Claims: How can different types of knowledge be identified, documented, and assessed in RPL applications of RPL credits? Comparison of two case studies at a South African vocational/professional higher educational institution (V/PHEI)

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May 2025

Declaration of originality

I, the undersigned, declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution for assessment purposes. Furthermore, I have acknowledged all sources used and cited in the list of references.

This research project emerged directly as a result of the development of the concept of a 'knowledge claim' and the findings in my Master's thesis. The research presented here for the Doctoral Degree is located in the field of professional practice and represents an entirely independent study. The thesis is, therefore, presented as a coherent study as per the requirements of the degree.

Frederika Hilde de Graaff

Signature:

Date: May 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my supervisor, Linda Cooper, for your patience, constructive feedback, and critique, chapter after chapter, throughout the time it took me to complete my thesis – a special thank you.

I want to thank my colleagues in Academic Development for their support, interest in my work, and regular questioning about how my studies were going.

This study would not have been possible without the academic staff who were willing to undertake RPL in their respective academic departments and the administrative staff who supported the process. A special thank you goes to these colleagues, who asked critical questions and presented me with situations and scenarios that helped build our collective experience and knowledge about RPL.

A special thank you goes to my step-daughter and the many cups of coffee we drank together; she listened to my thinking about my thesis and the steps I was taking during this journey.

I want to thank my parents for always emphasizing the importance of education. I regret that they are no longer here to witness this journey with me. My brother was present, and his support was invaluable to me – he and our parents will continue to live in my heart and my memories.

I want to fulfil the wishes of the family of the person I named 'Nala' in my thesis. His family asked me to reveal his real name, Mr. Pieter Willemse. Pieter successfully gained RPL into the Advanced Diploma: Architectural Technology and was granted credits for two subjects, as explained in Chapter 6. He completed the first six months of his studies and was top of his class. Unfortunately, he passed away in August 2021 due to COVID-19. He had permitted me to use his work, but his untimely passing prevented me from interviewing him. It is with a heavy heart that I write this paragraph because his passing was not only a loss to his family, but to the architectural fraternity.

DEDICATED TO MY BROTHER CAREL-JOHAN DE GRAAFF

Abstract

TITLE :'Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Knowledge Claims: How can different types of knowledge be identified, documented, and assessed in RPL applications of RPL credits? Comparison of two case studies at a South African vocational/professional higher educational institution (V/PHEI).'

The purpose of this study was to analyse the inner workings of RPL in the case of awarding credits for subjects within a qualification via RPL. For this study, RPL for credits requires the applicant to present informal and non-formal learning from the workplace in a manner that is recognisable within a higher education context.

This qualitative study employed a case study methodology to highlight the uniqueness of two RPL applications: Human Resources Management and Architectural Technology. The RPL process at the institution is qualification-specific, with its RPL processes and requirements tailored to the qualification and its associated profession. Drawing on the concepts of different knowledge structures and disciplinary boundaries (Bernstein, 1999, 2000), knowledge from the formal qualifications was analysed, and the nature of the boundary in each knowledge field was explored. All documentation from the RPL process was analysed, and all academics involved were interviewed.

To facilitate the RPL application, the academic departments changed the learning outcomes (LO) from the formal curriculum into RPL LOs for each qualification. A taxonomy based on the work of Anderson and Krathwohl (2002), consisting of two fields, type of knowledge and complexity of knowledge, was adopted as a conceptual tool to analyse and compare both sets of LOs.

This study demonstrates that workplace knowledge can successfully be recognised for credits in an academic programme, under particular conditions. One enabling factor was that the knowledge structures of the disciplines concerned were found to be hybrid and segmented in nature.

A further enabling factor was identified by drawing on the concept of 'chain of recontextualisation' (Evans et al., 2009). At least three interlinked processes of recontextualisation were identified: Firstly, LOs from the formal curriculum were recontextualised into the RPL programme takes place; secondly, the RPL candidates recontextualised their workplace knowledge in the course of their portfolio development; and thirdly, the academics – in assessing the RPL application, interpreted (recontextualised) the evidence of workplace knowledge presented.

The theoretical and knowledge contribution of this thesis includes that RPL for credit is not solely a process of Recognition of Prior Learning but also a process of Recontextualisation of Prior Learning (R-PL). The academics involved in the study adjusted and changed the learning outcomes of the formal programme for the purposes of the RPL programme. This demonstrates that selected learning outcomes of a formal programme need to be analysed and modified before an RPL process is undertaken. A further contribution is that this processes of recontextualisation points to the importance of a shared repertoire between the RPL assessors and the RPL applicants and highlights the significance of shared tacit knowledge (tacit-to-tacit knowledge) between RPL applicant and assessor within a specific field of expertise.

The study demonstrates that granting credits via RPL is a complex process that requires a deep understanding of the curriculum, the workplace, the profession, and the legal framework within which the qualifications and RPL operate in South Africa. The conclusion supports Cooper and Ralph's (2016) view of RPL as a Specialised Pedagogy.

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List of Acronyms

AD	Advanced Diploma
AL 4	Architectural Literacy 4
AP 4	Architectural Practice 4
AT	Architectural Technology
BCoE	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
SABPP	South African Board in People Practices
CHE	Council of Higher Education
D	Diploma
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HRM	Human Resource Management
IR 1	Industrial Relations 1
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LRA	Labour Relations Act
PrArchT	Professional Architectural Technologist (Holder of a Diploma in Architectural Technology (D:AT)
PrSArch T	Professional Senior Architectural Technology (Holder of an Advanced Diploma in Architectural Technology (AD:AD)
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SACAP	South African Council for Architectural Professional
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
UoT	University of Technology
V/PHEI	Vocational and Professional Higher Education Institution

Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale for the Study

1.1 What this Study is All About

This thesis focuses on the recognition of a person's knowledge gained through workplace learning via a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. This study explores how an academic institution is formally acknowledged outside the formal educational system through informal and non-formal learning (see Section 1.5.3 for a definition of the difference between the two terms).

RPL provides an alternative route of access to a qualification and/or granting credits within a qualification. The granting of credits[1] is the focus of this study.

I use two case studies to analyse the inner workings of the RPL process when evaluating a person's knowledge against specific academic subjects and the learning outcomes of these subjects. I analyse how informal and non-formal learning knowledge can be recognised within higher education.

This chapter sets the stage for this study, and I explain what RPL and outlining my key research questions. I provide a brief history of RPL's international development. Next, I explore the ongoing evolution of RPL since the mid-1900s, highlighting its increasing focus on lifelong learning and its incorporation into qualification frameworks in various countries worldwide. In conclusion, I present an overview of the remainder of this study by summarizing each chapter.

I am an RPL practitioner, overseeing and coordinating RPL at the research site. I have been involved with developing RPL as a practice at the research site since 2005; therefore, this study is a participatory form of research into the RPL process at the vocational/professional higher education institution (V/PHEI) where RPL is qualification-specific. I explain how academic departments develop plans for and implement the RPL process, for a specific qualification. This thesis reflects much of my own prior experiential learning as it took place over time, and what I and the RPL practitioners in the institution learned.

[1] In this thesis the word 'credit(s)' is used. The author does acknowledge that in terms of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) policy on RPL, CAT and Assessment (2016) the word 'exemptions' is preferred because in South Africa, NQF credits are not awarded to the candidate if exemption(s) are granted, resulting in a qualification awarded with less NQF credits as is required. Whether this practice is correct or fair is a point of discussion and disagreement amongst RPL practitioners in the country. Personally, I am of the opinion that the credits should be award, because the knowledge required for a specific subject is recognised, therefore I opted to use the word 'credits(s)' in this study.

My starting assumption is that different types of knowledge exist in the workplace and in higher education. Through RPL, these various types of knowledge can be considered and compared, allowing for an exploration of the recognition process within higher education. However, how exactly does this take place? This study explores the inner workings of this process of comparison and recognition. The research question focuses on how different types of knowledge can be identified, documented and assessed in an RPL application in a higher education context in application to obtain subject credits for informal and non-formal learning.

1.2 Research Question of the Thesis

Previous research into the influence of different types of knowledge on RPL (Harris & Cooper, 2013; Harris & Wihak, 2017), has shown that the influence can be significant and careful consideration should be given to the types of knowledge involved. Acknowledging this led me to the following main research question:

> *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Knowledge Claims: How can different types of knowledge be identified, documented, and assessed in RPL applications of RPL credits? Comparison of two case studies at a South African vocational/professional higher educational institution (V/PHEI).*

1.2.1 *Sub-Questions*

Exploring the relationship between knowledge developed in non-formal and informal professional learning and disciplinary knowledge leads to the following sub-questions guiding this study:

1. What types of knowledge gained through informal and/or non-formal learning in the workplace can be recognised as equivalent to learning in an academic programme?

2. How is knowledge from the curriculum of specific qualifications for an RPL process reflected in the associated learning outcomes?

I used two RPL cases, in two different qualifications, to answer the questions I had set for this research. One case study is in the field of Human Resources Management (HRM), where the applicant was granted credits for one subject,[2] Industrial Relations 1 in the Diploma of Human Resources. The other case study is in the field of Architectural Technology, where the applicant

[2] The word 'subject' refers to a part of the curriculum consisting of not more than 300 notional hours, 30 credits as per the NQF in SA. Each subject is part of a qualification.

was granted credits for two subjects (Architectural Literacy and Architectural Practice, and the Advanced Diploma: Architectural Technology).

Chapter 3 addresses the international and national research literature on the theory and practice of RPL. In the following section give an overview of the development of RPL internationally, before focusing on the development of RPL in South Africa (SA).

1.3 Development of RPL Internationally

The development of RPL internationally can be seen as a metamorphosis of practice and theory over the past 75 years or so. The emphasis has been on lifelong learning, social justice, and in South Africa (SA), redress of inequalities created due to apartheid. With the development of qualification frameworks and the use of learning outcomes and articulation, more emphasis has been placed on RPL. In the 21st century, a growing body of research has attempted to theorise RPL. This will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.3.1 *Origins of RPL*

At the end of the Second World War, returning service personnel entered academic institutions with "clearly academically equivalent knowledge" that had been acquired through life experiences, informal and non-formal learning, and work in and outside the military (Michelson & Mandell, 2004:2-3,9). By the 1960s and 1970s, universities had initiated processes of documenting and recognising this learning *(*Michelson & Mandell, 2004*).* In the US, the term ' Prior Learning Assessment' (PLA)[3] was developed to broaden access to higher education. In those early days, PLA practitioners observed that RPL (PLA) students were regarded as 'outsiders', stretching the boundaries of campus to include new places to learn such as work, home, artist studios, and the streets (Andersson & Fejes, 2013:406-407).

In South Africa (SA), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (the term preferred in the South African context) has its origins in social justice, in an effort made by academic institutions to reach out to constituencies that had been underserviced or entirely excluded from formal education under apartheid (Michelson & Mandell, 2004:2-3, 9). The belief underpinning RPL is that learning from outside a formal setting should not be repeated in a formal setting (Ralphs, 2016:1).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the changing socio-economic and cultural conditions influenced and altered education worldwide. RPL became important because 'interpretations of learning (had)

[3] Recognition of prior Learning (RPL) is referred to by different names such a 'Prior Learning Assessment' (PLA) and Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) (Andersson and Harris, 2006) or Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) (VPL Biennale 2019). In this study the term RPL is used.

become extended' (Harris, 2006:2-3), enabling adults to receive recognition for current knowledge, contributing to employability and the development of society. Globalisation resulted in changes in the modes of economic production and the advancement of information and communication technologies which benefited some, but also increased the levels of inequality world-wide (Ralphs, 2016:3). It became important for workers to keep their knowledge up to date, constantly learning either via the workplace or through formal institutions.

1.3.2 *Lifelong Learning and RPL*

RPL is seen as an integrated part of lifelong learning (LLL), although RPL is not used often enough within LLL to recognise the knowledge a person has. According to Michelson (2006:9-10) and Andersson et al. (2016:406-407), RPL is part of LLL, supporting all forms of learning and accommodating the ever-changing work environment (Joosten-Ten Brinke et al., 2008), unemployment and underemployment, informal employment, and unpaid work.

In this perspective, the emphasis is placed on the development of the knowledge society; 'lifelong learning policies become part of the economic discourse, with economic growth and employability as central issues'. The European Union has instructed member countries to complete the implementation process of national lifelong learning strategies, with particular attention to the validation of non-formal and informal learning as well as guidance (Fejes, 2021, in Andersson et al., 2013:407).

Supporting RPL is the notion of LLL becoming part of a global focus on continuing education to enhance the knowledge of adults. Two different interpretations of LLL have become key discussion points in individuals' understanding of the development of the economy's resources and the need for a competitive edge. This interpretation supports globalisation. The second interpretation is that LLL promotes the betterment of society, improving democracy and citizenship (Walters, 2006:10).

In the first decade of the 2000s, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducted research on the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) worldwide. Its findings were that the implementation of RPL was uneven worldwide, with some countries and institutions in these countries being more successful than others. The report is written from the perspective of RPL being an integral part of LLL (OECD, 2010:36,38,44).

Ralphs refers to the result of uneven development of globalisation as a paradox (Ralphs, 2016:4): a small group of highly skilled individuals is economically mobile, while a much larger group of individuals lacks access to further and higher education to improve their skills. This paradox has been recognised in educational policy, practice, and in the RPL policy. Where

greater emphasis is now being placed on lifelong learning and expanding educational access to provide the skills required at a global level. However, this has not necessarily broadened access, resulting in LLL not guaranteeing greater equity *(*Cooper & Ralphs, 2016:7).

To develop greater equity in education and support the mobility of individuals across the globe, international organisations such as UNESCO emphasise lifelong learning and recognition of informal learning in their documentation and work. In 2012, the 'UNESCO Guideline on the recognition, validation and accreditation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning' was launched.

UNESCO supports the second interpretation of LLL, leading on from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically number 4, which mandates '… inclusive and equitable quality education [and] to promote LLL for all'. Interpreting LLL as providing education for all requires LLL to be more inclusive than merely for economic advancement. LLL should include training and empowerment about health, economic growth, sustainable development and environmental awareness (Walters & Watters, 2017:230-231). Supporting this view is basic to adult education and RPL.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) offered a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for RPL practitioners in 2022. The MOOC consisted of seven units covering topics such as the importance of RPL, aspects such as legislation impacting RPL, roles and responsibilities within the RPL process, the potential challenges that RPL practitioners can face and assessment and quality. The ILO's support of RPL through a training programme indicates the importance of RPL globally and LLL (ILO, 2018).

1.2.3 *Inclusion of RPL in Qualification Frameworks*

Towards the end of the 20th century, qualification frameworks started to develop in various countries and regions, supported by regional agreements such as the Bologna Agreement in the European Union. The Bologna Agreement (1999), signed by EU members, paved the way for developing a qualification framework in Europe by promoting: '[the] establishment of a system of credits … promoting student mobility' based on 'a system of easily readable and comparable degrees'. Currently, 35 countries in the EU have RPL regulations oriented towards the general and technical vocational education and training (TVET) education sectors (ILO, 2018:35).

Following the Bologna Agreement, meetings were held in Prague and Berlin, resulting in two communiques giving guidance on developing and implementing the agreement. The Berlin Communiqué (2003) states the reasons for developing a qualification framework in the European Higher Education system and what the qualifications should consist of:

> Ministers encourage the member states to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competencies and profile (Berlin Communiqué, 2003:7).

This extract from the Berlin Communiqué is important because it makes mention of learning outcomes specifically: 'to accommodate a diversity of individuals, academic and labour markets' needs' (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). The Berlin Communiqué points out the importance of LLL: 'to enhance the possibilities for lifelong learning at higher education level, including the recognition of prior learning …. [including] a wide range of flexible [learning] paths …. … making appropriate use of credits' (2003:13).

1.3 Rationale for the Study

In the early days of RPL, it was interpreted as an assessment-led practice to determine 'the validity of equivalence claims without risking the integrity of academic standards' (Ralphs, 2016:2). Portfolio development became an assessment tool many higher education institutions (HEIs) use, especially to establish equivalence to learning outcomes (LOs) of a specific academic subject. This lengthy and complicated process highlights the 'learning and power that are invested in these practices – practices that endorse existing academic standards as the benchmark for establishing the credit value of experiential learning' (Ralphs, 2016:2).

1.3.1 *Focus on Learning Outcomes*

The challenge that I, as a researcher and RPL practitioner at the V/PHEI in question, have been thinking about and addressing is how knowledge from different contexts can be recognised. The RPL process takes learning from the workplace and/or a professional field into account and attempts to recognise it within the discipline associated with the profession within the associated qualification.

This study examines how RPL is used to recognise knowledge and skills gained in informal or non-formal contexts, as an RPL practitioner. It focuses on learning outcomes, particularly a detailed consideration of what forms or types of knowledge are found in the learning outcomes (LOs). This study unpacks the LOs into concepts[4] taught in the formal setting and examines

[4] The topics, concepts, ideas, theories, formulas, qualification specific language (repertoire) (Bernstein 2000) or as Anderson and Krathwohl (2002) refer to it, 'educational matter', will be referred to as 'concepts' in this study. (Explained in Chapter 4)

the process where they are compared against LOs that were changed and adapted for the RPL process.

The use of learning outcomes in a qualification framework enables RPL claims to be assessed against these outcomes. However, the question arises as to how knowledge is gained outside of formal education, how learning outcomes are interpreted, and how learning outcomes in the formal program compare to those for the RPL application. What are the learning topics/concepts included in the curriculum and, by implication, the qualification? I examine how RPL practitioners in the V/PHEI interpret these learning outcomes and how they apply them in the RPL process. Cooper and Ralphs (2016:157) mention that 'for academic staff, it means a process of reformulating their curriculum standards into more visible statements'. However, what is not addressed is *what* the learning outcomes of a specific subject are about. A review of the RPL research literature in Chapter 3 reveals an insufficient focus on, as well as a lack of detailed analysis of, the role of learning outcomes in the RPL process and the topics or concepts encompassed by these learning outcomes.

1.4 Focus on Knowledge Differentiation

During the years I have been working in RPL, I have noticed that the granting of credits via RPL is easier in some fields and qualifications than in others. Knowing the approach of Basil Bernstein's work during the late 1990s and early 2000s (specifically in 1999 and 2000) this situation led me to speculate that some types of knowledge within some qualifications lend themselves more to RPL than other types of knowledge or qualifications and that different disciplines and professions approach RPL differently than others.

The process of 'translation' of learning across different contexts is at the heart of the RPL process. It is at the core of research into RPL and is the focus of much theorisation of the practice. Theorisation of RPL has developed slowly in the past, but research conducted over the past decade has led to its development and expansion, particularly in South Africa.

The focus on 'knowledge differentiation' has meant a move away from RPL being seen solely as an assessment process (Nyatanga et al.,1998), to one that involves mediation of prior learning to the requirements of academia, with the help of tutors or facilitators, leading to an assessment of the knowledge presented by the RPL applicant. However, leading on from the various interpretations of Bernstein's work, highlights how knowledge differentiation has become an essential element in theorising RPL' Space within which different knowledge and learning practices are brought into critical dialogue around the content, methods and evaluation rules that decide what knowledge gets recognised and how evidence of such knowledge will be presented and assessed' (Cooper, 2016:29).

A generally accepted notion in RPL is that the interaction between the applicant and the academic makes RPL a contested field or space with different interpretations of the knowledge that is being translated or interpreted. The RPL applicant may have a different interpretation of the knowledge from that of the academic.

In this study, I focus on the space of contestation within specific disciplines and associated professions. I will show that the degree of contestation depends on the types of knowledge involved in the curriculum and workplace or, stated differently, in the academic discipline and the profession.

What is contested in RPL? In this study, I will show that writers such Harris (2000) and Pokorny (2017 and 2023) and especially Cooper and Ralphs (2016) make a valid point that the RPL process should be a negotiated process 'of reconciling the difference between learning developed through experience or practice and learning developed through learning formally' (Harris, 2000:26-27). Cooper and Ralphs (2016), especially with the concept of RPL as a 'Specialised Pedagogy,' it provides a theoretical space to analyse the extent of differences in learning in the workplace versus higher education. The concept of boundary crossing and navigating spaces between different types of knowledge is vital in RPL. Using the concept of 'boundary pedagogy' Cooper, Harris and Ralphs (2017:17) use this approach to illustrate that experiential/socially valuable knowledge (prior or current) can relate or link to specialised/formal academic knowledge, through the use of a form of pedagogy through which cultural and political boundaries can be navigated and transcended to enable articulation between these different types of knowledge (CHE, 2021:45).

Harris and Cooper (2013) as well as Harris and Wihak (2017) investigated a similar question at two different research sites. They conclude that qualifications in the humanities involving horizontal knowledge structures[5] (Bernstein 1999) were more receptive to RPL than qualifications in science-related fields. Harris and Wihak (2017:697) point out that the nature of knowledge is seldom discussed; assumptions are made that 'boundaries are porous, and knowledge can easily be transferred'. As I conclude in this study, Harris and Wihak (2017) point out that a process of recontextualisation is sometimes required in conjunction with or as part of a specialised pedagogy, as explained by Cooper and Ralphs (2016), to bring the two forms of knowledge together. In this study, the concept of recontextualisation is extensively used, based on Bernstein's (2000) interpretation of the concept and how it manifests in what Bernstein calls the 'pedagogic device' (Bernstein,2000), the curriculum development process.

[5] The concept of a horizontal knowledge structure is explained in Chapter 4.

Cooper and Ralphs (2016) adjusted the pedagogic device and developed a conceptualisation of RPL as ‘specialised pedagogy’.

In this study, my focus is on the granting of credits, also referred to as 'exemptions via RPL', for specific subjects based on specific qualifications. This study uses the word ‘credit(s)’. Chapter 3 indicates that little research has been done on granting credits for non-formal and informal learning. I wanted to know more about the different types of knowledge within a discipline, how RPL as a practice can best establish whether credits should be granted and what sort of reasoning the academic assessor’s 's decision is based.[6]

1.5 Overview of this thesis

Chapter 2 - This chapter focuses on the development of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in higher education in South Africa. The content focuses on developing the country's National Qualification Framework (NQF). I explain how the implementation of the NQF, including RPL, was done at the research site.

Chapter 3 - Literature Review: In this Chapter, I review the empirical research conducted on RPL. I also unpack RPL theorising from the perspective of different paradigms, highlighting the theories drawn in my study.

Chapter 4 - Conceptual Framework: In this chapter, I analyse theoretical frameworks that informed my research questions and analytic framework. I explain my use of Bernstein's work (1999, 2000) to unpack different types of knowledge and develop my framework. My framework is based on the concept of recontextualisation using the work of Barnett (2006) and the ‘chain of recontextualisation’ as developed by Evans et al. (2009).

Chapter 5 - Methodology: I use a qualitative research method, with case study analysis, to evaluate two RPL Applications. In this chapter, I discuss the research design of the study, data collection, and how I went about analysing the data and findings. The research design consists of two phases: Document analysis, followed by interviews with academics. I explain how I adopted the Revised Taxonomy of Anderson and Krathwohl (2002), to plot and analyse the learning outcomes of the formal programme as well as those of the RPL Programme.. In addition, I explain the steps I took to ensure the anonymity and validity of my study.

Chapter 6 - A Human Resource Management Case Study is the first of two case studies. The case study involves the subject Industrial Relations 1 (IR 1), which is part of the Diploma in Human Resource Management.

[6] If credits can’t be granted and the decision is based on sound reasoning , that should be clearly explained to all the stakeholders. This issue is not the focus of this study.

Chapter 7 - A Case Study in Architectural Technology is the second case study. It concerns the granting of credits via RPL in two subjects, Architectural Literacy 4 and Architectural Practice 4.

Both case studies consist of an analysis of the profession itself and of the curriculum with a specific focus on the subjects for which credits were granted; an analysis of RPL requirements as stipulated in the guidelines to support the candidates; an analysis of the RPL application itself and how the academic staff assessed it; and a theorisation of the findings.

Chapter 8 – Discussion and Conclusion: In this chapter, I summarise the analysis of my findings, link these findings back to the existing research literature and draw conclusions to answer my research questions These highlight the importance of RPL being interpreted and implemented as a Specialised Pedagogy, focusing on recontextualisation learning outcomes between the formal and RPL programmes.

Chapter 2: Development of Higher Education and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in South Africa

2.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, I give a historical overview of the development of post-school education in South Africa. Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, many changes have occurred in the country. I explain the establishment, development and reviewed in 2008 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa. Secondly, I discuss the inclusion of RPL in the NQF and its reasons for and importance. Leading on from the development of the NQF, I discuss the legislation and the CHE policy on RPL, credit accumulation and transfer (CAT), and assessment. In the last part of this Chapter, I discuss the site of research and the nature of the institution involved.

2.2 Development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Focus on RPL

Aiming to address the social and structural inequalities caused by colonialism and apartheid, the democratically elected government set out in 1994 to reform the educational sector in South Africa. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established through the South African Qualifications Act No. 58 of 1995 (Republic of South Africa, 1995). It makes provision for the establishment of a framework for all qualifications in the country, which is administrated and maintained by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The National Qualification Framework (NQF) was created with the promulgation of the SAQA Act in 1995 (Isaacs, 2010:1-3).

The framework is a mechanism to address past injustices and to develop an integrated system that is accessible to everyone and enables quality learning, transparency, and mobility along learning-and-work pathways (Bolton & Samuels, 2016:21).

> ‘The imperative for the transformation and restructuring of the higher education system is informed by the need to realise three fundamental objectives which are necessary to achieve the vision of a transformed, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic higher education system’, as outlined in the Education White Paper 3:A Framework for the Transformation of Higher Education’ (July 1997) (Department of Education (DoE), 2002).

In the early 2000s, the implementation of RPL was supported by two documents developed by SAQA at the time: ‘*Recognition of prior learning in the context of the South African NQF*

(2002)' and '*Guidelines and criteria for the Implementation of the recognition of prior learning* (2004)'. These documents were developed through a consultative and research-driven process aimed at 'the development of criteria and mechanisms to recognise prior learning to admit non-traditional students to higher education institutions' (SAQA, 2004:11).

2.2.1 *Review of the NQF and the Development of the Sub-frameworks within the NQF*

In 2002, the then Department of Education/Department of Labour/Government acknowledged that the centralised standard-setting system of the NQF governing all branches of education was problematic. Debates raged around whether there should be 'an integrated system of education and training' or 'an integrated approach to it', with the latter dominating' (Bolton & Samuels, 2016:22), and the NQF Act (No. 67 of 2008) was subsequently promulgated (Isaacs, 2010:4). Referred to as the 'NQF 2008', whereby the architecture changed from a single framework to three integrated sub-frameworks:

Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF): This is the sub-framework on which higher education degrees and professional diplomas, including this study, are registered. The Council for Higher Education (CHE) is the quality council for Higher Education, covering Levels 5 to 10**.**

General and Further Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF): This framework covers post-school and school levels of the NQF, specifically levels 1 to 4. The Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training is known as Umalusi for this sub-framework.

Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF): This caters to qualifications of a vocational nature, with the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) being the quality council covering the T/VET sector.

The sub-frameworks overlap at certain levels of the NQF. (See Appendix 1 for details) these overlap, making it possible for learning pathways and articulation to be flexible, including vertical, horizontal and diagonal pathways, enabling learners or students to move from one sub-framework to another. These learning pathways usually make provision for Credit

Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)[7], but this can also be enhanced through RPL, bringing informal and non-formal learning into the formal setting of the NQF.

The CHE highlights the importance of knowledge configuration, articulation, and mobility across the NQF's sub-frameworks, especially from vocational to higher education. In other words, knowledge configuration forms an integral part of curriculum development as designed by an HEI. Each qualification is required to indicate the type of qualification and the area of specialisation referred to as a 'Qualifier', which indicates which discipline or field the qualification contributes to, whether academic, vocational, occupational or professional, type and special purpose of the qualification including the body of knowledge, theories, concepts and methods particular to a specific discipline or field of study (SAQA, 2023:6).

This study explores the interaction between the knowledge gained in the workplace, as stipulated in regulations as set by professional bodies (details are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7), and what is included in the formal curriculum, for which Higher Education can give recognition for learning in the workplace.

2.2.2 *Legislation and Policy on RPL*

The implementation of the National Qualifications Act No. 68 of 2008 (Republic of South Africa, 2008) led to several pieces of legislation promulgated by the government which impacted RPL and provided a framework within which RPL practitioners must operate:

National Policy and Criteria for Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning Policy 2014, amended in 2019. Referred to as the 'RPL implementation policy', it places responsibility for quality assurance and benchmarking on SAQA and the three quality councils, CHE, Umalusi and the QCTO, in line with the three sub-frameworks of the NQF. This differentiation creates scope for different types of RPL processes within the context of each qualification sub-framework.

In August 2016, in line with the RPL Implementation policy, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) published policies on the **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), and Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the CHE policy)**. The purpose of the CHE policy was 'to develop and facilitate the implementation

[7] Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) refers to the process whereby formal learning from another HEI (accredited) is recognised by another HEI as having sufficient overlap to grant exemptions for specific subject(s). RPL refers to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning obtained outside the HEI, which through a mediation and assessment process can be evaluated for either access to or credits (exemptions) in a specifical qualification. Both these forms of recognition promote accumulation and learning pathways across all the sub frameworks of the NQF. (CHE Policy, 2016)

of RPL across the higher education sector', providing direction and guidelines for a dynamic and evolving system of RPL that will promote lifelong learning and protect quality and standards of qualifications and higher education institutions (CHE, 2016:v).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Coordination Policy (2016). This policy provides for the professionalisation of the RPL practice as a profession and sets out the responsibilities of a National Coordinating Mechanism, which is yet to be established. The different designations, roles, and responsibilities of RPL practitioners are spelled out in this piece of legislation.

With the above legislation and CHE Policy in place, the interpretation of RPL as more than an assessment process became part of RPL implementation. This interpretation of RPL is reflected in the definition of the CHE policy (CHE, 2016:6). It is also reflected in the definition of RPL as stipulated by the CHE:

> RPL is more than an assessment process but it is specialised pedagogical process that also includes 'translation' (inverted commas in original text) of informal and non-formal bodies of knowledge into their formal and structured equivalents. RPL will require close consideration of the associated epistemologies and specifically of the differentiation between experiential and academic knowledge and hence of the areas and levels to which RPL can appropriately be applied (CHE Policy: Point 4.1.2, 2016:7).

The definition encapsulates the complex relationships between different forms of knowledge and their associated learning pathways, of which RPL is a part. Based on this departure point, a Ministerial Task Team (MTT) on RPL[8] highlighted that RPL practices can mediate these complex relationships constructively and emancipatory.

The approach of the CHE aligns with the interpretation by Cooper and Ralphs (2016), who view RPL as a mediation space where informal and non-formal learning can be presented (made visible), interpreted (mediated), and evaluated (assessed and moderated) in a formal setting.

Three types of learning are accommodated (RPL Implementation Act, 2019): formal, non-formal, and informal.

Learning at a formal institution such as a university – referred to as '*formal learning'* –is part of a formal programme, with explicit entry requirements, learning objectives, and formative

[8] The Ministerial Task Team on RPL was appointed by the Minister of Higher Education in 2012, and commissioned by the SA government to make recommendations on the implementation of RPL. Its report includes a literature review as well.

and summative assessments resulting in a formal certification (this form of learning is not RPL, but CAT).

Learning occurs outside formal education, including short courses, workshops, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and/or in-house training – referred to as *'non-formal learning'*.

Learning takes place in a variety of ways, such as self-study, reading up about a topic, solving a problem and learning from the problem-solving process, being part of a community of practice, someone providing mentorship in the workplace, applying standard operating procedure or legislation-related regulations, referred to as *'informal learning'*.

2.2.3 *Specific RPL Principles contained in the Council of Higher Education's RPL Policy*

The legislation discussed above provides a framework for the country. There are several key points that influence the implementation of RPL, specifically the Policy on RPL, CAT, and Assessment from the CHE (2016). These include the limitation of granting 50% of qualification via RPL and/or CAT, that RPL should be qualification-specific, and that RPL is a mediation process. The implications of these points will become more evident through this study.

The CHE (2016:7,9) points out clearly that RPL is 'context-specific' in terms of institution, discipline, programmes, and level. The assessment should take place within the academic department because the disciplinary expertise of the academic staff members is responsible for assessing and moderating RPL applications.

Before an RPL process can start, the recognition needs to be determined. In the case of the research site, the qualification that an RPL applicant seeks will determine 'what' recognition is being sought. In the case of granting credits, the ‘what’ is based on the *learning outcomes* of the specific subject, that describe what a student should know about the subject by implication, what the RPL applicant is required to know for credits to be awarded.

Regarding the assessment criteria, the CHE (2016, 9) stipulates that 'RPL should not simply *replicate* the assessment criteria of mainstream study but should seek to accommodate the knowledge and skills gained in practice outside the formal educational setting. This clause in the CHE policy is important because it requires the implementers of RPL to recognise that the assessment criteria associated with learning outcomes should not duplicate those of the mainstream study. This study will illustrate how this can be accommodated within RPL.

The credit transfer for formal learning and recognition of prior learning (RPL) is limited to 50% of a qualification. In other words, a student who is granted either type or both types of credit

must register for and complete the remaining subjects at the institution, including final year subjects, before graduating. This regulation by the CHE imposes a significant constraint on RPL (Manthashe & Nkonki, 2019).

2.3 The Site of Research and the Nature of the Institution

Aiming to address social and structural inequalities, the democratically elected government in 1994 set out to reform the educational sector in South Africa, including the higher education sector. The Education White Paper on Education and Training (1995) announced far-reaching changes to the higher education landscape in the country (DoE, 2002). The changes included the mergers of many higher education institutions, creating fewer institutions of higher education but not decreasing the number of delivery sites.

The V/PHEI[9], where this study took place, was established as a University of Technology (UoT) in 2005 due to the merger of the two Technikons[10] in the region (DoE, 2002:16). The newly created V/PHEI continued to offer the qualifications already offered, which had a strong technology focus, providing specific skills and knowledge to the job market. At the same time, the new approach in higher education provided an opportunity to formally establish institutions, leading to professional body recognition and international comparability and recognition. Although in name the UoTs were established in 2005, it would take many more years before the nature of the new universities was established, including a review of the qualifications offered, resulting in substantial changes.

At a UoT, all learning programmes and research projects are related to applied fields and/or professions. The associated profession is a defining factor in all academic activities. Some of the characteristics of a UoT are primarily concerned with the development of vocational/professional education (Brook, 2000, in SATN, 2008:16). The curricula are also developed around the graduate profiles defined by industry and professions. And lastly, the focus is on strategic research and applied research in professional practice. The focus on research is a change for universities of technology, in addition to the focus, on legacy institutions.

The qualifications at the research site prepare students for specific professions such as **HR Practitioner, Senior Architectural Technologist,**[11] Accounting Officer, Biomedical Technician, Paramedic, and Paralegal, among other professional careers. Professional bodies

[9] This study takes place at a UoT, the name Vocational/Professional Higher Education Institution (V/PHEI) was chosen as pseudonym for the organisation.
[10] A Technikon was a vocational and semi-professional Institution created during the apartheid years. The qualifications offered did not lead to professional registration at the time.
[11] Professions in bold are the focus of this study.

of these qualifications accommodate graduates from the V/PHEI within specific categories of membership and registration.

I explain what a UoT is, to provide background to my study, because the qualifications used in this study lead to specific kind of professional registration and careers. The qualifications offered are designed to fulfil the requirements of future employers and the professional body associated with the qualification.

2.3.1 *Institutionalisation of the National Policies at the V/PHEI*

With the establishment of the V/PHEI in 2005, the institution began developing policies and establishing implementation plans to comply with national legislation. This led to the creation of an RPL Unit within the Academic Development Unit at the institution where I work. The RPL Unit is responsible for implementing and interpreting RPL legalisation within the context of higher education and having an RPL policy and guidelines consonant with the legislation. I conduct training for both academic and administrative staff and oversee the implementation of RPL and quality assurance of the RPL process within the institution.

Both former Technikons had RPL policies before the merger, although procedures were not very well-developed. In 2007, a new RPL policy was developed and approved by the Senate for the V/PHEI, and this marked the start of a journey to establish RPL processes and practices within the newly established institution (V/PHEI RPL Policy, 2007; RPL Policy, 2011 RPL Policy, 2014; RPL Procedure and Guidelines (2014); RPL Policy (2017), and RPL Procedure and Guidelines (2017)). I took the lead many times during this journey, the questions of this thesis arose from the questions and puzzles that have confronted (and continue to confront) me along the way. Initially, the institution used a generic approach to RPL, approaching it as ‘one-size-fits-all’. However, some academic departments had specific requirements of their RPL processes, so the RPL process became qualification-specific. The RPL policy was developed in 2012, and the RPL process was changed to qualification-specific, requiring an academic department to develop a specific RPL implementation plan with their specific discipline and profession in mind. The P/VHEI makes provisions for all types of RPL, having successfully accessed and /or granted credits to over 1200 RPL applicants since 2006[12].

[12] Based on yearly statistical reports done by the researcher at the V/PHEI.

2.3.1 *Development of the HEQSF-Aligned Qualifications at the Institution*

The NQF 2008 and its three sub-frameworks led to a recurriculation of all qualifications at all UoTs, including the site of research and the qualifications making up the case studies. In this section I will briefly explain the recurriculation process because it impacted RPL.

The qualifications offered at the V/PHEI are registered as professional qualifications in the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). The process of registering a qualification on the HEQSF is detailed and requires the academic department to do research and consult with relevant stakeholders, including the professional body, before submission for registration can be made. The case studies used in this thesis are based on the qualifications registered as a result of this HEQSF development and are aligned and duly registered.

When developing a new qualification, any academic department must establish an advisory committee composed of employers, professional body members, and alumni. The committee serves as a conduit to ensure that the qualifications offered align with industry standards. with the requirements of possible future employers. This was done in consultation with the institution's Curriculum Development Unit and the Academic Planning Unit. I was, although at a limited level, involved in this process.

The qualification should also be in line with the professional body's requirements to ensure that graduates can register with the professional body. Both professional bodies (in this study) have a 'body of knowledge' (BoK) that supports the profession, as will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. The students enrolled for a qualification must be able to incorporate the knowledge as practitioners; Thus, the qualification's content is oriented towards learning that enables individuals to function successfully in the workplace.

In Figure 2.1, I have indicated how the interaction takes place between the profession (employers and professional body) and the academic department when developing a qualification. I also indicate where non-formal and informal learning via RPL plays a role.

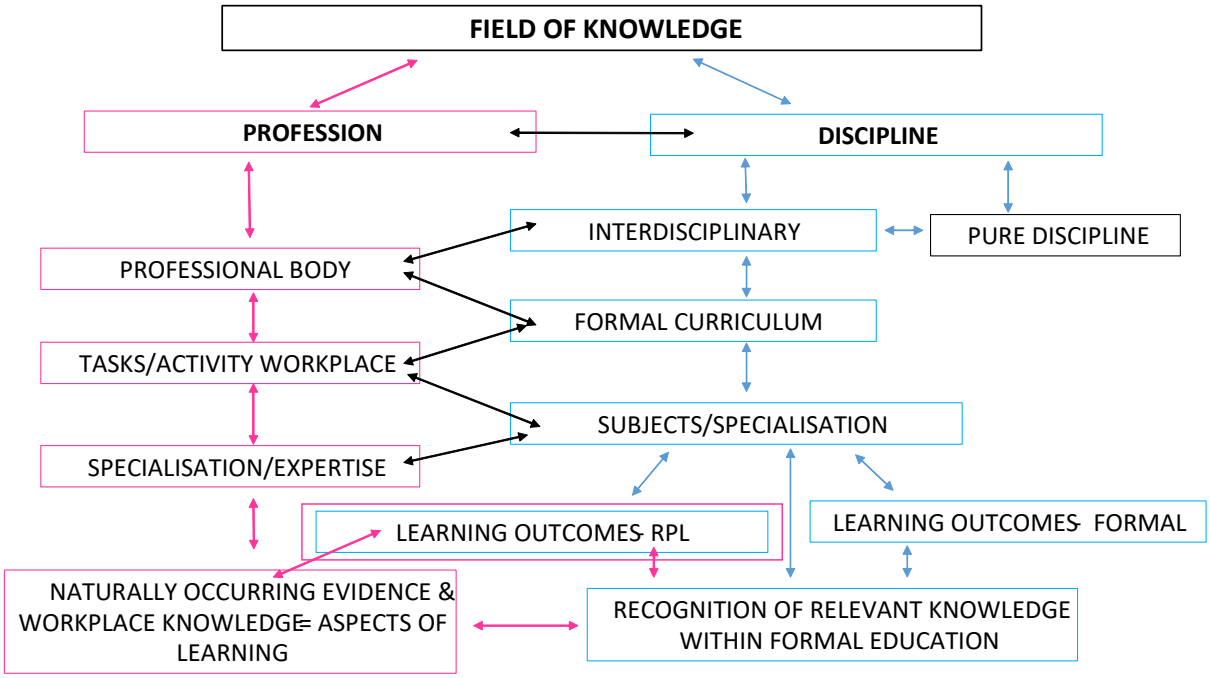


Figure 2.1: Interaction between professional and discipline in the development of HEQSF-aligned qualification

The profession, the professional body (and the associated body of knowledge), distinguishes the different sub-categories or subfields of the profession based on tasks and activities performed in the workplace. The level to which these activities can be performed in the workplace without formal registration is limited, when a person works in a specific field for a reasonable period without formal qualifications. In that case, they might reach a level of employment beyond which they will not be able to be promoted or be employed at a higher level without a formal qualification. They reach a career ceiling, or what I call a 'paper ceiling'.

The areas of specialisation developed in the workplace and endorsed by the professional body are incorporated into formal education as *subjects.* The curriculum for a discipline is developed based on the areas of specialization, encompassing various subjects. The qualifier is applied at this point to fulfil the requirement stipulated in the NQF 2008 that professional bodies should cooperate with the Quality Councils regarding qualifications and quality assurance.

Each subject is linked to an NQF level and informed by the level descriptors to indicate the level of complexity. NQF credits associated with the subject are also worked out to determine the number of notional hours required to master the topics at hand. The knowledge required to be competent in the specific subject is described in the qualification's learning and exit level outcomes.

In the workplace, the individual working and performing activities and duties usually gains experience and knowledge of some subjects in the qualification. Evidence of knowledge is referred to as *naturally occurring evidence* (NOE) later in this study. This evidence can (though not always) support the claim to knowledge made by an RPL applicant.

2.3.2 *Approach used in the Development of the Qualification at the Institution*

In preparation for the recurriculation process, the V/PHEI conducted research and consulted other HEIs, and decided to use a constructivist approach for curriculum development, using the work of Biggs (2001). as well as Bester and Scholtz (2012:288). These authors explain how they started the recurriculation process by asking academic staff within the academic departments to evaluate qualifications, analysing the learning that occurs – both what is learned and how learning takes place – with the Assessment including the cognitive complexities as described in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Bester and Scholtz discuss the use of the Revised Taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002) as a framework to analyse scaffolding, the integration of cognitive ability at all levels of knowledge, and the types of knowledge the institution was teaching linked to complexity levels and the associated professions.

During the recurriculation process, and departments were developing the HEQSF-aligned qualifications, I was thinking about how we could best facilitate the process of granting credits via RPL. When some departments with whom I work developed their new qualifications, analysing learning outcomes and documenting them using the Revised Taxonomy of Krathwohl and Anderson (2002), I could see that some learning outcomes might be achieved through informal or non-formal learning. A template from the government was used to document the new qualification, part of which was a curriculum map.[13]

This 'curriculum map' motivated me to explore the possibility of using a similar template for (RPL). The curriculum map or a similar template would allow a department and me to unpack the curriculum from a different perspective. With the map, the department analyses their learning outcomes from a workplace and professional perspective. Looking back now, a few years later, I realise that using the curriculum map and the Revised Taxonomy has benefited RPL within the V/PHEI. In the next section, I will explain the development of an RPL plan and its associated implementation.

[13] Template is provided electronically by government for the submission of new qualifications to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Council of Higher Education (CHE) and SAQA.

2.4 The Development of RPL Practice at the V/PHEI

Over the past 19 years, RPL as a practice and a procedure within the V/PHEI has led to refining the process within the institution. Each academic department involved with RPL is required to develop an RPL plan it accepts RPL applications (Institutional RPL Policy, 2017). This RPL plan stipulates what information and evidence the RPL applicant requires, both at the screening stage and during the RPL process itself. The plan also stipulates how the RPL applicant will be provided with advice and support during the RPL process, such as at the portfolio-building stage. In conclusion, the plan indicates the RPL assessments that will be done for all different types of RPL.

The V/PHEI makes provision for the following types of RPL:

- Access: RPL is used to provide an RPL applicant with the opportunity to pursue a qualification where the applicant fails to meet the entry requirements (CHE, 2016:8).
- Credit (or exemption) This form of RPL evaluates the knowledge of an RPL applicant *against specific knowledge or concepts within a particular subject* or subjects within a qualification. This type of RPL aims to grant credits from completing a subject as part of the qualification to be awarded.
- In South Africa (and in other countries), the awarding of credits for RPL is limited to 50% of the qualification, thus excluding the awarding of whole qualifications based on RPL in higher education. This is the type of RPL that is the focus of this study (CHE, 2016:8).
- Advanced standing: This type of RPL grants an RPL candidate the opportunity to continue with studies at a level higher, than a person's formal qualifications allow. At the V/PHEI, this type of RPL is used to grant an RPL candidate the opportunity to study at the postgraduate level (CHE, 2016:8-9).
- It allows for a combination of access and credits – or advanced standing and credits – RPL: Depending on the knowledge involved in the RPL application, a person not meeting the entry requirements might have developed specific knowledge in the workplace to enable the V/PHEI, to not only grant access into the first year of a programme of study but also credits(s) for subject(s).

RPL is a cyclical process that is repeated every year at the V/PHEI. The RPL process is complex and involves a variety of role players:

- RPL Facilitators – academic staff members in an academic department who oversee the development of the RPL implementation plan, its implementation, and coordination;
- RPL Assessor(s) – academic subject lecturers involved in developing the RPL plan and assessing RPL evidence submitted.
- RPL Moderator(s) – academic subject lecturer(s) are also involved in developing the RPL plan.
- RPL Administrators – administrative staff who are involved with support and administrative work for the RPL process. These staff members are also RPL advisors.
- RPL Advisors – staff members or students who can advise and/or tutor the RPL Applicant during the RPL evidence collection phase, and

RPL Institutional Coordinator – RPL is part of the Centre for Higher Academic Development at the institution, where I oversee the RPL process, being a trainer and advisor to academic and administrative staff. I conduct policy development, liaise with academic departments, faculties, and the Registrar's Office, and coordinate quality assurance.

2.4.1 *Preparation for RPL*

During the preparation phase, staff training takes place, developing an understanding of different types of knowledges. The academic department decides which types of RPL they are willing to accept. Some departments only consider access into the first year of the qualification, others might consider granting advanced standing (access) to postgraduate studies, while some might offer granting credits via RPL or a combination. The training includes making decisions about the assessment methods and tools used, sometimes at the departmental level – especially credits. However, the RPL access process into the first year is done at the faculty level in two faculties at the V/PHEI.

As soon as the RPL applications are received, the academic department reviews the applications and determines their feasibility. Aspects that are used to determine feasibility are the relevance and duration of work experience, short courses attended, and professional body registration, if applicable.

2.4.2 *Development of Curriculum Maps*

Making provision for RPL credits requires the academic department to use the learning outcomes from the formal programme and evaluate what possible knowledge from the workplace could be presented to support the RPL applicant's claim of knowing the subject's content.

The template for the curriculum map (Table 2.1), can be adjusted by the department into a grid or matrix[14]. The purpose of the document is a comparison between the learning outcomes (LOs) and assessment criteria of the curriculum of the formal programme (referred to as FP), and the possible workplace knowledge and associated evidence that the applicant might want to put forward. The academics can adjust the learning outcomes for the RPL process itself, under the column' workplace competence' to accommodate workplace knowledge.

Table 2.1: Template for a Curriculum Map: A Method to Compare Formal and Workplace-Learning

CURRICULUM MAP: Academic programme and RPL, learning in the workplace, experience, non-formal and informal learning						
Academic/formal programme		**Recognition of prior learning (RPL)**			**Completed by applicant**	**Assessment**
Learning outcomes/ Assessment criteria	Assess--ment criteria/ Assess--ment type	Workplace competence	RPL evidence require-ments	RPL assess-ment tools	Evidence submitted and page #	Comments by the assessors

Learning outcomes: The learning outcomes and concepts as in the curriculum and the *Assessment criteria:* What is assessed and the method it is assessed in the formal programme are indicated on the left side of Table 2.2.

On the right side of the grey column on the left side of Table 2.1, is the RPL section. The first column deals with *Workplace (based) competence:* what knowledge, learning and activities are performed in the workplace that could cover the FP learning outcomes. The academics complete this column, but the applicants are encouraged to add information if they can. Completion of the column is sometimes difficult, due to the nature of learning in the formal programme. This study will show that serious thinking and academic analysis are required to adapt the formal programmes' learning outcomes in order to enable RPL applicants to

[14] Different wording is used by different academic departments refers to a 'curriculum map', which AT calls it a 'matrix'. In chapters 6 and 7 the use of this tool is explained as each department developed and uses it.

effectively recontextualise their informal and non-formal workplace-derived knowledge. Without such adaptations, it might be difficult for the RPL applicants to understand, and provide relevant evidence for their learning achievements.

In the next column, the s*uggested RPL evidence requirements* are indicated. Academic staff list the possible evidence applicants can use to demonstrate their knowledge. This usually includes naturally occurring evidence in a portfolio, accompanied by reflective writing on the possible linkages between naturally occurring evidence and the learning outcomes. A presentation might be required, or any other appropriate form of assessment indicated.

RPL assessment tool: This column is optional and can be incorporated into the 'Evidence required column'. Academics will indicate whether a portfolio needs to be submitted, an interview be conducted or a demonstration be required. If any tests must be written, that will also be indicated. RPL applicants must complete this column to indicate what evidence they have submitted. They are encouraged to add evidence that is not listed if they consider it is relevant to the Learning Outcomes. They should indicate what evidence is relevant for which learning outcomes. Sometimes, the same evidence can be used for more than one Learning Outcome.

The second last column, *evidence submitted and location or page number in the portfolio:* This must be completed by the RPL applicant to guide the assessor.

The last column is for the *Assessment and comments.* The assessor and moderator use this column during the application assessment. Comments can be written and later used for the Assessment and Moderation report.

This framework consists of two main focus areas: The academic curriculum and a possible link to the workplace. The academic component includes the curriculum, learning outcomes, and a list of topics addressed in the formal programme. The applicant's workplace knowledge encompasses the topics and activities the person engages in, within the workplace, and the language (Professional discourse) and repertoire used.

The curriculum map is part of a guideline to complete the portfolio, making up the RPL Programme (RPL P,), indicating the evidence required and the flow of the RPL programme, including methods of interacting with the candidates and assessment methods. Linked to these areas is the profession, the assessment, and the conclusions that can be drawn.

As various departments developed their curriculum maps, I noticed that some departments, such as Human Resource Management and Architectural Technology, opted to change

'evidence required' and developed specific learning outcomes for RPL purposes to guide the process and the applicants. In other words, the learning outcomes from the formal qualification and subject may be amended, changed and even decreased in number to incorporate knowledge from the workplace. Resulting in two sets of learning outcomes; the LOs from the FP and LOs from the RPL Programme (referred to as RPL P). The RPL P learning outcomes are used to guide the RPL applicant in presenting evidence against the learning outcomes in the formal programme.

Assessment is done by subject experts in the academic department and moderated as per the formal qualifications requirements. Once the assessment is done, feedback will be given to the RPL applicants. The academic department approves an RPL application but is subject to final approval by the university's Senate.

2.5 Conclusion

The development of RPL at the research site evolved over time, including reflection on the process by the academics and administrators involved. Since 2014, the process is guided and supported by legislation and policy from the CHE. The development of RPL in South Africa did not occur in isolation from global developments. In the next chapter, I highlight the research worldwide into RPL and its influence in SA, as well as the impact research in SA made on RPL internationally.

Chapter 3: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): From experiential learning to a Specialised Pedagogy – a literature review

> 'Contemporary theorists argue that experience is not neutral raw material for knowledge creation but contextualised, partial and already shaped by knowledge.' (Harris, 2000:19)

3.1 Introduction

RPL is a process to recognise knowledge, among other things, to promote redress, social justice, and inclusivity, as well as for re-skilling, recognition of workplace learning, and economic development. As a researcher, I was interested in the role of knowledge in the process. I wanted to understand the types of knowledge involved in an RPL process when credits are granted, and how experience and knowledge interact. As Harris (2000) states in the above – experience is the creation of knowledge within a context.

This chapter focuses on the research literature on RPL, particularly regarding knowledge in its formal forms, as found in curricula and classrooms, as well as informal and non-formal knowledge developed outside the formal establishment.

I summarise different approaches in educational theory: ‘Kolbism, Social Realism, Activity Theory’ and ‘Critical theory’. I discuss these paradigms briefly, moving chronologically through the development of RPL theory since the 1970s and highlighting how RPL research evolved from Kolbism to the view of RPL as a Specialised Pedagogy.

This study is approached from within a Social Realism paradigm, drawing on Basil Bernstein's work. I discuss various RPL practitioners and researchers who have used Bernstein's work in their research. From the work of Breier (2006), Ralphs (2012), de Graaff (2014), and Cooper (2016, 2017), and others, I identify several concepts generated from within the Social Realism paradigm that have guided my study; these include knowledge differentiation, qualification-specific RPL and boundary crossing.

Part A: Research into RPL as a Practice: Empirical Research

In the first part of this Chapter, I discuss research that has influenced RPL in the last 30 years. RPL started as a practice and theory that has developed over time. This section highlights some of the most relevant empirical research published over time.

3.2 Summary of Key Issues in the Research Literature

Recognition of Prior Learning addresses learning and knowledge from all spheres of life, acknowledging and working across different forms of knowledge that are not always easily connected or connectable (Harris, 2014:54).

Judy Harris has been at the forefront of documenting the various theoretical underpinnings in RPL as these have developed within the practice since the turn of the century. The three books that Harris (2006, 2011, 2014) co-edited have contributed greatly to the documentation of RPL. Contributing to the development of RPL theory involves a dialogue between research and practice, a situation where RPL practice inspires research and theory building (Harris et al., 2014:15). Theorising RPL has become a distinct field of multidisciplinary academic research with a growing body of scholarly literature.

The 2006 book by Harris and Anderson, was published after globalisation took hold, creating a closer link between the economy and education (Ibid, 2006:2-3), moving practice and theory closer together. Lifelong learning has become increasingly important, with employers supporting not only formal education but also non-formal and informal learning. RPL became part of these changes, emphasising credits and alternative learning access routes. This book documents how various circumstances, opportunities, and different approaches to the Recognition of Prior Learning process influenced RPL practices. At the same time, national qualification frameworks were developed in countries such as South Africa, United Kingdom (UK), and Australia.

In the second book that Harris edited with Christine Wihak, *Researching the Recognition of Prior Learning: International Perspectives* (2011), the focus is on research done by various scholars worldwide. The book is aimed at chapters reflecting the state of RPL implementation and associated research in selected countries. The chapters include case studies from Australia, Canada and Québec, England, the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Report (OECD), Scotland, South Africa, Sweden and the United States of America (USA). Chapters in this book highlight that the uptake of RPL

is uneven and that some institutions are openly hostile to it. However, the opposite is also the case. Case studies in this book investigate the conditions required by what the authors call 'adult-friendly' Vocational Colleges in the US, Sweden, Canada, and Australia.

The role of governments and the inclusion of RPL in official policy, or lack thereof, is highlighted in the OECD. Despite the lack of government interest in RPL, the practice continued to grow in countries like the USA, Scotland, and Australia, particularly in the workplace. Employers have developed a need to upskill and recognise employees' skills and knowledge. The recognition of foreign qualifications for economic reasons is also important (Harris et al., 2011:3-5).

This *book of Harris* et al. (2011:7-8), highlights that RPL was shifting from a summative assessment practice to one of formative assessment in the EU and Scotland. This shift included the possibility of RPL for credits. The South African case studies highlight the practice of specific credits vs. general credits. 'Specific credits' require the RPL applicant to link their knowledge to specific subjects to receive credits for those subjects. 'General credit' is used to equate against general capabilities and level descriptors, including knowledge that cannot be taught in a formal programme (Breier, 2011).

In a third book, Harris working with Wihak and van Kleef developed what they call a *'Handbook of the Recognition of Prior Learning – Research in Practice'*, in 2014. This book builds on the first two books, focusing on the interaction between practice and research. The authors wanted to foster a dialogue between research and practice, and let the RPL practice lead to and inspire research. 'Practice throws up the most interesting questions' (Harris, et al., 2014:16) The research in RPL has become more interdisciplinary.

Wihak (2014: 29-30) reviewed research on RPL at the time. She draws from a list of RPL resources developed by New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL), known as the NALL Bibliography. Wihak built upon NALL's work and developed a list of topics related to RPL: assessment, recognition, accreditation, experiential learning, learning experiences, and prior learning. She and her research team reviewed 75 research papers.

With the review Wihak conducted on these articles, she found that the literature was descriptive, using either a quantitative or qualitative methodologies, indicating that RPL was present within education and training systems in many countries. Questions of concern were about the ‘predictive validity’ of evidence and the development of portfolios, which is a learning tool in and of itself.

Wihak (2014: 31) also lists research done by Cameron (2011) on RPL research from 1990 – 2010. The research mainly focused on the vocational sector, and it was found that research done into RPL lacked sufficient detail on statistical information, longitudinal studies, reasons for low uptake, adult education policy, and the transferability of credits between different qualifications and institutions.

Wihak (2014: 32-33) highlights the research done by van Kleef (2011). Using the NALL bibliography and Wihak's research, van Kleef refined the definition of 'research' and developed a list of more detailed types of research done in RPL: experiential quantitative, non-experiential quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. In addition, she subdivided each category into descriptive, explanatory, and predictive categories.

In 2012, Wihak (2014: 34) created a database called PLIRC to include a full-text, searchable database; analysing the research submitted to the PLIRC database, 88% of the research was about the discipline of Education. Wihak (2014: 35), quoting Wong (2011) and Donald (2002), notes that RPL occurs outside of an educational discipline. Future practitioners may need the ability to communicate with students in other disciplines or fields of study, working with experts outside of Education. This is an important finding by Wihak, highlighting the roles and types of involvement of different RPL practitioners in promoting RPL in all disciplines.

Wikak (2014: 35), drawing on the work of Donald (2002), points out that disciplines and fields vary across several dimensions that impact the nature of the research: how concepts are represented and related to each other in the logical structure of the discipline, what criteria and processes are used to determine valid knowledge within the discipline, and what methods and modes of enquiry are needed.

In 2016, a book entitled *'RPL as Specialised Pedagogy: crossing the lines'*, was published in South Africa, edited by Linda Cooper and Alan Ralphs, and consists of four case studies. Each case study demonstrates and analyses RPL as a pedagogy rather than an assessment practice.

The book features four case studies from four sites with varying RPL processes, institutional cultures, policies, and procedures. The four case studies explore the relationship between experiential knowledge and formal qualifications. The pedagogy used in the four RPL processes is also analysed, and the agency brought to the process by the applicants and RPL practitioners is examined. (Ralphs, 2016:12). I briefly summarise two of the case studies her. In contrast, the other two case studies are examined later in this chapter, namely the

qualification-specific case study by Cooper and Harris, and the occupational competence case study by Deller.

The chapter on access to undergraduate studies *examines* an RPL process at a traditional university in SA, which provides RPL as an alternative entry route into Bachelor's programmes. The case study describes the alternative use of entry tests versus the portfolio-building process. Individuals who wish to pursue higher education could, with a broad approach, be accommodated for different qualifications through the same process. The portfolio development process is used as a mediation tool to prepare the RPL applicant for higher education by creating boundary-crossing activities and projects (Ralphs, 2016:66)..Research done at the university found that the applicants completing the portfolio-building programme 'perform(ed) marginally better' than the applications who gained access via the test. This finding is explained by highlighting the pedagogy of the portfolio-building process, which enabled 'boundary crossing' (Ralphs, 2016:14).

In the chapter entitled '*Radical RPL Pedagogy at a Workers' College'* (Moodley, Shah & We Befelo, 2016), this case study investigates how RPL can be integrated into a diploma programme from three perspectives: (i) The agency of the participants and how they can draw on their experiential learning as a valuable resource; (ii) Recognising the epistemological authority of everyday knowledge sources; and (iii) Providing a high-quality RPL process feeding into learning pathways of university programmes. This RPL process enables the college to integrate formal, theoretical, and experiential knowledge, seen by the authors as 'radical pedagogy', and to create a new knowledge base enriched by the experiences of trade union members and activists from society (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016:14).

The workers' college used what is referred to as an 'in-programme RPL',[15] assisting their students to use their experiential learning within their programme to obtain access into higher education (Moodley, Shah & We Befelo, 2016:81), and accommodating applicants from similar backgrounds, i.e., trade unions for entry into a specific qualification.

In addition to the above-mentioned books, numerous articles have been published about RPL in the last ten to fifteen years. Bodem et al. (2022) undertook a research project, which reviewed all articles published on RPL (using the term PLA) internationally since 2011. They reviewed and categorised 85 articles, and 26% - the greatest number - were from South Africa. The review of Boden et al. identified eight major themes: Studies of programmes, Policy and

[15] 'rpl' is in small caps is based on Breier's interpretation of recruitment of experiential knowledge within a formal programme (Breier, 2006)

systems, studies of PLA [RPL], technology tools, theory building, Assessment practices Workplace applications of PLA [RPL], and Immigration.

Another comparative study was done by Raciti, Tham and Dale (2024), analysing research in RPL within Higher Education. This is a global study, but only English publications were analysed and themes developed. It was found that the majority of publications were from the Global North, and the majority of publications in the Global South were from South Africa (Raciti et al., 2024:2 and 9). The themes identified by Raciti et al. (2024) include the benefits of RPL, challenges of RPL, RPL processes, Institutional processes, and national RPL policy.

Challenges faced by RPL (Raciti et al., 2024:11) include the demonstration and assessment of knowledge gained non-formally or informally against the formal learning for the purposes of either access or credits. According to Raciti et al. (2024:11) this challenge is compounded by ‘discipline-specific approaches in terms of ascertaining the relevance of the knowledge, competencies and skills' of the RPL candidate. As will become clear in this study, this statement is crucial to the case studies analysed. Relevant knowledge is vital because it enables the RPL applications to be processed, assessed, and approved. However, the findings of this study will highlight that it is not a challenge but an opportunity.

In the two articles and books listed above, various authors researched and analysed similar topics of the RPL process. I have analysed the topics directly linked to the RPL process in order to understand the interpretation by RPL researchers and practitioners worldwide. I discuss the following topics:

- The type of RPL researchers focus on,
- Methods of assessment often discussed,
- Development of evidence and the importance of the mediation of knowledge,
- RPL as part of a formal programme,
- Assessment, and
- The role of explicit and tacit knowledge.

I selected these topics because of their relevance to my study. I do not deal with the development of technology for RPL, although the use of ePortfolios has become popular, especially during and after the COVID-19 epidemic. Although the evidence used in this study was submitted electronically, no ePortfolio software was used.

In the previous chapter, I dealt with the development of qualification frameworks worldwide. As I discussed in Chapter 2, RPL is embedded into these frameworks and international agreements, such as the Bologna Agreement.

3.2.1 *Development of Evidence*

Making a knowledge claim in RPL (Trowler, 1996; Ralphs, 2012; de Graaff, 2010, 2014), involves the presentation of evidence to support the claim made and providing evidence of knowing the knowledge as claimed. The evidence itself is a point of debate in RPL because of differences in opinion about what constitutes evidence. Additionally, what defines knowledge within different contexts is debated.

Granting an RPL applicant access to the vocational or higher education sectors has been widely researched. Access to undergraduate studies is an RPL process that provides an alternative route of entry into a level of education the individual does not qualify for. This type of RPL process involves entry tests and/or the presentation of the portfolio-building process. This RPL practice is interpreted as a process of enabling 'boundary crossing' (Ralphs, 2016:14).

A concern raised in RPL of this type is that knowledge outside of the formal educational setting differs from knowledge in higher education, and that granting access cannot be done without addressing such differences. The use of workshops or a portfolio-building process is a widely used method to address the differences between higher education and the outside world, which can include volunteer work, formal employment or hobbies and interests. (Ralphs:2012) De Paor (2024: 285), working on an RPL project to assist military staff in transitioning back to civilian life, highlights knowledge differentiation and the argument that ‘experiential forms of knowledge cannot be easily equated with the codified forms of knowledge … … in the academy’ (de Paor, 2024: 285), highlighting the importance of using mentors as part of the RPL process.

However, RPL can have a negative impact on applicants because the portfolio-building process might be of such a nature that it does not 'see' (Fenwick,2006:297) non-traditional knowledge and skills, separating experience from knowledge, which Fenwick interprets as an 'injustice'. She would like RPL to include a 'flexible conception of knowledge'. Similarly, Hamer (2013) draws on the approach of Nonneth (1995), who emphasises the creation of a just society, and points out that RPL ' may offer an opportunity to infuse professional practice with more diverse and perhaps relevant knowledge and skills' (Hamer, 2013: 482).

3.2.2 *Methods of Assessment*

RPL is a mediation space where evidence of knowledge can be developed, analysed, and explained. The mediation space is the most crucial aspect of RPL, and considerable attention has been devoted to the process. What knowledge, competence, activities and information are included in this mediation space and how they are used in the application are of importance

(Harris, 2000). Recently, this mediation process has become seen as a pedagogical process (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016; Pokorny, 2023, de Paor, 2025).

The most common assessment tool used is a portfolio of evidence. But, portfolios can be used for a variety of purposes. The options vary widely, such as personal reflection or storytelling. (Cooper, 2006) to a specific portfolio with specific requirements, accompanied many times by a guideline (Pokorny, 2023). A portfolio can also come with specific requirements such as summarising an academic article and reflective writing (Ralphs, 2012). Most of the time, mentors assist RPL candidates in developing these portfolios because RPL Candidates struggle to develop their portfolios to withstand academic scrutiny (Cooper, 2011:211). Mentors can provide formative assessment and assist with the portfolio-building process before the evidence portfolio is submitted for assessment. Once the evidence is submitted for the summative evaluation, it can be presented in a manner that is recognisable to the academy.

A study was conducted at a University of Technology (UoT) in South Africa for exemption from the subject English Business Communication (Rossouw et al., 2016:228) which is a generic subject, taught across all faculties at the UoT, consisting of a generic core syllabus, which can be adjusted to specific requirements to suit different disciplines. The study focused on 24 candidates and used a document analysis to collect data. Rossouw et al., quoting Andersson and Fejes (2010, 2020), correctly point out that RPL ‘is a procedure of transfer or mobility of knowledge, affording people an opportunity to transfer the knowledge learned in one context to another, for example, from the workplace to education.

Rossouw et al. (2010:238) explain that the assessment method was a test, and the candidates did not perform well against some of the subject's learning outcomes, struggling mainly with written text for presentation purposes. Upon further investigation, it was found that the candidates did not perform this type of duty in their daily work.

The candidates were also requested to submit a portfolio of evidence. Although the candidates acknowledged that compiling the portfolio of evidence was not easy and time-consuming, they indicated a preference for compiling a portfolio and undergoing an oral interview (Rossouw et al., 2010, pp. 239, 243). In conclusion, the researchers highlight the importance of an assessment process being ‘fit-for-purpose’ (Rossouw et al., 2010:244) as they found a combination of assessment tools can be an option as well, for example, a portfolio of evidence used in combination with an interview. Rossouw et al. (2010:244) found that the candidates requested sufficient orientation of the RPL process, a clear indication of what they were being assessed against and regular feedback from a UoT.

As mentioned in chapter 2, the RPL Policy in South Africa states that the Learning Outcomes in a RPL process should not be a repetition of the mainstream qualification. De Paor's (2024, 393) study found that applicants struggled to link their knowledge to the learning outcomes, One of her conclusions is that policies should be flexible and 'adequately reflect the particularities of RPL, rather than shoehorning policies geared towards an exclusively-taught programme' (de Paor, 2024, 393

The interpretation of evidence by assessors is an aspect that Hendricks and Volbrecht (2003) researched. Working at a University in South Africa, the researchers, had developed an RPL portfolio-building process to assess individuals for entry to the first-year qualifications offered at the institution. Using a portfolio development approach included an 'autobiographical learning history narrative' (ALHN). This approach, seen as a 'transitional space' (Hendricks & Volbrecht, 2003, 49), was used to facilitate the transition from school (and informal learning) to equip the applicants for studies at the tertiary level. Working with the applicants as advisors, the authors found that it was difficult for RPL applicants to 'extract learning from experience in a systematic process of reflection' (Hendricks & Volbrecht, 2003: 50). When the portfolios were assessed, Hendricks and Volbrecht (2003, 50) "expected from the assessors to reflect on, extract and make *inferences* (about the learning of the candidate". As Hendricks and Volbrecht admit, this is a move away from the 'conventional practice … where candidates [are] expected to reflect on their experience and extract learning' (Hendricks & Volbrecht, 2003, 50).

De Paor (2024, 283) points out that to be successful in designing and implementing an RPL process, there is a need to create an assessment process that reflects the 'particularity of prior experiential learning'.

In the study with which this thesis is concerned, the portfolio of evidence requested specific evidence based on learning and knowledge in the field of subjects for which the individuals were applying for credits. Evidence was submitted as part of a portfolio of evidence, which I refer to as naturally occurring evidence (NOE).

In the next section, I draw on the work of Yashaen Luckan (2021) to illustrate the link between competencies as a professional body and the curriculum and the possibility of RPL in this case.

3.2.3 *Case Study: Competencies and Recognition in the Architectural Profession*

Yashaen Luckan (2021) did an interesting study on RPL in SA in the academic field of Built Environment, focusing specifically on architecture as a profession and the role RPL can play in this field. Being an Architect himself, he did an in-depth study of the NQF level descriptors

and the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP) competencies[16] for the subject of Architectural Design. He compared the NQF-level descriptors with the SACAP competencies. In turn, he used the competencies to develop rubrics for Architectural Design as a subject located on NQF Level 9 (level of a Professional Architect) and NQF Level 7 (Level of a Professional Architectural Technologist), the focus of my study.

Although I will focus on different subjects in my Architectural case study, Luckan's work remains relevant. Luckan (2021, 67-69) employed three concepts to develop a conceptual framework: situated-project-based learning, constructive alignment between the NQF level descriptors and professional competencies, and Bloom's taxonomy of intellectual complexity.

Luckan (2021:69) found that the NQF level descriptors can be aligned to the two subjects' professional competencies (SACAP Competencies) and linked to professional designations. In practice, however, an Architectural Technologist (NQF 6) may be doing the work of a Professional Architectural Technologist (NQF 7), but is registered at a lower level with SACAP[17]. He proposes that the NQF level descriptors 'are explicitly defined at each category of professional designation to determine the fundamentals for constructive alignment of professional competence with the respective exit level outcomes' (of a qualification) In my view this study highlights the bureaucratisation of the profession and HE because Luckan want the level descriptors to be more detailed, this can be to the benefit of HE, but it could also restrictive, depending on how it is done.

Luckan's (2021) study highlights the link between NQF levels, professional competence and RPL. His use of Bloom's Taxonomy to analyse the complexity of knowledge is also interesting. However, he does not include any suggestions on how the RPL process itself can be undertaken. He does not include examples of evidence, only possible rubrics that can be used during the assessment process.

Luckan (2021:86) lists the competencies of the various professional designations in Architecture, pointing out that Architectural Technology and Professional Architectural Technologist (focus of this study) training is at a higher level than required by the SACAP and the competencies the professional body deems sufficient. To accommodate this situation, he advocates for the use of RPL, which he refers to as an 'alternative pedagogy, which has its own nuances'. He does not use the word 'pedagogy' as Cooper and Ralphs (2016) do in an epistemological manner but rather highlights several systemic issues facing the

[16] The SACAP competencies are discussed in chapter 6, I'm not describing them in detail here.

[17] In chapter 7, the academics I interviewed for my study made the same observation. This situation is related to the level of scope that the various designations may work at according to legislation, as is explained in more detail in chapter 6.

implementation of RPL both at a national and at institutional level. At a national level, he points out that the residency clause and the associated funding have a restrictive effect on the institutional implementation of RPL. He also notes that proper quality assurance requires rigorous assessment and training of RPL assessors is of significant importance. (Luckan, 2021:94-95). He does not refer to RPL practitioners, a shortcoming in his study because he does not refer to the entire pedagogical process that encapsulates RPL.

In the next section, I will focus on specific key concepts that have been identified in the selected research summarised below.

Part B: The Influence of Different Paradigms on RPL Practices and Research focusing on the Aspect of Knowledge

3.3 Various Theoretical Perspectives

The research summarised below is from diverse perspectives and based on various theoretical departure points: Adult and experiential learning, Vygotskian, Situated Learning, Activity theory, Critical Theory, and Social Realism (Harris et al:2014, 18-19).

> … RPL requires one to consider the nature and structure of the discipline or field of education concerned, the relationship between formal and informal knowledge within that discipline or field and the extent to which pedagogic discourse mirrors that relationship (Breier:2006, 87).

The quote above from Mignonne Breier highlights the debate over different types of learning - formal, informal (and I would add non-formal) within the RPL space. This section on RPL theory development will highlight research of RPL published in the past few decades. As Andersson (2013:409) observed, writings about RPL focus on instruments that can be used, followed by a practical focus, and only in recent years has theory-building become a significant part of the research. In the next section, I highlight how these debates have evolved over the past years and how they have shaped the theories I draw on in this study.

3.3.1 *Early Developments in RPL Theory*

During the last two decades of the previous century, as RPL was developing as a practice, a common theoretical approach used in researching RPL practice was Experiential learning based on Kolb's Learning Cycle (Andersson et al., 2013:408). Kolb's Learning cycle consists of four phases, namely, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract

conceptualisation and active experimentation, providing a method to reflect on learning by an individual and incorporate learning and experience (Kolb in Harris, 2000:11-12) .This phase in the theoretical development of RPL is referred to as the Liberal Humanist RPL practice model.

The contribution of 'Kolbianism' (Andersson et al., 2013:408) to RPL, at the time, was that RPL practitioners and researchers started using some form of reflection as part of the RPL process. This approach raised various critical questions, but at the same time it led to a widening of the research field of RPL.

Harris (2000:12-13) highlights the argument that experience 'is not neutral raw material for knowledge creation but contextualised, partial and already shaped by knowledge'. Harris sees the concepts of 'learning' and 'experience' as helpful in investigating how these are 'handled within the formal curricula and the RPL process'. One of the other points of criticisms made about this approach is that it separates experience and knowledge, mind and matter and thought and action (Harris, 2018:78). As Andersson et al. (2013:408) point out, the use the experiential learning approach also becomes problematic because it restricts the analysis of RPL from other theoretical perspectives.

What comes first – experience or learning? Pokorny (2023:2-3) points out that in Kolbianism, experience is seen as coming first, resulting in knowledge through a process of reflection. Emphasising that using Kolb for RPL removes the experience and conceptual lessons learnt from its location and embeddedness.

Two models of RPL practice that were associated with the Kolbian Model, were the 'credit exchange' and the 'developmental' models of RPL (Butterworth,1992). These models do not attempt to develop new knowledge, interpret or convert knowledge from one form to another (Trowler, 1996).

In the credit exchange model, recognition is given if an RPL applicant claims to have specific knowledge and he/she can demonstrate this or provide evidence of this knowledge. Butterworth pointed out that the credit exchange model developed at the same time as national qualification frameworks (Butterworth in Harris et al, 2006:5). The Credit Exchange Model is used for formal learning, for credits or for 'credit accumulation and transfer; (CAT) based on guidelines from the government linked to the NQF's principle of enhancing learning pathways.

The other approach in the development of RPL theory is the Developmental Model where the RPL applicant is assisted to meet the relevant learning outcomes through a process of learning and reflection. This model is often characterised by the development of a portfolio, where the RPL applicant is required to re-work and interpret his/her own knowledge about specific topics

and aspects of his/her experience and to compare these with the curriculum of a level, qualification or programme against which recognition is sought (Butterworth, 1992).

Comparing these models, Paul Trowler (1996:20-21) interprets the credit exchange and development models as 'twin poles on a continuum', because the latter merely supports the candidate endeavouring to meet the requirements for credit exchange. The differences lie in the experience-reflection distinction, both in the types of knowledge involved and in their ideological implications. According to Trowler (1996:21), the ideological underpinnings associated with the Learning and Development Model are a form of 'humanism' rather than the 'market-oriented vocationalism' of the credit exchange model. RPL, within a market-oriented philosophy, gave rise to RPL as part of LLL, which is incorporated in various in-house or professional programmes and courses, or in association with an institution of higher education (Uranis & Davis, 2020:3)

A key focus of my study is the interaction between learning and experience. However, as I will illustrate in the rest of this thesis, this interaction between learning and experience is not a 'one-way street', as Harris (2000) has already pointed out, between the RPL applicant and the academy. Breier's (2001, 2004, 2005) studies also illustrate how to avoid a 'one-way street approach to RPL through her case study on a vocational qualification where the facilitator of the RPL process realised that adjustments had to be made to accommodate different types of participants.

3.3.2 *Case Study in IR*

I shall describe research done in the field of Labour Law by Breier, which focused on how experiential learning is accommodated in two formal Law programmes. She wrote her PhD (2003) and several articles (2004, 2005, 2006, 2008) on RPL into the field of Labour Law. She set out to determine whether informal knowledge of Labour Law, for example, acquired by a trade unionist, could be recruited and valued in the formal environment. She researched two Labour Law Courses offered at two different institutions and interviewed some of the students (who had no formal training) and lecturers to determine how informal knowledge influences the classroom, the students and the lecturers.

Breier's (2005) study focuses on using informal knowledge to engage with learning after the successful RPL applicant had started studying, not prior to entry where RPL is normally done. She refers to this as 'rpl' rather than 'RPL'. Her study focused on the complexity of recognising informal experience in an academic environment as a 'post-entry pedagogy'.

Breier (2004, 2005) uses Bernstein to analyse and code the knowledge of mature adults in a formal educational programme. Breier found in her research that the recognition of prior

learning reflects power struggles in society and can lead to exclusion, but she also highlights the interaction between formal learning and experiential learning.

She used Bernstein's notion of horizontal and vertical discourse in exploring the lecturer's recruitment of informal and non-formal learning in two Labour Law courses (Breier:8-9, 2004). She reflects critically on the use of these two Bernsteinian concepts for RPL. She points out that while they provide a framework for analysing forms of knowledge, they do not indicate 'how they manifest empirically in the cut and thrust of educational practice' (Breier, 2004:8-9).

Breier realised that it was difficult to distinguish between horizontal and vertical knowledge. (Breier, 2004, 15-16) Observing her research subjects and their interaction with the formal curriculum, she concluded that the knowledge from individuals with work-based experience and the knowledge of the lecturers in the formal setting were difficult to separate. She noticed that general knowledge was also challenging to separate from a more profound understanding. She argues that her study indicates an interwoven network of knowledge involving what she calls the general (horizontal discourse) and the particular (vertical discourse), 'the abstract and the concrete in naturally occurring localised and general trajectories' (Breier, 2004:24).

Breier (2006:182) illustrates her findings by unpacking the different types of law, of which Labour Law is a subsection. Using Bernsteinian ideas on how a field interacts with practice and strategies in that field, she found: '…the informal experience in the practice of law, [is about] congruence between how experience is dealt with pedagogically and how it is contextualised in the practice of labour law'.

3.3.3 *Critical Theory*

Critical theory foregrounds power relations in society, and for RPL, such approaches see different kinds of knowledge as a reflection of power in society, partly in reaction to Kolbisim.

Michelson refers to 'outsider knowledge' that is valuable for its divergence from 'academic ways of knowing' (Michelson, 1996:185). This approach questions the notion that only learning within a formal educational setting can be recognised and not knowledge developed from experience. Michelson argues that knowledge is available from different 'standpoints' (Michelson, 1996:185), and that RPL is a vehicle to recognise and give space to knowledge and experience that may stand outside the conventional curriculum and the knowledge associated with it. RPL practitioners and researchers attempt to address contradictory or opposed ideas and knowledge claims within the RPL space. Supporting this notion, Mantashe and Nkonki point out that the main question asked of RPL is how to recognise knowledge from outside academia (Mantashe & Nkonki, 2019:35).

RPL, as defined in South Africa (and in other countries), requires the RPL practitioner to work within specific boundaries, such as entry requirements or learning outcomes for granting credit. The problem with these restrictions is that knowledge that falls outside what is deemed to be pertinent to the higher education institution (HEI) curriculum becomes invisible, especially when compared to specific subjects within a qualification. As Harris (1999:3) states, 'The site of knowledge production has changed, but not what counts as knowledge.' No challenge is made as to what counts as knowledge; the only knowledge regarded as worthwhile is knowledge within the boundaries defined by the HEI. (Osman, 2004:141). In this approach, there is little flexibility or space to validate knowledge that does not align with the curriculum and its associated learning outcomes, because the curriculum is a boundary within which the RPL process takes place (Pokorny & Whittaker, 2014). This study is conducted within these restrictions, and I will highlight their implications at the conclusion of this study.

Research conducted by Andersson and Osman (2008) highlights exclusions that occur when using RPL. The authors analysed the process of 'validation' used with immigrants into Sweden. Using the Foucauldian concepts of 'order of discourse', 'dividing practice', and 'technology of power', they highlight how some knowledge is made visible while other knowledge is not. They identify issues such as the language and communication skills of the emigrants as barriers. In addition, they also look into knowledge linked to practice within a specific vocation. They also highlight the power used by the assessors in this process to either include or exclude. Their study is located within a critical theory paradigm because its interpretive framework raises questions about the transformative and emancipatory potential of the RPL process used in the case studies highlighted.

3.3.4 *Vygotsky and Activity Theory*

Vygotsky's work and Activity Theory, combined with Bourdieu's three notions of; (i) student habitus, (ii) pedagogic agency, and (iii) the nature of the disciplinary field, has influenced research in RPL (Cooper, 2011:40-41). In this section, I discuss the work of Cooper, focusing on her research with successful RPL candidates and their experiences in higher education, using the three notions listed above. I also look at Pokorny's work using the Actor-network theory (ANT) and how this theory can help RPL candidates to 'conceptualise different realities.' Bourdieu also influenced the work of Basil Bernstein, and I will show how this connection, filters into the RPL research done in the past 30-20 years.

Cooper (2005: 222), reflecting on the question ‘What is knowledge?’, quotes Ralphs and Motala (2000), saying that little consensus exists in higher education on what constitutes academic knowledge. She quotes Harris (2004) saying that ‘we have little understanding of

what this dialogue [around different forms of knowledge] or conversation involves, indicative of theoretical and conceptual vagueness regarding the form of pedagogy underpinning RPL' (Harris, 2004, in Cooper, 2006: 222).

Cooper did her PhD on informal learning in the context of a trade union, analysing collective learning. Drawing on Vygotskian and post-Vygotskian perspectives about learning, she draws on the concept of 'tools of meditation' (Cooper, 2006: 223) to analyse her case study, specifically the use of language within the trade union. Cooper designed her study based on the assumption that informal learning occurs in settings such as meetings, organising, making decisions, and participating in collective activities. She found that storytelling played a significant role in the learning process, as union members would learn from the stories of more experienced union members (Cooper, 2006: 227). She interprets the various forms of communication within the union as mediation tools, of informal learning.

Cooper also focuses on the written forms of communication used within the union, for example educational materials such as handbooks, manuals, and booklets dealing with Labour law. Cooper observed that the information in these texts was detailed and dense. Although all were available, Cooper found that they were not widely read, and workers relied on oral transfer of information (Cooper, 2006: 229).

The importance of Cooper's study lies in her finding that RPL candidates have "subjugated knowledge' (Foucault in Cooper, 2006: 236), which might be unrecognisable to the academy because 'it is shared through different cultural forms than in the academy' (Cooper, 2006; 229). Referring to the storytelling within the union, Cooper highlights the importance of focusing on the 'principled understandings and knowledge that may be embedded in these accounts' (Cooper, 2006: 237).

Highlighting Harris's (2004) notion that 'RPL is a two-way process', Cooper (2006: 237) would like to see a mediation process between the knowledge from the unionist, the informal learning, and the academy. She refers to this as a two-way process because while a mediation process is necessary to assist the applicants in writing and using academic speech genres, the RPL process should also acknowledge the complexity of informal learning and work with the tensions this brings to the RPL process, 'bringing possibly new, richer and better forms of knowledge' (Cooper, 2006: 237-8).

Cooper (2011) asks if adult learners' prior experiential knowledge acts as a resource for acquiring the academic literacy practices necessary to complete post-graduate studies successfully. To answer this question, she used Bourdieu's three interrelated factors, namely

(i) the nature of the disciplinary field, (ii) the nature of the program's curriculum and pedagogy, and (iii) the students' social and learning histories. Cooper highlights that both parties in this relationship have their own habitus, dispositions and agency - the students and the academics (Cooper, 2011: 42-43). To analyse the curriculum and following the work of Harris (2004), Cooper draws on the concept of 'soft' and 'hard' disciplinary boundaries, Cooper doing her research with RPL students in a MPhil in Disability Studies, points out that the interdisciplinary orientation of the in qualification makes the boundaries porous between the academic and everyday knowledge, resulting in a hybridised curriculum. The advantage of having mature and experienced individuals given access to the classroom via RPL was that they provided unique insights valued by the lecturers and were seen as enriching the formal curriculum (Cooper, 2011: 46).

In her research with this group of students, Cooper (2011, 47-8) discovered a 'disjuncture' between the rich experiential knowledge of RPL students and their ability to express themselves through writing in English. She explains that the RPL students could demonstrate their knowledge better orally than in written form. Drawing on Bourdieu's notions of the nature of the field, pedagogic agency and student habitus, she argues that because these students came with an activist background, they had difficulties understanding the academic demands of the university context. In conclusion, Cooper (2011, 53) points out that her research highlights the complexity of RPL and demonstrates that much of the knowledge involved in this process is 'complex, tacit and contested'.

Pokorny (2023:5) using the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approach to research RPL. ANT, as defined by Creswell, Worth and Sheikh (2010) in Pokorny (2023;5), highlights the reality we live in as one which is performed into existence, and 'help(s) to conceptualise how different realities are experienced and enacted by different actors'. Pokorny (2023:5) adds that ANT frees up the research from the task of finding a single overarching explanation for how things come to be as they are.

Pokorny, used five concepts from ANT to analyse her data: Immutable, intermediaries, mediators, obligatory passage points and boundary objects (Pokorny, 2023, 6). Pokorny's work in this research project stands out for me, in particular, the point that 'boundary objects' have different meanings in different contexts. 'However, their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognisable', Pokorny (2023,6) refers to the portfolio of evidence and its contents, such as the evidence itself and the concepts and questions that might arise from the evidence.

3.3.5 *Social Realism – The Differentiation of Knowledge*

Various RPL researchers and practitioners draw on the work of social realist Basil Bernstein because this paradigm allows them to identify knowledge as 'socially produced by a community of practice'. At the same time, as Realists, they argue that ‘knowledge is about an objective world that exists independently of our social constructs of it' (Wheelehan, 2010:8). Keeping this explanation of Wheelehan in mind, various RPL Researchers have used Bernstein's work for their research.

RPL is seen as boundary work by Harris (2000), as navigating the boundaries between different knowledge discourses. Harris believes that, 'although the site of knowledge production is challenged, what counts as knowledge is not' (Harris, 2000:4). She makes this statement because she found in her case studies that socially advantaged individuals might have developed knowledge, skills and competencies in the workplace and in life that are not included in formal learning programmes and therefore, are not recognised. Her statement is important because it addresses the interaction between the academy, the workplace, and society at large, highlighting the need to keep pace with changes and how they are incorporated into formal education and the curriculum.

Harris works from Bernstein's theoretical perspective, focusing on how knowledge is organised in the curriculum and pointing out that 'some forms of organising knowledge provide better opportunities or possibilities for RPL than others' (Harris, 2000:11). She critiques Kolb and experiential learning and points out that 'experience + reflection = learning/knowledge' (Harris, 2000:12) is not necessary contextualised because of the difference between experiential learning and learning from experience (Usher, 1993, in Harris, 2000:12). RPL is about learning from experience, specifically *what* was learned from experience by an individual. Harris (2000) established several theoretical perspectives, particularly those derived from Bernstein, that would guide the research practices over the next 20 years and beyond, especially in South Africa.

Her book, edited with Per Andersson (2006), focuses on the 're-theorising of RPL', focusing on a changing world and changes in the modes of knowledge production and communication. The idea of knowledge structures becoming a preamble to curriculum development, authority and power within and over education and partnerships. Quoting Eraut (1994), 'Practice and theory have moved into closer proximity, especially in professional education'. Harris (2006:2-3) points out that RPL is not a 'new phenomenon' but has become a formalised practice concerning alternative access and granting credits into formal education.

The notion of knowledge structure provides a framework and conceptual language to analyse different types of knowledge in formal learning. Vertical discourse comprises two types of knowledge structures: horizontal knowledge structures and hierarchical knowledge structures (Bernstein, 1999, 2000). Several RPL researchers (the majority of whom are based in South Africa) have found his approach valuable for analysing RPL, including Harris (2000), Breier (2006), Ralphs (2012), de Graaff (2014), Cooper and Ralphs (2016), and Pokorny (2023).

Bernstein (1999:159) explains horizontal discourse as 'common-sense knowledge'. This knowledge is derived from and used daily in everyday life. It is oral, local, context-dependent, specific, tacit, multi-layered and segmentally organised. These segments, Bernstein explains, are culturally based and involve specialised activities, language and practices.

Vertical discourse consists of specialised structures of formal bodies of knowledge, which in turn comprise two knowledge structures: hierarchical knowledge structures, i.e., disciplines in the natural sciences; and *horizontal knowledge structures,* i.e., disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Each structure has a different social base, social relations, language and discursive practices. The process of acquiring knowledge in the horizontal knowledge structure involves language and recontextualization of knowledge, comprising the material, topics, concepts, and theories that make up the segment.

When studying a discipline within a horizontal knowledge structure, one *specialised language* is not a prerequisite for another. The process of acquiring knowledge in the horizontal knowledge structure involves language and the *recontextualisation* (*Italics added)* of the material/theory. (Bernstein, 1999:160-162).

Knowledge is segmented within such disciplines where it is serial in nature, and practitioners share a 'gaze' also called a 'repertoire' unique to that specific disciplinary segment. The Horisontal Knowledge Structure develops as a result of experience and ongoing practices, which include research and development.

To explain and conceptualise this process, Bernstein uses the concept of a *'pedagogic device'* to analyse the *production of knowledge* in a research site and, through intellectual work its *reproduction* as curriculum knowledge in formal education institutions and its *pedagogic transmission* in teaching and learning situations. This process is based on the process of recontextualization (Bernstein, 1999:160-162). I explain the pedagogic device in more detail later on in this chapter.

Bernstein (2000, xiii) explains the concept of *a boundary* as a metaphor:

> … in my case inside/outside, intimacy/distance, here/there, near/far, us/them. The crucial metaphorising is *what the boundary signifies*.

> Condensing the past but not relay for it, rather a tension between the past and possible futures. **The boundary is not etched as in copperplate nor as ephemerals is quicksand and is sometimes more enabling than disabling.** I have been concerned with how distributions of power are realised in various, and often silent, punctuations of social space with construct boundaries. I have been equally concerned with how these boundaries are relayed by various pedagogic processes as to distribute, shape, position and opposition forms of consciousness. However, engaging with such a metaphor as boundaries, whilst opening possibilities at the same time limits them. It is important to know when this limit is reached. (Italics in original text)

Bernstein used the word 'boundary' as a metaphor to capture the difference between forms of knowledge. Accordingly, it is not easy to cross the boundaries between non-formal and informal knowledge and formal knowledge are not those boundaries between different disciplines.

Brieir (2006), Harris (2000:33-34), and Cooper, Ralphs and Harris (2016:124-125), explain that Bernstein provides a 'conceptual vocabulary' to analyse the different types of knowledge within the RPL space. Different types of knowledge are associated with different types of boundaries. Bernstein distinguishes between various degrees of 'classification', which determines the strength of boundaries. Cooper, Ralphs, and Harris (2017:200) noted 'the absence of an equivalent set of languages of description for the conceptualising knowledge and circulated 'outside' the academy. Cooper and Ralphs note that everyday knowledge is not 'flat terrain' but involves complex, specialised experiential knowledge produced, circulated, and acquired outside the academy. Despite this, 'there is little theorisation of differentiation within knowledge produced and reproduced in sites of non-formal and informal learning' (Cooper, Ralphs & Harris, 2017:200).

Bernstein's work highlights that there are control and power relations at play in the determination of what knowledge is regarded as acceptable within specific social relations, including the academy, professional bodies, and/or the state (via the NQF), which determines what should be included in the discourse and curriculum of a specific discipline. This issue will be revisited later in this study in relation to the different professions that form the case studies.

Ralphs work led to the book he co-authored with Cooper (2016) and others where RPL is interpreted as a specialised pedagogy. Cooper and Harris (2013), and Harris and Wihak (2017), conducted research into the viability of RPL for specific qualifications. The study done in 2013, looked specifically at RPL into postgraduate studies, using the notion of 'knowledge differentiation and explores whether the nature of the disciplinary domain offers affordance or barriers to RPL' (Cooper & Harris, 2013:1). The 2017 study was done looking at a range of academic and professional qualifications, each having a different point of connection between

the formal and experiential knowledge (Harris & Wihak, 2017:696) Both studies found that curriculum based on horizontal knowledge structure provides more affordances for RPL.

RPL taking place within the Vocational Professional Higher Education Institute (V/PHEI), as is the case in this study, has to take cognisance of the type of qualifications based on a specific discipline offered to 'prepare (the students) for professional practice focusing on developing specific knowledge and skills to be applied to practical context within and beyond the educational programme' (Dall'Alba, 2009:34). RPL within a V/PHEI, needs to take into account the type of knowledge within the discipline focuses on programmes as well as the profession to which the programme leads.

3.3.6 RPL as a Specialised Pedagogy

The idea of recontextualisation is of great importance in this study. The concept plays a crucial role in RPL, enabling the interpretation and mediation of evidence of knowledge claimed by the RPL applicant, as I will explain in this section. To explore the context of recontextualisation, I draw on the work of Cooper and Ralphs (2016), and Bernstein's (2000) concept of the pedagogic device.

Recontextualisation is a process of selection, adjustments to, and change of knowledge carried out, which always involves a process of history playing itself out in the process of developing curriculum. It is a process that attempts to accommodate the changes taking place in society. It is a process that is not free of power and is influenced on the interests of various role players and gatekeepers.

Recontextualisation within a specific academic field (I include professions here) deals with producing educational knowledge for learning and teaching. The curriculum consists of knowledge derived from the original field of knowledge production (research or workplace-based practice) but has been filtered and transformed for educational purposes (Cooper and Ralphs, 2016:129). The recontextualisation process determines how knowledge from the original source is filtered and for what purpose. The filtering process is a powerful tool in the hands of curriculum developers because it determines what knowledge is important or not.

Theoretical knowledge is interpreted by Bernstein (2000:30) as 'powerful knowledge' which is regulated through what Bernstein refers to as a 'division of labour' that will grant some access, while others do not. The division of labour has three components: the researcher and academic – the knowledge producers - the teachers who are knowledge re-producers, and the knowledge acquirers, the students.

Bernstein (2000:155) asks, ‘What knowledge was before it became part of the curriculum’? From a theoretical knowledge perspective, he develops the notion of a pedagogical device based on a set of rules, as he points out that 'they are not ideologically free' (Bernstein, 2000:28). He identified three phases of the Pedagogic device, each with its own set of rules.

Explaining the pedagogic device's three phrases (Bernstein, 2000:15):

> *Knowledge field*: The knowledge field is the space where knowledge is produced. The sources of knowledge include research by scholars and professionals, as well as occupational and everyday knowledge-making.
> *Recontextualising the Field:* Recontextualisation involves the formation of a specific pedagogic discourse through the selection, relocation, and refocusing of elements from other discourses (fields) into a particular educational field (Bernstein, 2000:31).
> *Pedagogic Field: Functions* at a cognitive, social and cultural level. Based on the selection and other functions done in the previous recontextualisation stages, a specific context reproduces knowledge, dominant forms of specialised consciousness, and evaluation rules structure the knowledge that should be acquired (Bernstein, 2000:35, Cooper & Ralphs, 2016:131).

This process of recontextualisation, as interpreted by Bernstein, has led to some criticism, for example. Zipin, Fataar and Brennan (2015:11-12), referring to Young (2008), object to how social realism places' powerful knowledge' on a pedestal, giving it a central place within a curriculum, leading to specialists or disciplinary communities, noting reference to a 'claim of truth within a specific community'. Zipin et al. raise the question: What degree does the claim 'guarantee the truth’? Zipin et al. (2015:10-11) argue that social realists' shunt aside important ways of thinking about knowledge and curriculum that matter for socially just educational work'. They highlight an essential aspect that Bernstein and some of his followers did not address social justice. Bernstein highlights that the selection of knowledge via the pedagogic device depends mainly on the selection by specialists, and therefore excludes non-selective sections of society.

Using the three fields of the Pedagogic Device, Cooper and Ralphs (2016) explain that RPL pedagogy follows the same steps. However, the RPL process 'disrupts' the power dynamics: the rules governing knowledge production and evaluation rules. They have reviewed and transformed, rather than challenged, the pedagogic device for RPL purposes.

In the *Knowledge Field,* RPL disrupts the rules of knowledge production by recognising dual sources of authority – the site of specialised knowledge production as well as specialised

sources of experiential learning. Describing RPL as a form of 'artistry' that manifests itself as a specialised pedagogy, Cooper, Ralphs and Harris (2016:132) shaped by the unconventional methods[18] used by RPL.

In the *Recontextualising Field, the RPL proposes constructing a curriculum that 'looks both ways' – that recontextualises knowledge from the specialised sites of knowledge and selected sites in the experiential world, for example,* the workplace. RPL practitioners view RPL candidates as having knowledge that needs 'unlocking' (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016), and that they thus need assistance preparing for the assessment within an RPL process. RPL therefore involves a mediation process. The RPL practitioner (this can be a facilitator or a tutor) is seen by Cooper and Ralphs (2016) as 'boundary workers'.

In the *Pedagogic Field,* RPL attempts to broaden or contest the evaluation rules by acting to mediate between the recontextualised discourse of experiential knowledge and the recontextualised discourse of codified knowledge - in the direction of the later, creating the basis for they refer to as a Specialised Pedagogy (Cooper, Ralphs & Harris, 2016,131).

The work done by Cooper and Ralphs has led researchers to take their ideas and concepts further, applying them to different contexts and methods. This section describes the work done by Helen Pokorny, who researched the interpretation and presentation of evidence as part of the RPL process as a specialised pedagogy.

3.3.7 *Case study: RPL and Occupational Competence*

A case study by Deller (in Cooper and Ralphs (2016) deals with basic business skills in different workplaces with a qualification registered on the OQSF. Focussing on vocational skills and knowledge. In this case study, the author found that the traditional format of curriculum as required by the Quality Council for the Trades and Occupations (QCTO) based on 'knowledge', 'practical', 'workplace' and 'fundamental' (Deller, 2016:1,110) is too restrictive in the RPL context. She refers to these requirements as 'pedagogically counterproductive and significantly undermining RPL candidates' confidence in their capabilities'.

An integrated approach of mediating different competencies was developed to address this dilemma. The process facilitators assisted the candidates to make connections from their workplace based on procedural knowledge to contextualised understanding of theoretical

[18] 'Unconventional methods' Cooper (et al) refer to the methods used to develop portfolios and the mediation process involved.

concepts (Deller, 2016:110) The approach enabled Deller to accommodate different levels of knowledge from the applicants.

Deller realised that the various levels of knowledge became a challenge. She addresses this by adjusting the RPL programme to accommodate different levels of competence. It was assumed by the employers who had selected the participants that they had developed competencies 'informally' and would cope with the programme. As she explains, however, the candidates had difficulty engaging in and using the specialised language as required by the (QCTO). She concludes that RPL applicants could express themselves better through 'practice and reflexive [learning] outcomes' (Deller, 2016:103-105). Her pedagogical approach assisted the candidates in' articulating the unpinning knowledge and/or theory in relation to their own context-bound practices'.

Deller's interpretation and adjustment in this programme are interesting approaches to RPL. The changes she made are a form of recontextualisation and indicate sensitivity and insight into the types of knowledge found in (in this case, vocational education) and in the workplace and how these can be brought together using different methods for different participants.

3.3.8 *Pedagogical Pragmatism*

Pokorny (2017, 2023) completed interesting research using Actor Network Theory (ANT) to interpret RPL. She agrees with Cooper and Ralphs (2016) that RPL is a form of artistry and a Specialised Pedagogy. Pokorny's research focused on the RPL applicants themselves and how they experienced the RPL process. She analyses the interpretation of RPL applicants using the information they thought should be included in their developing portfolios and how they interpreted and reflected (or not) on their evidence (Pokorny et al., 2017:19).

Pokorny uses the concept of 'Pragmatic pedagogy' to interpret RPL, using a negotiated and interactive approach. The RPL process undertaken in 2017 involved mapping learning outcomes of specific modules, remaining 'abstract representations of learning' (Pokorny et al., 2017:22-25). The applicants had to adhere to RPL requirements, such as specific work experience (in this case, being a manager), and they also needed to submit a CV, a letter of reference, and a 1000-word professional profile. An interview followed this. If selected to proceed with the RPL process, the person was invited to engage in a 16-week program to complete a portfolio, which included four workshops, interaction with tutors, and a panel interview. The evidence presented was mapped against the learning outcomes. The portfolio included reflective writing about the evidence presented in relation to the Learning Outcomes, which is described as a 'bridge' between the evidence and the learning outcomes.

Pokorny et al. (2017:27) found that based on the evidence submitted, an 'otherness' was present, 'images of what knowledge is'. Pokorny(2017:27) quotes Magodla (2008) in this regard, who refers to the 'self-authorship' of the applicants, which impacts the applicant's beliefs, identity and social relations. She refers to this phenomenon as the 'agency' of the applicants.

In a second research project conducted in 2023 with RPL applicants seeking credits in a postgraduate teaching programme, the applicants could apply for credits against two of the three programme subjects: one focused on teaching and learning, and the other on assessment and providing feedback. The applicants worked independently from each other and were given guidelines and mapped learning outcomes. They were also provided with two readings. They had to provide evidence against these learning outcomes and provide a narrative to explain their evidence, but no specific' modes of reflection' were given. (Pokorny, 2023: 1-2).

Pokorny investigated how the applicants in an RPL programme saw the use of the guideline and learning outcomes differently, and their interpretations of the guideline. Pointing out that RPL is a process of 'mediation across boundaries' (Pokorny, 2023:1), and using ANT as her theoretical framework, she could focus on the 'tracking of [the] translation process' by which a network of individuals expands or contracts and through which knowledge becomes patterned in particular ways" (Latour, 1999, in Pokorny, 2023:5-6).

Having analysed the evidence submitted by the RPL applicants, the information was classified into three types (Pokorny, 2023: 9-10): (i) One group saw their evidence not as a mediation object but as an intermediary to the text – it was used to support the claim. They used the evidence to explain 'where I do what I do', articulating professional learning and highlighting what they had learned, explicitly stating and explaining it. (ii) The second group saw their evidence as a method to demonstrate professional practice. Their evidence was viewed as an example or artifact of their learning, explaining 'why I do what I do'. This group demonstrated their professional practice. (iii) The third group saw their evidence as a method to authenticate their professional practice, transferring it to the portfolio without interacting with the evidence, demonstrating 'what I do'. Authentication professional practice without reflecting on the information they opted to include in the portfolio of evidence; they did not engage with the tutoring and support that was put in place as part of RPL process.

She interpreted these three categories of what evidence can do as an illustration of practice, verification or authentication of competence, and a catalyst for integrating practice. The first two groups valued the new learning that candidates gained through the development of the portfolio; these participants concentrated on making their tacit knowledge explicit However,

the third group did not interact with or seek to explain their evidence. Based on this finding, Pokorny (2023:10) positions RPL as a ‘pedagogy of learning translation and transfer'.

Based on her findings, Pokorny (2023:10) interpreted the evidence submitted as a 'transfer' or 'translation' process, and what these individuals focussed on as RPL – T&T: 'Transfer' – if the applicant had done no or little to explain their evidence; and 'Translation' – if the applicant interacted with their evidence and presented it. With this model, Pokorny explains that she 'recognised that some skills and knowledge may directly transfer across contexts whilst others require mediation and translation' (ibid). The implications of Pokorny's work is based on her concept of 'pedagogic pragmatism', which provides RPL practitioners with the opportunity to exercise their 'professional artistry'. At the same time, they can develop a specialised pedagogical practice in higher education to facilitate the RPL process.

In conclusion, Pokorny refers to the process as the 'communication of learning outcomes' between the practice and educational contexts. She interprets the role of evidence as representing or illustrating practice, verifying or authenticating competence, and being a catalyst for the interrogation of practice (Pokorny, 2023:11).

Pokorny points out that the participants who valued their experience and appreciated the new concepts they were learning, at the same time, developed a new perspective of their own practice. She also argues that ' RPL participants by using the RPL guideline and tasks focused on making explicit their situated learning through a boundary object'

The study in this thesis draws on the interpretation of RPL as a specialised pedagogy. I incorporate Pokorny's findings in my reflection on the RPL process in the two cases on which my study is based. I demonstrate that the interaction among the learning outcomes, academics, assessors, and applicants was crucial.

This section has described the work done by several researchers in RPL and the various paradigms The context in which the researchers operate has benefited from the work of Cooper and Ralphs, prompting other researchers to explore their ideas and concepts in various contexts and employing different methods. The interpretations of RPL by Cooper and Ralphs, along with those of Helen Pokorny, form the foundation of this study. I will now highlight several key aspects of RPL that my study concentrates on.

3.4 Some Key Concepts in RPL Theory

In this section, I focus on four key concepts in RPL that emerge from the literature and have proven significant for my study: knowledge differentiation and RPL as a contested field, the use of learning outcomes, qualification-specific RPL, and boundaries.

3.4.1 *Knowledge Differentiation and RPL as a Contested Field*

The contestation in RPL revolves around 'knowledge, pedagogy and power'. (Osman, 2006:205) and the 'understanding of knowledge, pedagogy, learning, experience and learning from experience' (Harris, 2000:26-27). This leads to a 'debate about the relationship between academic/disciplinary/formal curricular knowledge and experiential knowledge', resulting in different understandings of 'equivalence' between formal and non-formal/informal learning. Osman (2003) in Cooper and Ralphs (2016: 26) refers to this contestation as a 'knowledge paradox', explaining that if an academic value experience only, they will exclude applicants with formal knowledge; however, the opposite was observed by Osman in her studies, where academics don't value experiential learning, the dominance of the academic knowledge will guide them.

The question that all RPL practitioners, assessors and applicants, must navigate within an RPL process is how to work within this contested field. The RPL applicant may have a different interpretation of knowledge from that of the academic. The interpretation of knowledge should be a negotiated one, a process “of reconciling the difference between learning developed through experience or practice and learning developed through learning formally” (Harris, 2000:26-27). Cooper and Ralphs (2016) and Harris (2000) interpret RPL as a negotiated process, emphasising the complexities involved and naming it a 'specialised pedagogy' working across different communities of practice and different forms of knowledge.

3.4.2 *The use of learning outcomes*

This study focuses on awarding credits within a qualification for specific subjects. These subjects are based on the curriculum and the learning outcomes (LOs) of the subjects. In this section, I look at research on the influence of learning outcomes on an RPL process.

The use of learning outcomes for credits via an RPL process originates in the qualification design involved. The development of qualification frameworks worldwide has led to development of qualifications using learning outcomes for all the subjects within the programme. These qualifications are aligned to levels on a qualification framework underpinned by level descriptors. Reflecting on research done in Scotland by Whittaker and Brown (2012:1), the qualification framework 'opens up new possibilities for recognising prior learning in a way that facilitates greater *parity* between the outcomes of informal and formal learning' (*italics added).*

Helen Peters (2006) refers to learning outcomes as a lynchpin of this (granting of credits) type of RPL. Writing about the use of learning outcomes in RPL, using critical discourse theory as her framework for analysis, she highlighted several aspects that can influence success. RPL

practitioners see Learning Outcomes as a standard against which experiential learning can be evaluated. The evaluation of the evidence submitted and the result, thus power (the decision to grant credits or not), rests within the Institution of Higher Education (HEI) through the learning outcomes as developed for their programmes. Peters (2006:170) correctly points out that this process is only possible if the learning outcomes are written correctly for learning to be identified.

As Deller found, Whittaker and Brown (2012:8) highlight the problem faced in the RPL process where LOs are used, which can become a barrier. Knowledge of academic terminology is a challenge and can also result in a barrier (Naudé, 2016:64-65). Interaction between the RPL applicant and RPL assessor is a critical aspect of this process. As this study will show, how the LOs are written and used can also be an enabling factor in the RPL process. In addition, it requires a deep understanding of the types of knowledge in the curriculum, the subjects, and their learning outcomes. It also requires a profound understanding of the workplace. The approach to RPL must be qualification-specific because different qualifications, disciplines, and associated professions encompass distinct types of knowledge.

Pokorny describes the approach to RPL, which rests on particular combinations of 'technical rationality' and 'adherence to a Learning Outcomes focused output 'as 'static and a given'. Together with 'professional artistry' Harris (2000), and Pokorny et al. (2017) point out that the onus is on the RPL applicant to take the initiative and to negotiate the recognition process on their own while developing a portfolio of evidence.

Research done by Pokorny (2017:20) compares two approaches to enable interaction with Learning Outcomes, the one being dialogic mediation and the other monologic teaching (Gravett & Henning, 1998, in Pokorny et al., 2017:20). Dialogic mediation involves interaction between the applicant and assessor working together to identify learning that is equivalent to, but not the same to the curriculum. This is contrasted with the monologic approach, where tutors worked with the RPL applicant who felt disempowered. The conclusion is drawn that the RPL process has to be a negotiated, interactive approach.

Some in higher education view Learning Outcomes as untouchable and incapable of being transformative. This study will illustrate that Learning Outcomes can be changed without losing meaning or importance in the pedagogic process. Learning outcomes are as much part of the RPL mediation process as the portfolio-building process, influenced by the disciplinary field and the profession involved.

3.4.3 *Qualification-specific RPL*

Harris (2000:11) posed a question:'[do] some forms of organising knowledge provide better opportunities or possibilities for RPL than others?' She took her question and conducted research into the impact of different knowledge structures on the feasibility of RPL in two research projects (Cooper & Harris, 2013; Harris & Wihak, 2017).

From a knowledge differentiation point of view, Cooper and Harris (2013) explored 'whether the nature of the discipline or knowledge domain offered affordances or barriers to RPL' (Cooper & Harris, 2013, 4). They focused on access to postgraduate studies, to qualifications, in an applied, professional, or vocational orientation at universities in Canada and South Africa. In discussions with academics, Cooper and Harris (2013) found that the disciplinary context or knowledge domain is an important factor influencing the possibility of RPL. Other factors affecting the success of RPL, are the interpretation of the individuals/academics involved in the process and the organisational culture. The research found that 'knowledge structure does affect the feasibility of RPL, but less so at the postgraduate level.

However, the 'pedagogic agency' of the academics involved also played a crucial part in the Development of 'diverse pedagogic interventions appropriate for the inclusion of knowledge historically excluded from higher education institutions' (Cooper & Harris, 2013:14-15). In conclusion, the authors note that 'RPL cannot be reducible to 'one size fits all' but needs to assume different forms in different institutional and disciplinary settings'.

In a separate, but similar study, Harris and Wihak (2017) investigated the extent to which the structure and purpose of a qualification can connect formal learning with experiential knowledge. In their view, using the knowledge structures developed by Bernstein does not assist with the unpacking or understanding of experiential knowledge (Harris & Wihak, 2017:698). Harris and Wihak make the point that experiential learning can be a highly complex hybrid that can consist of elements of disciplinary knowledge.

They chose to work with different undergraduate programmes: Science, Nursing, Business, Social Work, Tourism, and Journalism. The following were their general points and conclusions: RPL was more feasible where knowledge in the formal curriculum was found to be segmental, and courses offered were multidisciplinary and outward-facing, with weak boundaries, whereas in a programme such as HRM, there is a degree of vertical discourse because some subjects are prerequisites to others. They also found that an element that needs to be considered is the requirements of professional bodies in the RPL process, because they determine the content of the curriculum. Without the professional designation,

gaining employment is exceedingly difficult. The nature of the labour market also influences the feasibility of RPL in different fields (Harris & Wihak, 2017:708). They also found that Individuals' drive and willingness to learn in the workplace is also an important aspect, as is the ability of the individual to derive knowledge from experience.

Harris and Wihak (2017:708) conclude that RPL seems more feasible in disciplines drawing on Social Sciences and Humanities. They also noted that RPL is more feasible in 'professions with stronger contextual logic and greater proximity to practice'. They also stated that recontextualisation between the formal programme and experiential learning can go a long way to closing the gap between academia and the workplace.

In summary, they point out that the feasibility of RPL depends on a variety of variables: discipline, knowledge domain, knowledge niches, pedagogic agency, regulatory and professional bodies, the nature of the labour market, and employment contexts. All these aspects influence the feasibility of RPL Thus, RPL criteria alone are not sufficient as indicators, as the aspects listed also influence the process.

3.4.4 *Boundaries and boundary objects*

The three key concepts discussed in the above points namely: (i) knowledge differentiation and RPL as a contested field, (ii) the use of learning outcomes, and (iii) qualification-specific RPL, which are all influenced by the fourth concept: boundary crossing and what boundaries are at play in the RPL space.

Pokorny (2023:11) refers to a boundary object within the context of ANT. She uses this concept specifically in the case of RPL as Translation, where it is a key concept for tracing translation. A boundary object is 'plastic enough' (Pokorny, 2023:9) or flexible enough for RPL candidates to value educational concepts or develop new perspectives and make their tacit knowledge visible, highlighting the evidence's role. Her model acknowledges that some skills and knowledge may be directly transferable across contexts, while others may require translation and mediation.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have given an overview of the literature in RPL relevant to this study. In Part A, I focused on empirical research conducted on RPL based on publications within the sector. List the topics. Part B centers on the adoption of various theoretical approaches that underpin the RPL research literature, beginning with the use of experiential learning and the ‘Kolbism’ approach. Due to the restrictive nature of this theoretical approach within RPL as both a practice and research field, researchers began to utilize different educational theories to

address its shortcomings. I provided an overview of Critical Theory, Vygotsky, and Activity Theory. The works of Bernstein and Social Realism have greatly influenced RPL, particularly in South Africa.

I have highlighted some of the Bernsteinian concepts usually included in research about RPL from a Social Realist Perspective. My interpretation led me to four conceptual themes that will be guiding my study moving forward:

- Knowledge structures,
- Curriculum and Learning Outcomes,
- The process of Specialised Pedagogy, and
- Boundary Crossing.

Throughout this study and to make sense of the two case studies selected, I will use the idea that RPL involves a process of recontextualisation and is conceptualised as a Specialised Pedagogy, where RPL practitioners assist applicants to navigate boundaries between different forms of knowledge.

This chapter has not only provided an overview of the relevant research in the RPL field but has also identified some gaps or topics not extensively researched (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:91). A key gap that I have identified that there is relatively little research on the granting of credits for informal and non-formal learning via RPL. In addition, little research exists on the use of Learning Outcomes in RPL. Details on how Learning Outcomes are recontextualised in the RPL process and how both academics and applicants interpret Learning Outcomes are rarely addressed. Learning Outcomes are seen as ‘static and a given’ (Pokorny 2017). The question that remainder of this study will address is whether the Learning Outcomes can be adjusted to suit the RPL process? These concerns have influenced and shaped my research questions.

Chapter 4: Development of a Conceptual Framework to Identify and Analyse Types of Knowledge

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe and explain the development of the conceptual framework that was used to analyse the two case studies in this research study.

The conceptual framework draws firstly on Bernstein's conceptualisation of different knowledge types and secondly on Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation, both of which I use to interpret different types of knowledge involved in an RPL knowledge claim. Barnett's (2006) concepts of ‘reclassification recontextualisation’ and ‘pedagogical recontextualisation’ help to locate the different forms of knowledge involved in RPL, as does the concept of ‘chain of recontextualisation’ developed by Evans et al. (2009).

I also deal with the knowledge claim itself, explaining it from the perspective of an RPL application, as well as from the perspective of Higher Education.

This chapter further explores the work of Peters (2006), who reflects on using learning outcomes in RPL practice, describing them as a ‘lynchpin’ within the practice. ‘For many RPL practitioners, learning outcomes are the standard against which learning from experience is measured’ (Peters, 2006:170). This study will later show that using learning outcomes creates a specific/bounded space for RPL practitioners and applicants within which knowledge developed outside the curriculum can be compared to knowledge in the curriculum.

In conclusion, I explain how I have used the Revised Taxonomy of Anderson and Krathwohl (2002) as an analytical tool to compare the learning outcomes and, indirectly, the different forms of knowledge within the RPL process.

4.2 Unpacking Different Types of Knowledge

> 'Recognition of prior learning deals with learning and knowledge from all spheres of life and learning, acknowledging and working across different forms of knowledge that are not always easily connected or connectable.' (Harris, 2014:54)

Underpinning Harris's statement above is the understanding that some form of differentiation exists between different forms of knowledge, which presents a challenge to recognising these different forms of knowledge. How knowledge is interpreted by the various stakeholders within an RPL process directly influences what knowledge is recognised.

The work of Basil Bernstein emphasises the structure of knowledge. It analyses how it is influenced and even determined by social relations that underpin theoretical and everyday knowledge. These social relations can mediate and determine access to knowledge in ways that provide access to some and not to others (Wheelahan, 2006:12). Bernstein's work is important for RPL because, as I will demonstrate in this study, the types of knowledge structures associated with different academic disciplines are important, but so are the social relations associated with the knowledge, particularly how it is acquired and used within a specific discipline and profession.

In my case studies, I highlighted the nature of the knowledge and the boundaries at play in the RPL application, that had to be navigated. These boundaries exist not only between informal, non-formal, and formal knowledge but are also shaped by the requirements of the professional body, the type of work done by the applicant, and what the applicant has learnt in the workplace.

RPL candidates must navigate the space between different types of knowledge, where knowledge from the workplace or profession and knowledge included in the qualifications intersect.

There is a growing recognition that 'specialised forms of experiential knowledge are being produced and circulated outside the academy' (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016). Quoting from her research done with trade unions, Cooper points out the 'hybridity of this knowledge' and 'a transgression of boundaries' (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016:129). The hybrid comprises of 'complex articulations of different forms and dimensions of knowledge – each carrying its own specialisations very often determined by context'. In the light of this observation by Cooper, I explain the process of recontextualisation in the next section, which plays an important role in the RPL process as I interpret it in this study.

4.3 Process of Recontextualisation

My use of the concept of recontextualization is based on the reinterpretation of Bernstein's (2000) concept by Cooper and Ralphs (2016). It refers to a process of taking a topic or concept from its original context and moving it into a new context. The concept of Recontextualization can be drawn on to provide a conceptual language for describing the RPL practice across different sites and contexts and the distinctive features of the 'inner workings' during boundary crossing. (Ralphs, 2016:17)

Bernstein's (2000) notion of recontextualisation is related to his concept of the 'pedagogical device'. Bernstein's notion of the pedagogic device illustrates how knowledge is recontextualised from one field to another using the process of education. Bernstein identified three steps in the curriculum process as knowledge moves from one field to the next:(1) the production of knowledge through research; (2) the selection of relevant knowledge into the development of a curriculum; and (3) the evaluation or assessment of knowledge in pedagogy. In some disciplines, knowledge and concepts or topics are steeped in history, traditions, and processes. What is regarded as knowledge by the selectors for the development of curriculum and the recontextualization of the original concepts/topics is influenced by the worldview of those individuals, which is ideologically based. Thus, during the process of recontextualisation of knowledge, there is an interplay of different social interests from various stakeholders involved in the process.

Bernstein's concept of the Pedagogic Device has been used by authors other than those researching RPL to focus on curriculum development and use. For example, the idea of recontextualisation was reinterpreted by Micheal Barnett (2006) in his analysis of the interaction between the formal curriculum, vocational education and the workplace.

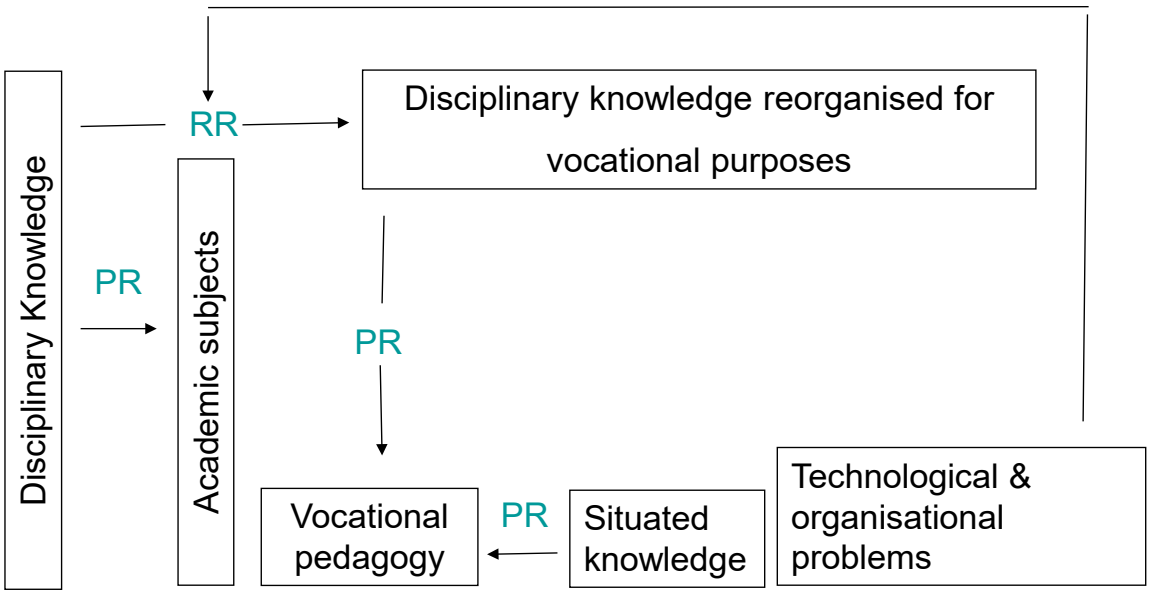
The benefit of using the concept recontextualisation (Evans et al., 2009:15-16) explains how all forms of knowledge are tied to their own context, identifies how knowledge changes as it is used differently in different practices and contexts; it identifies how new knowledge changes people, social practices and contexts and it identifies what and who supports the recontextualisation process.

4.3.1 *Vocational Education and Recontextualisation*

My interest in Barnett's work is in his interpretation of recontextualisation and how he used this concept to explain the interaction of knowledge between different learning spaces - i.e. workplace learning, formal learning, experiential learning, and learning from reflection. The process used by Barnett was interpreted as a 'chain of recontextualisation' by Evans et al., 2009).

Michael Barnett (2006) writes about vocational education in the United Kingdom (UK), drawing on the work of Basil Bernstein. He explains the interaction between knowledge, pedagogy and workplaces and the development of apprenticeship curricula. For this analysis, he uses three concepts from Bernstein's work specifically: 'classification' (boundaries), 'recontextualisation', and 'framing' type of pedagogy to analyse vocational pedagogy (Barnett, 2006:144-145). He also draws on the notion of the pedagogical device.

For this study, I draw specifically on the concept of recontextualisation, which Barnett defines as '… the appropriation and transformation of knowledge for various purposes'. Barnett, identifies two processes of recontextualisation: *'pedagogic recontextualisation' (PR)* and *'reclassification recontextualisation' (RR)* illustrated in Figure 4.1. In other words, Barnett illustrates how knowledge changes as it is used in different contexts and practices



Note: PR – pedagogic recontextualisation
RR – reclassificatory recontextualisation

Figure 4.1: Knowledge, recontextualisation and vocational pedagogy (Barnett, 2006:148)

The concept of *pedagogic recontextualisation* (PR) Barnett makes a case for curriculum development to 'conceptualise the links between workplace activity and disciplinary knowledge' (Barnett, 2006:146-7).

In the first process of recontextualization, Pedagogical Recontextualisation (PR) deals with formal academic education described as: ‘the development of academic curricula, the transformation of disciplinary knowledge into academic subjects to be studied at various levels and in various institutional and non-institutional settings is a process of selection, simplification and paraphrasing’ (Barnett, 2006:145-146).

Barnett explains the possible impact of the workplace on formal education through the interaction between situated knowledge and vocational knowledge. He interprets this process as Pedagogic Recontextualisation (PR) because he interprets this recontextualisation as taking place from the academic subject into the workplace, part of training within the workplace and the operational demands of the working environment.

The PR within the workplace 'is related particularly to forms of codified non-tacit knowledge, for example, practical operating procedures, effective designs and systematic practical knowledge which has or has not yet, been brought into relationship with the formal analytical structures which tend to characterise disciplinary knowledge' (Barnett, 2006:148-149).

The second process of *reclassification recontextualisation* (RR) involves accommodating the demands of professional practice, i.e., the development of the vocational curriculum. Barnett asks how one acquires the more abstract knowledge required for particular professions, such as financial regulations. He proposes a method 'to conceptualise the links between knowledge of the workplace or profession and disciplinary knowledge with a different process of recontextualisation, having regard for the technical and organisational problems encountered in specialised work settings'. This is called recontextualization (RR) because the disciplinary knowledge is conceptualised for workplace activity (Barnett, 2006:147).

As indicated in Figure 4.1, RR moves from 'Disciplinary knowledge' to 'Disciplinary knowledge reorganised for vocational purposes'. Barnett has ‘Disciplinary Knowledge’ on the far left of his diagram. He refers to this as *‘primary sources’* from which the PR and RR draw their knowledge as indicated by the arrows. This point made by Barnett is important because he illustrates that both types of recontextualisation processes are '*d*rawing from the same original source’ as PR. RR is used to analyse and develop vocational education or short courses based on the specific knowledge needs in the workplace. It is important to note what Barnett refers to as Disciplinary knowledge, which is rarely used in its original form because these

primary sources have already been recontextualised for use in an educational and/or workplace setting (Barnet, 2006:145-146).

Barnett points out that problems in the workplace are sometimes important drivers for the development of disciplinary knowledge. Barnett explores the operational demands of workplaces as a means to link 'disciplinary knowledge and vocational pedagogy' by noting that in the workplace, technical and operational demands require specific knowledge, typically sectoral or organisational. This leads to what he refers to as 'situational knowledge'. He points out that situated knowledge: 'does not easily relate to disciplinary knowledge', it is tacit and hard to codify. But, *situated knowledge,* which is part of the workplace, job-specific, and associated with specific tasks, is trapped within the contexts of application, frequently tacit, difficult to put into words, and trial-and-error is part of the learning process (Barnett, 2006:145-146).

Barnett concludes that this interaction results in a ‘toolbox' of applicable knowledge by drawing on knowledge from various areas of disciplinary knowledge, 'reclassification recontextualisation (RR)'. Barnett explains that the development of the toolbox is how the knowledge bases of professions such as engineering and medicine are assembled. The demands for RR come from practice and not from a learning or teaching perspective (Barnett, 2006:147).

The recontextualisation of knowledge for different vocational and professional disciplines requires different recontextualisation processes. The principles of recontextualisation for a specific curriculum or subject should be considered for pedagogical reasons when developing or selecting vocational knowledge for teaching and learning. Of great importance to Barnett and Bernstein, is how knowledge is subdivided or 'carved up' – this is a 'very important pedagogic question and the criteria for recontextualising knowledge can reflect fundamental beliefs and choices in terms of how the subject and its relationship to the wider world are perceived' underscoring Bernstein's comments about the role of ideology and the determination of 'acceptable knowledge'.

4.3.2 *Recontextualisation between Learning and Work Leading to a Chain of Recontextualisation*

Using the notion of recontextualisation from Bernstein's and Barnett's work, Evans, et al. used it as a lens to analyse how different forms of knowledge are recontextualised as ‘people move between sites of learning and practice in universities, colleges and workplaces providing new ways (of understanding) longstanding and seemingly intractable problems relating to ‘theory and 'practice' (Evans et al., 2009:156).

Defining recontextualisation as 'a way to analyse the relationship between forms of knowing, learning and acting between the contexts of education and work' (Evans et al., 2009:80), they acknowledge that theoretical and practical forms of knowledge can be distinguished analytically as separate, but that 'they have a mediated relationship with each other'.

Evans et al. (2009:156) conducted a research project involving five case studies or exemplars (the term they used) to improve the analysis of work-based learning (WBL) and explaining how the *same knowledge* is put to work in different environments. Concentrating on different forms of knowledge, They analysed how ways in which forms of knowledge are contextualized and recontextualised within specific disciplines and workplaces. The research involved various sectors of the economy, but all learning sites incorporated theoretical knowledge, such as science, and applied that knowledge within a workplace. For example, electronic fundamentals applied to engine maintenance as part of aircraft maintenance in a qualification for avionic engineering. Workplace learning was part of the qualification and had to be completed successfully before the qualification was awarded.

The authors point out that the theory-practice debate 'fails to acknowledge that knowledge viewed as content is knowledge that has already been 'codified' in accordance with the rule and procedure of particular disciplines, schools of thought and practices'. These 'schools of thought' include the traditions and norms of practice, and the life experiences in which different kinds of knowledge are generated. Knowledge generated in one context must be recontextualized to be applied in another context (Evans et al., 2009:4).

This research led by Evans et al. (2009:12) led to the development of an adapted concept of ' a chain of recontextualisation', consisting of four models (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Four Models of Recontextualisation (adapted from Evans et al., 2009:12)

Content recontextualisation (CR) – Programme design which could be the recontextualisation within a horizontal or hierarchical knowledge structure leading to a training programme	**Workplace recontextualisation (WR)** – If the workplace supports learning and the learners takes responsibility for their learning, then. 'Progressive recontextualisation takes place as the learners become more confident and develop an increased ability to do the work.
Pedagogic recontextualisation (PR) – Teaching and facilitating is organising teaching opportunities that follow logically within the associated knowledge structure and include learning outcomes.	**Learner/Employee recontextualisation (LR)** – Learners making sense of the whole by bring together learning from the programme and learning in the workplace.

These four kinds of recontextualisation ‘focus on processes involved in successfully moving knowledge between disciplines and workplaces via pedagogic strategies and learner/employee engagement.’ (Evans et al., 2009: 8) Content Recontextualisation (CR) and Pedagogic Recontextualisation (PR) are both in the formal setting, while Workplace Recontextualisation and Learner/Employee recontextualisation (LR) are in the workplace.

The idea that knowledge moves from one context to another, being recontextualised in the process, and forming a chain of recontextualisation, seemed to me, could apply to the RPL process. In this study on RPL, the focus is on identifying the knowledge and concepts that are transferred from one context to another - from a particular workplace to an application of RPL to a higher education institution,- and the learning outcomes and knowledge, within the specific curriculum.

Guille (2014:81-82) reflects on the development of a professional qualification and points out that the theoretical forms of knowledge selected from the discipline sit alongside the practical reasons and the professional perceptions and actions involved in a professional qualification. What he highlights is that theory and practice interact to develop professional judgement. The idea of ‘recontextualisation’ as discussed above provides a beneficial notion in this regard to explore the interaction between different types of knowledge. The knowledge structure is hierarchical in disciplines with stronger boundaries, such as physics and other sciences. The rules of recontextualisation are clear and form the basis for the curriculum. However, within horizontal knowledge structures in weaker boundary disciplines, the segmented knowledge structures of [for example] Sociology lead to ongoing contestations between 'different allegiances, interests and identities' (Luckett, 2009:451) as curricula are determined (Hordern, 2016:372).

Analysing horizontal knowledge structures, Hordern argues that in the development of applied curriculum, the recontextualisation process is more complicated because these disciplines have to consider the requirements of the occupation. 'The curriculum aims to produce adept practitioners at a novice or competent level who can meet the demands of the occupation' (Hordern, 2016:327). RPL works the other way around; using the concept of a knowledge claim, it is a tool to analyse this interaction between the formal education requirements and learning in the workplace within RPL.

4.4 Development of a Knowledge Claim

Recognising what a person knows is complicated. So far, I have explained the various components of knowledge within the academic environment, in the workplace, and the profession, and the interaction of different forms of knowledge through the concept of

recontextualisation. I now combine all the above theories, interpretations, and processes into a 'knowledge claim'. This concept enables analysis of various forms of knowledge that one might find in an RPL application.

4.4.1 *The Idea of a Knowledge Claim*

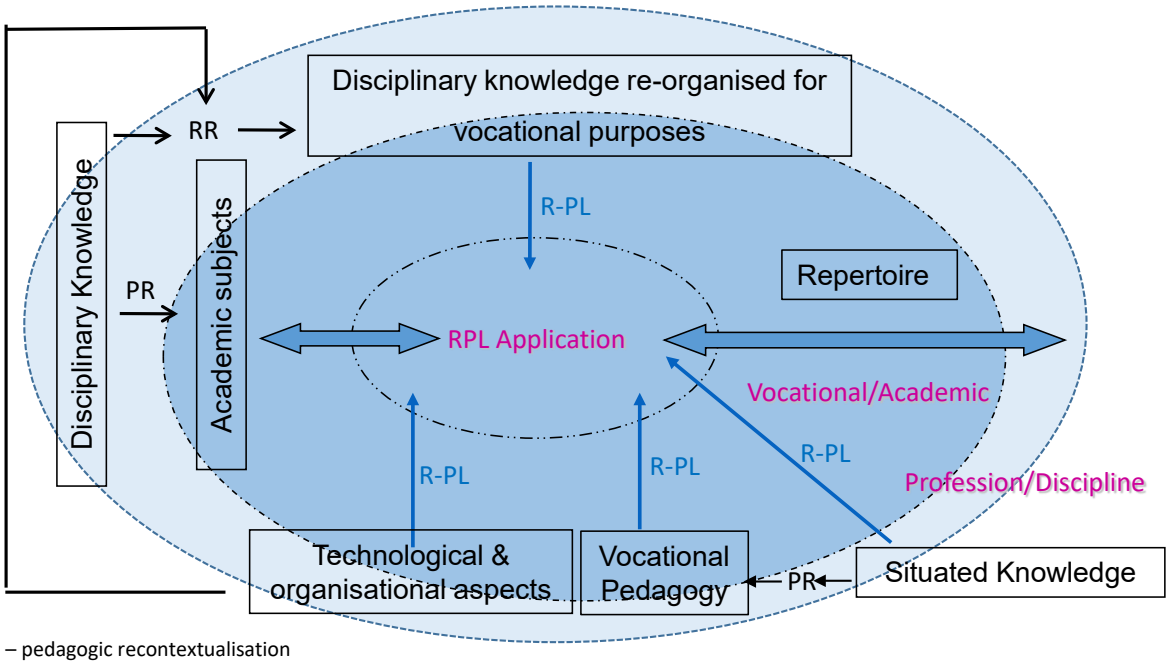
While reflecting on Barnett's work, I realised that the RPL application can be situated in the middle of Barnett's illustration (Figure 4.2). I considered the various forms of knowledge that converge within the RPL process. Although Barnett writes about curriculum development, the notion of pedagogical recontextualisation and reclassification recontextualisation provides a method to interpret the RPL process as well. It also provides a framework for identifying the various types of knowledge involved in an RPL process. Barnett's work led me to develop the concept of a knowledge claim for my master's research (De Graaff, 2010). I take the concept idea further and in this section indicates how an RPL application aligns with Barnett's work (Figure 4.2). I retained Barnett's schema unchanged, with the original source of knowledge still positioned on the left for both discipline and vocational knowledge (PR and RR). I highlight the different processes of recontextualisation, bearing in mind the interaction between discipline and profession as described earlier on in this section. This interaction is illustrated as follows:

- The light blue sphere (outer sphere) represents the knowledge developed within the discipline or professional field. This sphere is outlined with a dotted line, signifying that it does not exist in isolation from other fields and disciplines. This sphere encompasses all types of knowledge within the discipline, including both academic and workplace-oriented knowledge.

- The darker blue sphere represents the knowledge claims made on one side within working life situated knowledge. This is supported by the repertoire of the profession as well as workers' reflection on practice that can lead to the development of workplace knowledge. In the workplace, non-formal and informal training does take place and is included in vocational pedagogy. The workplace also has technological and organisational aspects, policies, and procedures that will influence the workplace knowledge. Legislation applicable to the field/discipline can also lead to learning.

- Disciplinary knowledge is recontextualised for vocational purposes and can be either formal knowledge learnt in a formal environment[19] such as in-house training or in non-formal and/or informal setting.

- A second knowledge claim in the blue sphere is academic knowledge and/or formal learning. Disciplinary knowledge within the field is recontextualised for academic education purposes and included in the formal syllabus.



PR – pedagogic recontextualisation
RR – reclassification recontextualisation (Barnett, 2006)
R-PL – recontextualisation of prior learning

Figure 4.2 :Development and layers of knowledge claims within a discipline and profession in the context of RPL

- The third sphere, in the middle, is the RPL applicant whose knowledge claim is based on aspects of the two bigger spheres, because this is the environment or context, that the person is working in.

[19] Training in the workplace can be formal if the course is on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) and course provider are accredited by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupation (QCTO) in-line with the NQF 2008 regulations. In such a case the learning done in the workplace can be considered for articulation to HE rather than RPL. This aspect of transferability and learning pathways is not part of this study.

The two spheres in the background indicate what is included in the knowledge claim: I use the two types of recontextualisation per Barnett's interpretation to explain the link between recontextualisation and RPL. Firstly, I will explain my interpretation of recontextualisation (RR):

Disciplinary knowledge reorganised for vocational purposes: RR. The RPL candidate has a working knowledge to do his/her job within the field. Some of this knowledge might have been taught by a mentor, and might include standard operating procedure, regulations, and quality assurance principles. Some of the knowledge might be tacit, and some might be explicit. The question is, what does this knowledge consist of?

Technological and organisational problems: the RPL applicant has developed knowledge based on the challenges faced in the workplace, reflecting on knowledge used to resolve them, within a team or individually.

Secondly, Figure 4.2 demonstrates Pedagogical Recontextualisation (PR) – the pedagogical aspects within the knowledge claim.

- *Disciplinary knowledge and academic subjects:* The academic knowledge claim is on the left-hand side of the illustration. Curriculum development within an academic department is a selection of disciplinary knowledge that is included in various subjects in the curriculum. The curriculum is developed based on various subjects, with learning outcomes at its core. This is a knowledge claim based on the interpretation of academics regarding what should or should not be included in the curriculum.

- *Vocational pedagogy:* This is knowledge gained from programmes that could be tailor-made to the specific organisation and profession. The RPL application can include knowledge from formal or non-formal courses that the person has completed (or not) through short courses or other educational institutions, such as those in the private sector or vocational/trade sector (T/VET Colleges).

Pedagogic Recontextualisation (PR) *disciplinary knowledge reorganised for vocational purposes,* which is Reclassification Recontextualisation (RR) from disciplinary knowledge, becomes a PR to *vocational knowledge*. Although the vocational knowledge comes from the same source as the disciplinary knowledge, the selection and the departure point for the curriculum development is different, which thus makes it pedagogical recontextualisation.

Situated knowledge is the knowledge used by the applicant while doing his or her job. This is done within the context of the workplace, while the knowledge within the disciplinary context

is 'appropriate and reformed' (Barnett, 2006:148) into codified non-tacit knowledge, i.e., practical operating procedures, effective design - 'framing', according to Barnett.

Barnett refers to *'reclassification recontextualisation (RR)*', creating a 'toolbox' of applicable knowledge (Barnett, 2006:146). RR takes place from the same source to 'disciplinary knowledge reorganised for vocational purposes *and* technological and organisational aspects'.

I have added the wor*d 'repertoire' to* Figure 4.1: This is the language/terminology supporting all aspects of the knowledge claim. It consists of the terminology and language used within the profession, which binds everything together. The various parties involved in the knowledge claim will not understand each other without a shared repertoire. Misunderstandings can sometimes be attributed to repertoire either not shared or not understood.

4.5 Learning Outcomes: Using Types and Level of Knowledge to find Common Ground

RPL is about bridging the gap between academia and the workplace. I keep a picture in my mind of a bridge and analyse whether the curriculum and the RPL submission could cross this bridge. I want to argue that both parties can get onto this bridge and walk it to meet each other *somewhere* on the bridge. I have noticed this process of bridge crossing several times at the V/PHEI. As an RPL practitioner in building this bridge, where the RPL applicant embarks on a journey toward higher education, I realise it is complex. Presenting evidence and using the appropriate assessment tools is part of the journey. In this study, I had to find a tool to analyse this journey from both perspectives.

I opted to use the Revised Taxonomy as developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002:213) to provide a framework, or a bridge that I could use to analyse the knowledge claims made within the RPL process. As explained in Chapter 2, this approach was used during the recurriculation process at the V/PHEI, ensuring that learning outcomes in the formal programmes are written correctly. The same approach is still used to update qualifications.

The taxonomy is based on two dimensions – knowledge and cognition. Both dimensions are based on complexity. A learning outcome consists of a noun and a verb as explained by Anderson and Krathwohl. The noun describes the types of knowledge and the degree of depth of the learning outcome. The verb indicates the level of cognitive complexity of the learning outcome. The noun and the verb determine the complexity of the learning outcome. Using the

taxonomy gave a platform to compare the two sets of learning outcomes: Those from the FP and the others from the RPL P. This conceptual tool will be explained further in the next chapter as part of my methodology.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I describe the development of a framework for analysing the case studies used in my research. Concepts used, are described, to explain the different forms of knowledge, and the concept of recontextualisation and how Barnett (2006) uses it to track the relocation and changes in knowledge in the curriculum development process. Based on Evans' et al. (2009) work, I have explored the idea of a chain of recontextualisation of knowledge within a curriculum/discipline and profession/workplace by highlighting the interaction between discipline and profession and how this chain of recontextualization might be seen as operating also within the RPL process.

To analyse the RPL process, it was not sufficient to determine equivalence or overlap between concepts that are applied across the formal curriculum and the workplace. As researcher, I also needed to look at the depth of knowledge and conceptual complexity involved in specific learning outcomes, how the RPL applicant understood these and whether the evidence submitted supported the knowledge claim made (or not). This led me to the Revised Taxonomy, as developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2002:213), which provided a framework or bridge to analyse the knowledge claims made in this study.

In Chapter 5, I will explain the methodology used in this research study and how I further developed the Revised Taxonomy in order to assist me in comparing types of and complexity knowledge involved in the two case studies of this study.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

Harris (2011) points out that much of the research on RPL is practice-based and that a theory is needed to ‘understand the nuance of prior learning and the meaning of practice’. Harris's comment aligns with my research and experiences as an RPL practitioner. My work as an RPL practitioner incorporates experiential learning and reflection on my practice drawing on the theories I have just described.

In this Chapter, I discuss my methodological approach and the reasons for choosing the approach I took. Firstly, I discuss my paradigm, which is that of Social Realism. I explain the reasons for this thesis being a qualitative study. I opted to use the Case Study approach and explain why this was the most appropriate method to capture each RPL application I selected for this study. I describe the process I used to analyse my data and how I moved from an inductive approach to a deductive one. The purpose of using this methodological approach provided me with ‘the space’ to use an explanatory tactic to discuss the RPL process in each of the case studies in detail. RPL is complex and detailed. I discuss how I made use of this ‘space’ to do justice to the complexities involved.

The sections below will explain the types of data collection methods used and the methods I used to analyse the data. I explain how and why I used the revised taxonomy of Krathwohl and Anderson (2002) to analyse levels of knowledge and unpack complexity issues within the data and draw on Bernstein's concepts to analyse the types of knowledge in the knowledge claims made.

In conclusion, I discuss ethics, subjectivity, experiential learning, and validity in my study.

5.2 Research Topic

In this section, I explain my problem statement, topic, research questions, and themes.

5.2.1 *Problem Statement*

As already highlighted, many authors write about RPL in the context of granting access and not the granting of credits. In addition, little is written about the process of granting credits via RPL, which is a gap in the literature, and in practice. In South Africa, considerable research has been done about the types of knowledge and using the work of Bernstein, as highlighted in Chapter 2. However, little is written about the types of knowledge involved when granting credits, particular in higher education. The problem (gap) in this research is addressing is to compare the types of knowledge involved in the curriculum of a discipline and the types of knowledge in the workplace, and by implication, in the profession. Based on the comparison of the knowledge found in these two contexts, the analysis determines how it is possible to grant credits.

5.2.2 *Research Question*

This study sets out to identify how different types of knowledge interact during the RPL process, leading me to the main research question:

> *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Knowledge Claims: How can different types of knowledge identified, documented and assessed in RPL applications for credits? The role of learning outcomes in two case studies of RPL at a South African vocational/professional higher educational institution (V/PHEI).*

I employ the concept of a 'knowledge claim' to establish the parameters of the different types of knowledge involved in this study, which examines the interaction and application of various types of knowledge found in a curriculum and in workplace learning. This study is also about the relationship and interaction between a profession and its associated discipline, which leads me to the research questions below.

5.2.3 *Research Sub-Questions*

The following are the sub-questions of this study:

1. What types of knowledge gained through informal and/or non-formal learning in the workplace can be recognised as equivalent to learning in an academic programme?

2. How is knowledge from the curriculum of specific qualifications for an RPL process as reflected in the associated learning outcomes?

5.2.4 *Conceptual and Analytical Themes*

The following conceptual/analytical themes emerged from the literature, as described in Chapter 3, are:

- Knowledge structures,
- Curriculum and Learning Outcomes,
- The process of Specialised Pedagogy, and
- Boundary crossing.

5.3 Qualitative Research

This thesis is about knowledge and different ways of knowing. The research process took a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is regarded as a research approach encompassing various tools and methods, enabling researchers to understand 'the meaning people have constructed, how people make sense of their lives' (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:15).

5.3.1 *Paradigm: Social Realism*

Because my research is about types of knowledge, it is based on a social realist epistemology, which, according to User (1997,173), consists of a 'philosophical discourse that concerns itself with different criteria to determine what counts as knowledge'. Knowledge is created by communities of practice in an objective world, existing independently of our social constructs of it (Wheelehan, 2010:8).

I had to find a method to analyse the details of the knowledge claims involved: the academic-based knowledge claim, the knowledge claim of the RPL applicant, and the types of knowledge in the discipline/profession. The aspect of 'boundaries' between different types of knowledge was an issue I had to consider when conducting my analysis. The question is, '*How* to cross the line [the boundary] that means paying detailed attention to the politics of redescriptions and translations and the means required for a successful crossing' (Muller, 2000:71, in

Wheelehan,2010:8). In the following chapter, I will highlight how the academics involved gave a considerable amount of thought to boundary crossing, although the term ‘boundary crossing’ never come up on my conversation with them.

According to Young (in Wheelehan, 2010:8), Social Realists argue that students must understand the difference between ‘theoretical and everyday knowledge’ *(ibid)*. The distinction between the educational and other domains, such as the workplace, remains important ‘because each provides access to a different type of knowledge even though the two must be brought into a relationship within the vocational and professional curriculum’ (Barnett ,2006 in Wheelehan, 2010,8). ‘Social realism differs from the dominant approaches to curriculum because it treats knowledge as causally important in its own right. It argues that knowledge has transcendent properties beyond the specific conditions under which it was produced precisely because it provides access to the natural and social worlds even though our knowledge is never perfect and is a work-in-progress.’ (Wheleehan, 2010: 10.)

Because I was working with knowledge, the qualitative paradigm of research provides the opportunity for interpretation. Two of Merriam and Tisdell's (2016:17-19) characteristics of qualitative research relevant to my study are:

- *Focus on meaning and understanding:* Qualitative researchers are interested in ‘how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their world and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.’ Quoting Patton (1995), Merrian and Tisdell (2016: 17-19) highlight that qualitative research is an ‘effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and interactions there. Their understanding is an end in itself’ (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:17-19). The purpose of the study was to understand how a formal programme learnt and used in the workplace can be recognised for the purposes of RPL for credit in a formal programme of study.

- *Researcher as primary instrument:* In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:17-19). Understanding is the goal of the research, and the researcher collects and analyses the data. However, the researcher has 'subjectivities' or biases that the person needs to be aware of, identify, and monitor in both the theoretical review and the interpretation. The researchers' interpretation, combined with the participants' interpretations in the project, can make subjectivities visible.

I initially used an inductive approach. Inductive analysis is a process of using the 'bits and pieces of information gathered from interviews, observations, and the documents', which is

my raw data and moving it into categories' (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:19). On the other hand, deductive analysis is used in qualitative research, where the researcher draws on already established theoretical categories, subcategories, and generalisations to detect patterns (Ensor & Hoadley, 2004:81).

In this study, I worked initially from an inductive perspective, using analysis software to assist me. This was the first stage, where I identified concepts in the Formal and RPL programmes. During the second stage of analysing my data, I began to interpret my findings deductively, drawing on themes and concepts from my inductive and initial analysis to compare them with the data, seeking similarities and differences. The concepts were valuable as they provided explanatory power. I began to identify concepts present in the Learning Outcomes of the FP and the RPL P.

5.3.2 *Capturing the Uniqueness of RPL Applications through Case Study Research*

To capture the uniqueness of an RPL application, I decided to use a case study approach because the RPL-related knowledge claims are specific to the content of each discipline and the curriculum, as well as the context of the related profession. The definition below sums up my approach:

> 'Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information [author's emphasis] (i.e. observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes.' (Creswell, 2007:73)

Each RPL application, which is my unit of analysis (Henning et al., 2013:40-41) is a case study on its own, involving the curriculum, the workplace, and the knowledge claim(s) made by a specific RPL applicant, the knowledge claims made within the academy and the curriculum and the RPL plan and process of each department involved.

There is a debate as to whether the use of a case study as a research method allows generalisation to be drawn from a case. The discussion of the generalisability of a case study (or not) has been interpreted differently by various authors over the years. Stenhouse (1985, cited in Bassey, 1999) views generalisation as a matter of judgement by the researcher and the nature of the study. He states that a researcher can make generalisations predictively or retrospectively.

Simons (1995) interprets the issue of generalisation as a paradox. It is an opportunity to embrace the uniqueness of a case study while acknowledging the difficulties associated with drawing generalisations from case studies (Bassey, 1999:35-36).

Bassey (1999:27-28) summarised various opinions and approaches. He points out that the use of case studies as a research approach is ‘for the researcher to observe the characteristics as an individual unit’ (Cohen & Manion, 1989), cited in Bassey, 1999). However, Kemmis (1980) cited in Bassey (1999) interprets a case study as an ‘intertwined process involved in the conceptualisation of a research problem’ with the interpretation of the findings having application beyond the case study.

When I started my study, I thought I could make generalisations, but as I illustrate in the following chapters, generalisations are difficult to make due to the uniqueness of each case study and the different disciplines and professions involved. I use the case studies to describe the applications, evidence, and assessment, and as an opportunity to explore the process. In the case of this study, the cases analysed are 'educational case studies' (Stake, 1995, cited by Bassey, 1999), aiming to enrich the thinking and development of educational theory, and in this study, the theoretical understanding of RPL. Each case afforded me the opportunity to identify concepts that are essential for the respective disciplines and professions.

5.3.3 *The Specific Cases of the Study*

This study draws on two case studies of two different RPL processes: one in the Diploma: Human Resources Management (D:HRM) and the other in the Advanced Diploma: Architectural Technology (AD:AT). Within the qualitative methodology of research, these two case studies provided me with bounded systems for interpretive analysis of the topic. Both RPL processes were about granting credits via RPL for informal and non-formal learning. In the case study in HRM, I focused on the RPL process and evidence for one subject, namely Industrial Relations 1 (IR 1). In the Architectural Technology (AT) case study, I focused on RPL for Architectural Practice 4 and Architectural Literacy 4.

Working at a V/PHEI where the policy of the institution accommodates credits via RPL does not mean that there is a serious uptake for this type of RPL. However, some academic departments consider granting credit(s) via RPL. Other academic departments are very hesitant to consider this type of RPL, while others refuse to look into the option. I noticed this number of years ago, and I started to wonder why.

Being familiar with the work of Bernstein, as explained above, it seemed to me that the academic departments granting RPL credits, that is, recognising non-formal and informal learning, were offering qualifications that had embedded in them a more horizontal knowledge structure than those with a hierarchical knowledge structure.

The work in granting credits via RPL allowed me to better understand the types of knowledge involved in a discipline and profession during the RPL process. Working at a V/PHEI (UoT) context provided the ideal environment to observe disciplinary and professional interaction.

As explained in Chapter 2, academic departments develop RPL plans and curriculum maps/matrices for their RPL process for granting credits. In the curriculum maps of these two departments, I could see their interpretation of RPL was not only detailed but also pedagogically sound; this was the reason (besides the availability of candidates) I decided to ask them to be part of this study.

Choosing the candidates I used in the case studies, I chose applicants with no formal tertiary education beyond school; in other words, all their learning was informal and non-formal, making them ideal RPL subjects for this study and underscoring the reasons for RPL, namely redress and social justice.

Having worked as an RPL practitioner for several years and dealing with various qualifications, I realised that credits can be awarded for specific subjects in some qualifications. In conversation with these academics, I came to appreciate that some knowledge can be learnt outside a formal establishment, such as the V/PHEI, and can be recognised as equal to or the same as knowledge in the formal curriculum. I, therefore, decided to focus on the granting of credits; I wanted to know what kinds of knowledge learnt in the workplace can be recognised via an RPL application for credit in the curriculum.

Over time, it seemed to me that disciplines/qualifications that are interdisciplinary and have more horizontal knowledge structures received more RPL applications than disciplines with more hierarchical knowledge structures. The former applications were in the fields of management, human resource management, office administration and tourism, architectural technology, and sometimes construction management. However, the Architectural Technology (AT) Department seemed to have a clearer idea of what RPL was and what the process entailed. I started to wonder why academics in this field seemed to be more comfortable with RPL than other departments.

A further reason for choosing these specific cases was that the academic departments implemented the RPL process in line with the RPL policy and guidelines of the V/PHEI. The departments analysed their LOs, completed the curriculum map, and developed an RPL approach unique to the qualification and associated profession. The interpretation of RPL by the departments of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Architectural Technology (AT) demonstrated their detailed and pedagogically sound understanding of RPL. Due to their understanding of RPL, both departments developed good-quality curriculum maps (as will be explained in Chapters 6 and 7), resulting in fairly detailed assessment reports. Not all academic departments in the institution have the same level of understanding and implementation of RPL. Therefore, I asked these two departments to work with me on this study.

In the HRM case, I chose one RPL application, using the pseudonym 'Capt. Ruby' for the applicant. She had received credit for the subject Industrial Relations 1. The other case study in Architectural Technology I used is an application for two subjects in the Advanced Diploma: Architectural Technology. I used the name 'Nala' as a pseudonym for this applicant.

Neither applicant had any formal education beyond school; Capt. Ruby did not complete school, while Nala's matric results did not enable him to continue into tertiary education. These cases go some way to demonstrate that RPL is possible from what some would refer to as a 'low academic base'. I also have some background in these fields, which influenced my decision.

The focus of this research is on two different fields, disciplines, and associated professions. It seemed to me that the subject, Industrial Relations, and the two AT subjects, Architectural Practice and Architectural Literacy, might have different knowledge structures. These other subjects presented a firm basis for comparison of varying knowledge structures, with the former being more horizontal and the latter more hierarchical.

5.4 Data Collection Methods

In this section, I explain the primary and secondary evidence I collected. RPL is a lengthy and complicated process, and as explained earlier in this chapter, I collected my data in two phases, from various sources. The data collection and analysis were conducted in phases, for each of the case studies (Henning et al., 2013:42).

In the first data collection phase, I studied the two disciplines involved and developed some insight into the principles and practices that constitute the disciplines and their corresponding

professions. I had to look at the requirements of the professions and how the V/PHEI prepared the students for a career in those professions.

As I explained in Chapter 2, there is close interaction between the professional bodies and the V/PHEI (namely the South African Board of People Practices (SABPP) for HRM and the South African Council of Architectural Profession (SACAP) for Architectural Technology). The professional body's requirements for these two qualifications significantly influence the content of the qualifications offered, as obtaining the qualification leads to registration with the professional body for students once they have qualified.

I considered the following points:

- The discipline and the profession are linked through the body of knowledge and competencies, or standards.
- The professional body and its influence on the curriculum development of the HEQSF-aligned qualification.
- The body of knowledge and the type of knowledge the discipline is based on.
- Individuals working in the profession without formal qualifications and the RPL process.

This analysis constituted the first data collection phase and provided me with a background understanding of the disciplines and professions involved.

5.4.1 Documentation Review

A wide variety of documentation is generated during the RPL process, forming a significant component of the data collected. Some of these documents are primary sources, while others are secondary. I collected and studied:

- Relevant legislation and documentation from the government and other regulatory bodies, including information about the NQF, were analysed.
- V/PHEI documentation, such as policies and minutes of relevant meetings.
- Curriculum, study guides, and textbooks that were prescribed and used by the two academic departments.
- Information from the academic departments regarding their RPL plans and the departments' interpretation of the completed curriculum map is needed.
- Information provided by the RPL applicant, assessment plans and reports, all background information, the portfolio of evidence, and assignments: the use of

the curriculum map and how the applicant interpreted the requirements of the learning outcomes.

- Feedback from the academic department and assessment reports.

I analysed all these documents first before conducting my interviews.

5.4.2 Participants and Interviews

Once the above documents had been analysed, I involved the relevant individuals, namely academics in the Human Resource Management Department and the Department of Architectural Technology. Each department had an RPL facilitator with whom I had already worked closely to formulate and implement the RPL process within the academic department.

Originally, I had planned to interview the RPL applicants, but I was unable to do so due to events outside my control. I decided to focus on the academic side of the selected RPL applications.

The questions and topics discussed, although the same for both department where linked to the documentary evidence I had collected and analysed. I used open-ended questions to facilitate discussion. (For the question schedule, see Appendixes 6.1 for IR1 and 7.2, for AT.

Before the interview, I sent the academics a summary of my findings based on the document analysis. This included plotting the Formal and RPL Programme LOs onto the Revised Taxonomy (adjusted to this research, which I will explain later in this chapter), included in Chapters 6 and 7.

The following questions and topics were discussed:

- Relationship between the specific academic department, the work environment, and the professional body.
- The interpretation of LOs from the formal programme and changes made for the RPL programme. Reasons for the changes? What informed the changes?
- What counts as knowledge in the academy compared to the workplace and why?
- Assessment – determination of validity of the evidence and the conclusion made as part of the assessment.

The interviews with the academics were recorded. In the case of HRM, I was able to hold a face-to-face interview with two academics. The interview with Architectural Technology was done via Microsoft Teams and recorded. I transcribed the discussions myself.

5.5 Analysing Types of Knowledge and Levels of Complexity

My study aimed to identify which types of knowledge could be recognised within the context of a specific qualification to grant credits for specific subjects. As shown in Chapter 4, I developed an analytic framework based on a combination of three theories: Bernstein's work on knowledge structures as well as his concept of recontextualisation; I used the work of recontextualisation within specific contexts based on the work of Barnett (2006) as well as Evans et al., 2009); and my interpretation from a knowledge claim. I explain how I analysed my data, first inductively, changing to deductively, identifying concepts in the academic subjects and the same or similar concepts in the evidence submitted.

I also used the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2002) to analyse my findings, which I adjusted slightly to suit my research.

5.5.1 First Phase of Interpretation of Naturally occurring Evidence - Learning Outcomes

In my analysis, I started analysing the learning outcomes of the subjects under investigation. Secondly, I analysed the RPL curriculum map in each case and noticed that the learning outcomes had been changed for RPL. I refer to these two sets of learning outcomes as the LOs from the Formal Programme as 'FP' and from the RPL Programme as the' RPL P'. As explained in Chapter 1, as a RPL Practitioner, I do not prescribe how to complete the curriculum map to the RPL Facilitators or subject experts in a department. The Industrial Relations Lecturer (Academic B) amended the LOs in the RPL Programme as he saw fit, and the academic department accepted his approach.

In the first phase of the Industrial Relations 1 case study analysis, I reviewed all the documentation, focusing on the learning outcomes as a starting point for my analysis. I decided to look at the topics or concepts included in both sets of learning outcomes. I was looking for themes/topics and concepts that reoccurred in the data, but in different forms or formats.

I identified concepts such as 'procedural fairness', 'grievance procedure', and 'termination of employment' from the textbook. Going through the information in the RPL submission made me realise that these were some of the issues she was dealing with daily at her workplace. I thus worked through all the naturally occurring evidence in her submission.

Naturally occurring evidence (NOE) is generated as part of the work done by the RPL applicants and submitted to the V/PHEI as part of the RPL process. In the NOE, such as the subject guides, the RPL guide, and evidence submitted by the RPL Candidates, I started identifying words, topics, concepts, rules, and regulations associated with the subject, the discipline, and the profession. Although I was working with concepts, they were not derived from theoretical principles. I was analysing the NOE, from my perspective and background knowledge, as Saldãna states:"… letting the data speak for itself" (Saldãna, 2013:63).

Once I developed the list of concepts and topics I could identify in IR 1, I was unsure what I was looking at. I realised I needed a mechanism to analyse the relationship between concepts in the NOE and the concepts of the formal curriculum. This led to my second phase of data interpretation.

5.5.2 Phase Two: Interpreting Words and Drawings

A big difference between Industrial Relations (IR) and Architectural Technology(AT) is that Industrial Relations is 'wordy' and Architectural Technology is 'sketchy'. The methods of communication in these two disciplines and professions are vastly different: one communicates verbally through words, with references to case law and legislation, while the other uses predominantly visual means of communication, such as drawings and plans, based on centuries-old practices, visual interpretations, and regulations. Practitioners in both professions understand the unique method of communication in their own language and would not be able to do their work otherwise.

My interpretation of the evidence in the Architectural Technology (AT) portfolio differed. Most of the Naturally Occurring Evidence (NOE) submitted did not comprise verbal information but a wide variety of different types of architectural drawings. Due to my exposure to architecture as a child and young adult, I can read architectural drawings to a certain extent, which enables me to understand them and identify key concepts.

5.5.3 Third phase: Identification of an appropriate framework for interpretation

I had to find the most appropriate method of interpreting the data I was dealing with to cut across both case studies. I had to find a way to describe how topics, concepts, and discipline-

specific 'educational matter' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002) and also theory, approaches, principles, rules and regulations, and interpretation thereof, taught in the formal programme, were present or not in the RPL programme and the evidence. I decided to use the word 'concept' to identify these topics I encountered in the LOs. It became an exploratory journey that would keep me busy for the rest of my studies.

I realised that the knowledge types described by Bernstein (1999) were not detailed enough for the knowledge I had found in my data. I had to find a tool that would enable me to identify and categorise the types of knowledge involved and that could highlight the differences and/or similarities between the two sets of LOs.

I found myself in a situation where the institution had approved credits via RPL. However, there seemed to be 'tacit-to-tacit knowledge' between the academics and the applicants, hiding in plain sight. I use the term '*in plain sight'* because I could understand the evidence and the assessments done, but what were they? I describe the types of knowledge involved.

Through the work I did with the recurriculation of the qualifications at the V/PHEI, I was familiar with Bloom's revised taxonomy as developed by Krathwohl and Anderson (2002). We had used the revised taxonomy in training and as a guide to writing learning outcomes in the HEQSF-aligned qualifications. As an institution, we opted to use the two-dimensional revised taxonomy rather than Bloom's original taxonomy. The original taxonomy is a cumulative hierarchy ordered from simple to complex and concrete to abstract (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2002:212). The revised taxonomy, as developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2002) is based on two different aspects: a noun and a verb.

- Learning within the revised taxonomy is framed as a subject matter (concept) or knowledge – as a **noun.**
- Describing the action that should accompany the noun is a **verb** reflecting the cognitive complexity of what is to be done with or to the content.

I concluded that the revised taxonomy could afford a comparative matrix to compare knowledge in the formal curriculum with the knowledge presented in the RPL process, using the same parameters to analyse the learning outcomes. A detailed account of this taxonomy is given in the next subsection.

The revised taxonomy provided an in-depth framework to analyse two aspects of both sets of learning outcomes. I could code the learning outcomes used in the qualification, or what I started to call the ‘formal programme’ according to the taxonomy, coding each of them against

the knowledge and cognitive dimensions. I knew at this stage that the academics involved in IR 1 had changed the learning outcomes for RPL. I decided to code these learning outcomes against the exact dimensions.

Coding these two sets of learning outcomes onto the revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001:12-13) provided me with a method to analyse the types of knowledge (the **what**) as well as the cognitive complexity (the **how).**

5.6 Using the Revised Taxonomy of Anderson and Krathwohl

Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) list four types of knowledge they take into consideration when developing learning outcomes, which they refer to as the 'Knowledge dimension':

The first two are:

> *Factual knowledge* is the basic element that a 'student should know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems within it'. *Factual knowledge is 'what of knowledge'* (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002: 52-53). Unpacking what makes up factual knowledge, two subtypes are identified: 'knowledge as terminology' and 'knowledge of specific details and elements.
>
> *Conceptual knowledge* refers to the interrelationships among the fundamental elements within 'a larger structure that enable(s) them to function together. *Conceptual knowledge, as is factual knowledge, is the 'what of knowledge'* (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002: 52-53), which deals with knowledge of classification and categories, principles and generalisations, theories, models and structures, schemas and mental models.

In the Factual and Conceptual dimensions, emphasis is placed on how different bits of information are interconnected and interrelated systematically and how these parts function together.

The following two categories are Procedural and Metacognitive Knowledge:

> *Procedural knowledg*e is the *'knowledge of how'* (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002, 52-55) .it refers to 'doing something, methods of enquiry, criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques and methods'. Knowledge included in this category can be simple routine

> or complex problems that need to be resolved, a series of steps that need to be taken, including skills, subject-specific techniques and methods. Procedural knowledge is specific to a particular subject or discipline, compared to general procedures such as problem-solving.
>
> *Metacognitive knowledge* includes 'knowledge of cognition as well as awareness and knowledge of one's cognition', including self-knowledge, strategic knowledge and knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge. This dimension of knowledge is about developing an awareness with the student about their own thinking and cognitive abilities. (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002: 55- 60).

Anderson and Krathwohl (2001: 214-5) also developed six categories for the complexity of knowledge the cognitive dimension: Emphasis is placed on 'retention' of what a student learns and the importance of 'transfer':' retention' requires the students to **remember** what they have learned, whereas transfer requires students 'to **make sense** of and **be able to use** what they have learned'. (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001:63). According to the authors, the categories differ in complexity, with the first category, 'remember', being the least complex and 'create' being the most complex - the cognitive dimension is thus hierarchical. The verb associated with each cognitive category is listed as follows:

Levels of Complexity:

Remember: retrieving relevant knowledge from long-term memory; recognising and recalling.

*Understand :*determining the meaning of instructional messages, including oral, written and graphic communication; interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarising, comparing and explaining.

Apply: carrying out or using a procedure in a given situation; executing and implementing.

Analyse: breaking material into its constituent parts and detecting how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose; differentiating, organising and attributing.

Evaluate: making judgements based on criteria and standards; checking and critiquing.

Create: putting elements together to form a novel, coherent whole or making an original product; generating, planning and producing.

I adjusted the revised taxonomy slightly: I changed the 'knowledge dimension' to 'type of knowledge' and retained the terms for the four types of knowledge as Anderson and Krathwohl

have described. I changed the ‘cognitive dimension’ to ‘knowledge complexity’, but kept the six levels of complexity the same as in the original revised taxonomy.

I changed the framework's name from 'Bloom's revised taxonomy' to the ‘Types and Complexity of Knowledge taxonomy' (T&CKT).

Table 5.1:Types and Complexities of Knowledge Taxonomy

Types and Complexity of Knowledge taxonomy (T&CKT) *(Based on the revised Taxonomy by Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002)*						
Complexity of knowledge / Types of Knowledge	***C 1: Remember:*** *Retrieving relevant knowledge from long-term memory - Recognising & Recalling*	***C2;: Understand:*** *Determining the meaning of instructional messages incl. oral, written and graphic communication - Interpreting, exemplifying, classification, summarising, inferring, comparing and explaining.*	***C3 : Apply:*** *Carrying out or using a procedure in a given situation - Executing and Implement-ing*	***C 4: Analyse:*** *Breaking material into its constituent parts and detecting how the parts relates to one another and to an overall structure or purpose. differentiating, organising and attributing*	***C 5: Evaluate:*** *Making judgements based on criteria and standards - checking and critiquing*	***C 6: Create:*** *Putting elements together to from a novel, coherent whole or making an original product - generating, planning producing*
T 1: Factual knolwedge *– the basic elements that students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it.*						
T 2: Conceptual knowledge *– the interrelations among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable to function together.*						
T 3: Procedural knowledge *– How to do something, methods of inquiry and criteria for using skills techniques and methods. Being able to determine when to use appropriate procedures.*						
T 4: Metacognitive Knowledge *– knowledge about cognitive tasks including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge. Using knowledge to appropriately adapt the ways in which the student thinks and operates.*						

Once I decided to use the T&CKT as my framework for analysis, my next step was to code all the LOs onto the taxonomy. This became an intensive coding exercise using the learning outcomes from both programmes and identifying:

- Identical outcomes in both,
- Similar outcomes in both,
- Learning Outcomes only in the Formal Programme (FP), and
- Learning Outcomes are only in the RPL programme

For example, I found learning outcomes with the concept of 'workplace issues' in both the formal and RPL programmes in the IR case study. I used the word 'concept' to describe the topics, theories, rules and regulations to summarise what was being taught with a specific learning outcome. As illustrated in Table 5.2, I have indicated the concepts I found while coding in brackets on the T&CKT.

Table 5.2: Example of Coding LOs onto the T&CKT and Identifying Concepts

	Type of Knowledge	*Complexity of knowledge*
RPL Programme: LO 2.4: 'Correctly identify workplace issues and possible institutions to seek solutions from (Workplace issues)	Type of Knowledge: Procedural (T3)	Complexity of knowledge: Analyse (C 3)
Formal programme: LO 2.3: 'Correctly identify workplace issues and possible solutions' (Workplace issues)	Type of Knowledge: Factual (T1)	Complexity of knowledge: Remember (C1)
LO 3.5: Correctly identify workplace issues and possible solutions (Workplace Issues)	Type of knowledge: Conceptual (T2)	Complexity of knowledge: Remember (C1)

Concept identified from the learning outcome, found in evidence and might be included in both programmes

I coded all the learning outcomes and later discussed my interpretation of the two sets of LOs with the academics in my interviews with them. Using the T&CKT was something the academics were familiar with, and could interpret, and give feedback on. The results of these conversations are presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

5.7 Ethics and Validity

In this section I explain my approach to ethics and validity. I also discuss my own subjectivity.

5.7.1 *Ethical Clearance*

Working as an academic staff member at the site of research and being a student at a different institution of higher education required me to obtain ethical clearance from both HEIs for my research, which I obtained.

Because my research focussed on the nature of knowledge involved in two professions and disciplines, I could not avoid indicating which professions and disciplines were involved. I had to carefully consider this issue and ensure I got informed consent from the concerned academic departments (Henning, 2013:73) I discussed this issue with both departments, making sure that they were comfortable with the department being disclosed, and both gave me permission to identify their qualifications, use their RPL implementation plans, and assessments of the two applicants. I anonymised the academics and applicants and gave pseudonyms to all participants involved.

I asked the RPL Applicants for permission to use their RPL applications, including their submitted documents, communication with the academic department, and assessment reports. The RPL applicants in the study granted me permission on condition that their names were changed and blocked out from all the evidence I included in this thesis.

I clarified that participation in my research was voluntary and anyone involved could withdraw at any time. I have taken all necessary steps to ensure that information shared with me is kept confidential, and that I do not disclose any identifiable information without permission.

5.7.2 Validity

The research has subjectivities and biases that the researcher needs to be aware of, identify and monitor in relation to the theoretical and concept frameworks. The researcher's and participants' interpretations can make subjectivity visible (Merriman & Tisdell, 2016:17-19).

Using a case study-based approach, I was able to involve my participants in the research as partners and develop a feedback loop to discuss my findings with them. I first analysed the documentation before I conducted interviews with the academics. After transcribing the

interviews, analysing them, and writing up my analysis of findings, I sent my draft chapters to the academics for their input as a method of triangulation (Merriman and Tisdell, 2016:245) for the purposes of validity. I used a method of triangulation to verify my findings. First I analysed all the documentation and coded the T&CKT. Then I finalised the questions I wanted to discuss with the academics. Before the interviews took place, I emailed the questions and the coding on the T&CKT to the academics. After finalising Chater 6 and 7, I send the chapters to Academic B and C for their feedback.[20] Academic C especially gave constructive feedback. I included the comments I received from the academic's feedback in chapters Six and Seven.

5.7.3 *Personal subjectivity and Biases*

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I was the primary collector and interpreter of the data in my study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:17-19), and thus had to give my own subjectivity and biases deep thought. This study was affected by the fact that I work as an RPL practitioner and have my own views about RPL. I am passionate about RPL because it is a process that is valued, acknowledged, and enabled by policies of the democratic government in South Africa. My views about RPL are influenced by the path my own life took and it is important to me to find ways and processes that will enable individuals to obtain access to and in the case of this study, credits, in higher education from a perspective of redress due to the history of the country and social justice. Being a white female (my parents immigrated to the country), growing up during the Apartheid years, I had opportunities to gain an education that many South Africans did not have due to Apartheid.

This brings me to the question of who I am as a researcher. As Cooper (citing Gray in Cooper, 2005:98) correctly points out, the participants in research such as mine are highly knowledgeable individuals from whom I learn. The academics and the RPL applicants with whom I worked are knowledgeable within a specific field. I am not an expert in their fields; my role is to facilitate the process of the RPL, ensuring that it takes place in an open, honest and fair manner. I am part of the process but also an observer.

I had to plan my methodology with my role as an insider and observer in mind (Henning et al, 2004:87). During my analysis of the documentation and the interviews with the academics, I had to keep an open mind to be able to learn from my participants. As my research's primary 'instrument', I simultaneously interpreted my findings as I documented them. I then discuss my documentation, analysis and interpretation with the academics during my interviews.

[20] Academic A and D were not available to provide feedback.

My interviews with the academics allowed me to discuss their own field, their interpretation of knowledge and RPL and their interpretation of the applicants I had selected for this study. These were discussions that we did not always have, because many of the discussions about the applications take place within the academic department and I am not always present. This situation gave me another opportunity to triangulate my data. My relationship with my research participants and the academic departments was that of advisor and trainer. My primary focus was primarily on the RPL practice. In doing this study, my position changed to that of an inside researcher and an RPL practitioner.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained my journey to complete this thesis, my understanding of my work, and my desire to become a more experienced RPL practitioner and researcher.

I explained my research question, sub-questions and themes. I explained why this study was based on case studies and my approach to collecting and analysing my data. The analysis was challenging, but once I had decided to use and adopt Anderson and Krathwohl's revised taxonomy, I found a method and developed a template that enabled me to analyse my data and answer my research questions, as I will demonstrate in the next three chapters.

I also explained the steps I took to conduct my research ethically and ensure validity. And provided insight into my own subjectivity.

Chapter 6: Captain Ruby: A Case Study in Industrial Relations 1

6.1 Introduction

Deciding on a field of interest and building a career is the most challenging task of adulthood, according to Gie et al. (2021:4). Gie points out that choosing a career is what a person wants to do with their life to find meaning and purpose. Developing a career is not static, it requires commitment and updating of knowledge on an ongoing basis.

Human Resources Management (HRM) is an academic discipline with an associated profession and thus a career for an HRM Practitioner (Gie, 2021:4). HRM as a profession consists of a few fundamental components which are required in any organisation to attract, manage, maintain, and develop staff:

- Employment of the correctly skilled and qualified individuals: important to the process is the job description or a job profile in line with the organisation's mission and company goals.
- Once employed, the employee works for a company to grow as an individual, advancing their own knowledge and putting it to use within the company, including opportunities for training and upskilling, which is referred to as talent management.
- Performance management and remuneration is another facet of HR, enhancing outstanding performance and correcting non-performance.
- Labour relations (IR) is an aspect of HR that this case study focuses on, specifically on the individual relationship between the employee and immediate line management, representing the employer.

This case study deals with Industrial Relations 1 (IR 1) , a first-year subject (offered during the second year of the Diploma: HRM) and focuses on how credit was granted for the subject to a student via the RPL process. An RPL Applicant whom I call Capt. Ruby applied for RPL and was granted credits for Industrial Relations 1.

In the first section of this chapter, I describe Human Resources Management (HRM) as a profession and the role of the professional body in SA, namely the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP). After obtaining the qualification, I also explain the hierarchy of qualifications in the HRM field and the process of professional registration with SABPP.

In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the Diploma in HRM and specifically the subject IR 1. This section describes the RPL process in the HRM Department and analyses the RPL process for the IR 1 programme specifically. I outline and analyse the learning outcomes (LOs) from the formal programme and the changes made to them in the RPL programme using the Types and Complexity of Knowledge Taxonomy (T&CKT) (as discussed in Chapter Five) coding the LOs according to the taxonomy. I discuss the RPL application made by Capt. Ruby looked at the naturally occurring evidence (NOE) she submitted and its importance. I reflect on the interpretations of the RPL Application done by the academics and discuss the changes they made to the LOs and the assessment they did.

In conclusion, I list the types of knowledge I found via the taxonomy, listing the concepts I found and linking them to the knowledge claim, highlighting the movement of these concepts across the knowledge claim in a chain of recontextualisation (Evans et al., 2009)

6.2 Human Resources Management as a Discipline and Profession

In this section, I explain HRM as a discipline and a profession. Reid and Ulrich (2017) are authors of an influential publication containing international standards guiding the practice of HR and which influences qualifications and training in the discipline, namely *A Guide to the Human Resources Body of Knowledge* (widely known by the acronym *HRBoK*). In addition, I discuss the HRM standards in SA, registration with the SABPP, the training explicitly offered at the V/PHEI, and the HRM qualifications offered at the institution are explained.

6.2.1 *Human Resource Management: Scope of the Field*

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a discipline and an interdisciplinary profession that draws on research from disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, social science, and business management (Reed, 2017:30-32). Gie *(*2021:6-7) describes HRM as having an ‘ambiguous identity’ because some HR curricula are psychology-based, while other curricula are more business-orientated. Fields such as organisational development and behaviour influence HRM, but so do fields such as management, political science, economics, technology and globalisation (Reed,2017:30-32; Gie,2021:7). I interpret the knowledge structure of HRM as more horizontal in nature (Bernstein, 2000) because it draws on such a wide variety of knowledge areas that constitute the profession and discipline.

As a profession, HRM has three levels of specialisation, increasing in complexity, namely individual contributor, manager and leader (Reed, 2017:xviii). Reed explains the profession of HRM as a ‘career mosaic’ where an individual can choose to work as a generalist or a

functional specialist. Specialisations include aspects of HRM such as recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and labour relations.

In line with international practice, in South Africa, the SABPP sets standards for HRM, and approves qualifications offered in the country for HRM profession on the QCTO and the HEQSF. It also accredits training centres and academic departments, such as the one at the V/PHEI to offer HRM qualifications.

The SABPP has developed standards and competencies to guide HR practitioners. The standards align with the *HRBoK* (Reid & Ulrich, 2017), covering the same domains but structured differently. The reason for developing the standards by the SABPP was to support corporate governance, providing a solid basis for HR practitioners to ‘take their place as strategic and operational business partners, applying the [HR] standards in their own particular organisational context and building on the standards to innovate and implement superior HR practices which drive better organisational performance’ (SABPP:HR Standards, 2017).

The SABPP published an HRM model (SABPP, 2014) structured around three levels of HRM practice: strategic alignment with the business strategy, functional and cross-functional HRM value chain, and HRM service delivery and technology. In Table 6.1, the 'HR Architecture' as developed by the SABPP is visually presented.

In Table 6.1 the functions within HRM are brought together in the HRM department in an organisation and include workforce planning, learning, performance, rewards, and organisational development. This study focuses on wellness and employment relations management (EMS). From these functions, the SABPP developed standards to define routine processes for these HRM functions within an organisation. Providing explicit standards in the HR field is a method of supporting HR practitioners and line management.

Table 6.1: HRM Architecture Developed by the SABPP

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Business strategy and HR alignment</td><td rowspan="11">HR Competencies</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Strategic HRM</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Talent Management</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">HR Risk Management</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Functional and cross functional HR Value chain</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">Implementation</td><td>Workforce Planning</td><td>Employer branding, recruitment and selection, onboarding, employment equity, succession planning and career management</td></tr>
<tr><td>Learning</td><td>Workplace learning to support a learning culture: needs analysis, learning design and learning evaluation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Performance</td><td>Performance management and appraisals</td></tr>
<tr><td>Rewards</td><td>Remuneration</td></tr>
<tr><td>Wellness</td><td>Incapacity management</td></tr>
<tr><td>Employment Relations Management (ERM)</td><td>Grievance procedure, disciplinary procedure, collective bargaining, dispute resolution, absenteeism management.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Organisational Development</td><td>Leadership development, change management, mentoring and coaching; organisational design.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">HR Value and delivery platform</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">HR Service</td><td>HR Technology</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">(SABPP: Factsheet, August 2013, and SABPP:HR standards – 2017) (Blue bold sections are the focus of this study).</td></tr>
</table>

To enable implementation, the SABPP has developed competencies required for HRM practitioners, which should be included in qualifications offered in this field in SA. The definition of competency by the SABPP is based on (SABPP, 2013:6):

- Attributes (knowledge, skills, motivation, or traits),
- Performance (behaviour demonstrated),

- Value/ethics (customer care, safety, customer orientation, diversity).

Key topics of interest here include incapacity management, absenteeism management, grievance procedures, and disciplinary procedures. I analyse how these standards are reflected in IR 1 and in the evidence submitted by Capt. Ruby.

6.2.2 Qualifications in the Human Resources Management Profession in South Africa

The management of people as a profession draws from a variety of disciplines, as mentioned above. An HR practitioner in SA can obtain the following qualifications:

- On NQF level 5, National Certificates in HRM are offered, usually referred to as N4, N5 and N6, with an 18-month academic programme coupled with 18 months placement in the HR position, registered on the QCTO.

  The Diploma in HRM offered at the V/PHEI is at levels five to six of the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (2013). This three-year Diploma (Dip:HRM) provides graduates with entry-level HR-related knowledge, skills, and competencies to perform basic HR functions in the workplace (per the Department of Human Resource Management study guide). At the V/PHEI in this case study, graduates of the Dip:HRM can continue their studies with an Advanced Diploma in HRM or HRD (Human Resource Development). The qualification in HRD is focused on learning and development in the workplace, while the HRM option focuses on the core HRM functions within an organisation.

Following on from the advanced diploma is a Postgraduate Diploma in HRM, followed by a Master's in HRM and a doctoral degree also in HRM. The HRM department at the V/PHEI has been an accredited learning site for the SABPP since 2011, preparing HRM practitioners for registration with the SABPP once they graduate. The qualifications offered in HRM were developed in consultation with the SABPP and the department's advisory body (as explained in Chapter 2 and the recontextualisation of the SABPP standards into the qualifications offered by the P/VHEI.

The registration of HR practitioners reflects this hierarchy of qualifications:

Table 6.2: Levels of Professional Registration of HR Practitioners

HR Technician	Completed an one year diploma, with at least one year work experience
HR Associate	Completed a two-year diploma with two years' work experience and Board Exam Level 1
HR Professional	Completed a three-year diploma or degree and three years working experience in middle management and Board Exam Level 1 (as offered at the V/PHEI and the part of this case study)
Chartered HR Professional	Completed a four-year Honours or Postgraduate Diploma with 4 years senior management experience. Board Exam Level 2
Master HR Professional	Completed Master's or Doctorate degree with six years' work experience in top management. Board Exams Level 3

At a traditional university, an individual can complete a bachelor's in commerce (BCom), specialising in HRM or Industrial Psychology. This qualification is followed with a BCom Honours in either one of the specialisations, which can give the person the option to continue with a master's followed by a doctoral qualification in either option.

6.2.3 *The Diploma in Human Resource Management*

The Diploma in Human Resource Management at the V/PHEI prepares students for all four main functions, as Reid and Ulrich (2017) indicate. The subjects in the qualification are (Table 6.3):

Table 6.3: Breakdown of Subjects in the Diploma in Human Resource Management

Year	***Human Resource Management***	***Industrial Relations***	***Human Resource Development***	***Business Studies***	***Complementary subjects***
3rd	Human Resource Management 3	Industrial Relations (IR) 2	Human Resource Development 3	Business Studies 3	Work Integrated Learning (WIL)
2nd	Human Resource Management 2	Labour Law Industrial Relations (IR) 1	Human Resource Development 2	Business Studies 2	
1st	*Human Resource Management 1*		Human Resource Development 3	Business Studies 1	Communication, End-User Computing and Statistics
Subject focus of this study (V/PHEI brochure, 2021) Subject in blue is the focus of this study.					

Three major subjects, HRM, HRD, and IR, prepare the students for the major activities that they will be performing in the workplace:

- The **Human Resource Management (HRM)** stream of subjects, prepares students for the acquisition, recruitment and remuneration of staff, the strategic planning of staffing needed in the future in line with the strategic plans of the company, and the legal compliance of the firm within the South African context (Departmental subject study guides; Gerber et al., 1998:9-11).
- The **Human Resource Development (HRD)** stream deals with staff knowledge and training needs and compiles the skills development plan, including the Skills Development Officer role within the company (Departmental subject study guides).
- **Industrial Relations (IR) and Labour Law** are subjects dealing with the relations with individual staff members and their rights and obligations within a company and its daily operations, as well as dealing with industrial relations from a group perspective such as a trade union. These subjects deal extensively with the industrial legislation of the country and the institutions that govern industrial relations in South Africa such as the CCMA (Subject Study Guides).
- The fourth main component of the Diploma is **Business Studies**, which uses a systems approach to business dealing with the functional areas within a company, such as development of a business plan, the interaction between operations, finance and HR (Departmental Study guides).

Four **complementary subjects** are: work-integrated learning, where students are placed in the workplace for a short period of time in the third year, Communication, Statistics, and End-User Computing - focused on software used in HRM.

6.3. RPL process in the Diploma: HRM

Based on the qualification-specific approach to RPL at the V/PHEI, the HRM Department developed their own RPL plan. The RPL requirements for HRM are in line with the RPL requirements within the institution, namely that an RPL applicant has to be at least 23 years old and have relevant work experience to be considered for credits. An individual applying for this type of RPL is also required to have worked in the HR field for at least 5 years.

The initial phase of applying for RPL requires the individual to complete the ‘screening questionnaire’ to indicate work experience gained and explain its relevance to the subjects for which credits are being sought.

The department developed curriculum maps for all the subjects in the Diploma. To guide the RPL process for their subjects. As described in Chapter 2, the curriculum maps are the backbone of the RPL process for credits. The use of the curriculum map and learning outcomes within the HRM context are explained in the next session. The curriculum maps are also part of an RPL portfolio-building guideline that is provided to RPL applicants as soon as the department deems them feasible for candidature. This document is made available electronically, and the applicants submit the portfolios of evidence as stipulated in the guideline to the department, also electronically.

The learning outcomes of the formal programme are first listed in the next three sections. Secondly, the learning outcomes of the RPL programme are listed. Thirdly, the two are compared using the T&CKT.

6.3.1 Learning Outcomes for Industrial Relations 1 – Formal Programme

The study guide for Industrial Relations 1 lists seven learning units, as illustrated in Appendix 6.1. The learning units with the associated learning outcomes are coded on the Type and Complexity of Knowledge Taxonomy (T&CKT).

The seven learning units in the formal programme (Figure 6.1) are:

i) *Learning Unit 1:Overview of industrial relations in South Africa*

The 1st learning unit deals with the history of labour relations internationally and within South Africa. The textbook *Labour Relations in South Africa*, edited by Robert Venter and Andrew Levy (2014), discussed the changes in South Africa after the first democratic elections in 1994 in detail, explaining the various pieces of legislation introduced in 1995 in South Africa. This unit consists of three learning outcomes:

- Discuss how the different role players of the labour relationship interact with one another.
- Summarise and evaluate the various approaches to the labour relationship.
- Give an overview of South African labour history.

ii) *Learning Unit 2: Most important labour regulations for organisations*

The 2nd learning unit examines the employee-employer-trade union relationship in the country, as well as the legislation promulgated in democratic South Africa as part of the ‘new labour dispensation’, which aligns with the country's constitution (Venter et al., 2014:92-95). In this section the programme deals with the various pieces of legislation that govern labour relations in the country, namely the Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1995 (as amended) and the

associated labour relations mechanisms such as the Commission of Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCOA), the Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998) and the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) (Gerber et al., 1998; Venter et al., 2014).

The 2nd unit comprises the following learning outcomes:

- Understand and apply the labour legislation in an organisation.
- Correctly identify and assess the impact of legislation on an organisation.
- Correctly identify workplace issues.
- Provide the correct legal advice in a given situation.
- Think logically about problems to solve them cost-effectively.

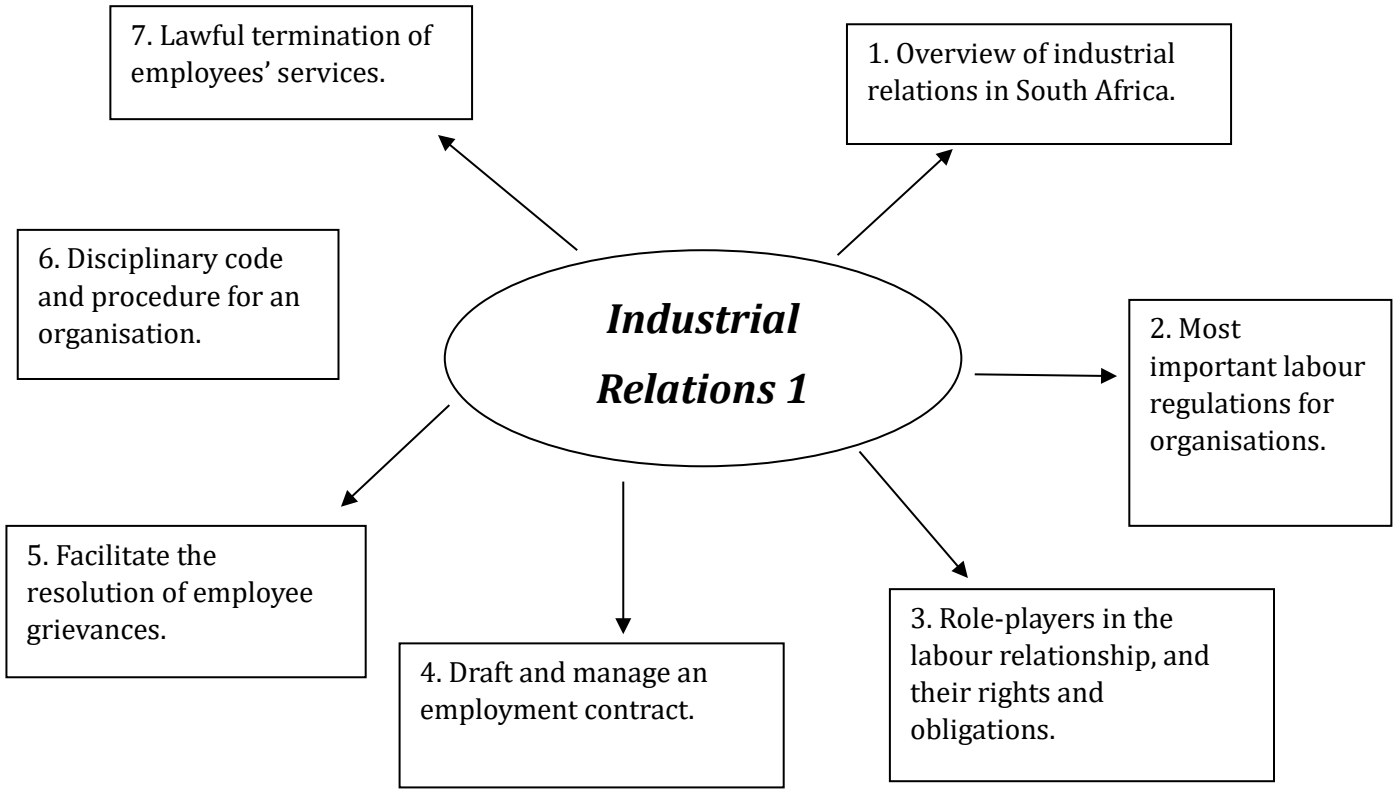


Figure 6.1: Structure and Learning Units for Industrial Relations (IR1) Formal programme

Iii) Learning Unit 3: Role players in the labour relationship, rights and obligations

This learning unit discusses employment relations within the organisation, specifically the communication role of labour union practitioners and the issues that arise in the workplace regarding sound working relationships.

The course aims to prepare the student for various eventualities that might occur in the workplace. The learning outcomes in the 3rd unit are:

- Understand the importance of the role played by trade unions in SA.
- Discuss how employers can unite their common interests.
- Discuss the State as an employer.
- Explain how the Government manages to 'keep the peace' amongst all the role players.
- Correctly identify workplace issues and possible solutions.

iv) *Learning Unit 4:Drafting and managing an employment contract*

The curriculum narrows down from an historical, national and legislative perspective to the role of a labour relations practitioner. Learning Unit 4 deals with the 'ability to analyse conditions of employment' providing students with the basic skills of employment conditions, closely related to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997 (BCoE Act) (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

The learning outcomes are:

- Apply and ensure compliance with labour legislation (Basic Conditions of Employment Act).
- Gain sound knowledge of the conditions of service relevant to the sector/industry.
- Compile both indefinite period and fixed term contracts of employment.
- Advise the organisation on the correct time frame and conditions for terminating the contract of employment.

v) Learning Unit 5: Facilitate the resolution of employee grievances

The learning outcomes for this unit are:

- Fulfil the role of a labour relations practitioner.
- Ensure sound and harmonious communication within the workplace.
- Establish workplace communication structures.
- Comprehend the grievance procedure theory and key concepts.
- Apply analytical skills to solving employee grievances,

vi) Learning Unit 6:Disciplinary code and procedure for an organisation.

The learning outcomes for this unit are:

- Comprehend the discipline process and relevant legislation (LRA) to solve problems and provide correct advice
- Implement a disciplinary code and establish a disciplinary procedure
- Identify the principles of discipline and correctly assess the impact of non-compliance on the organisation.

vii) *Learning Unit 7:Lawful termination of an employee's services*

The last unit, Unit 7, deals with the termination of employment with a specific employer due to retrenchment, redundancy, or lay-off, and explores alternatives that can be explored according to the provisions of the LRA. The learning outcomes are:

- Discuss the circumstances that could lead to retrenchment.
- Analyse employment alternatives before implementing retrenchment.
- Implement a fair and lawful procedure (LRA) for retrenchment.

Appendix 6.1, compares the learning outcomes of each of the learning units in the formal programme and RPL Programme using the T&CKT to determine the types of knowledge involved and their complexity. In Appendix 6.1, I used different colours to indicate the LOs from the formal and RPL programmes.

6.3.2 *Industrial Relations 1: Learning Outcomes on the RPL Programme and Placement on the T&CKT*

The HRM department at the V/PHEI developed its RPL programme with the workplace in mind. Bearing the explanation above in mind, Appendix 6.1 indicates the differences between the formal programme learning units of IR 1 and those of the RPL Programme. The number of learning units has been reduced from seven in the formal programme to five for the RPL requirements.

The academic interviewees explained that the change from seven to five units was made to accommodate the workflow in the workplace. The workflow, development of documents (generation of evidence) in the workplace and flow of learning within the academic setting are different.

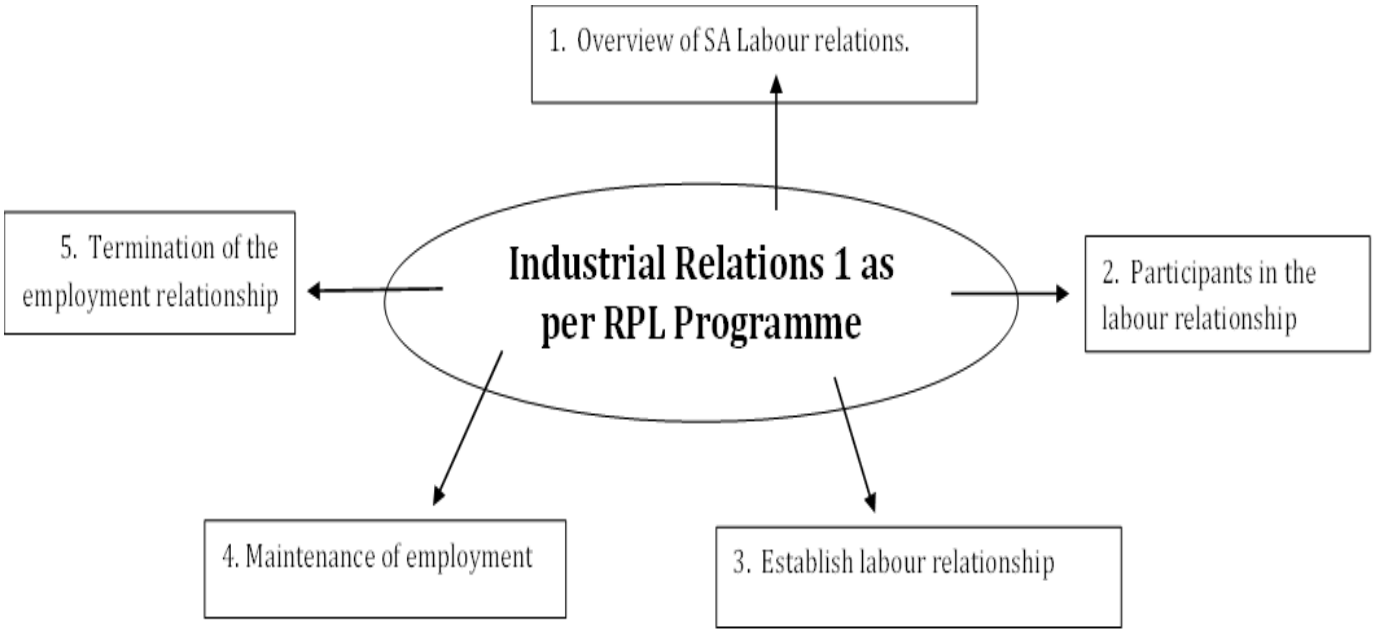


Figure 6.2: RPL Learning Units of Industrial Relations

The department developed a curriculum map according to the template (as discussed in Chapter 1), clearly indicating the learning outcomes for the RPL programme, the required evidence and the assessment tools used. From the curriculum maps, it is clear that they solicit naturally occurring evidence by listing the required evidence.

The learning outcomes for the RPL programme are explained below:

i) Learning Unit 1:Overview of SA labour relations

The content of the curriculum of Learning Unit 1 in the RPL guideline is the same as that of Learning Unit 1 in the formal programme. Both start with a historical overview and identify the leading role players.

ii) Learning Unit 2:Participants in the labour relationship

Learning Unit 2 for RPL covers some of the content from Learning Units 2-4 in the FP. Learning Unit 2 in the formal study guide deals with: 'Participants in the labour relationship'. The participants in the labour relationship are the employee, employer and the state. This relationship is governed through legislation such as the LRA. The RPL candidate needs to be able to source, identify, and apply the sections of statutes in the South African legislative framework to ensure a fair and harmonious workplace environment.

iii) Learning Unit 3:Establish a labour relationship

In the 3rd learning unit, the RPL applicants are required 'Identify and describe the factors regulating the interaction between employer, employee and trade unions'. The assessment criteria require that the RPL applicants 'Have read and analysed cases and articles and can relate them to problems at the workplace using logic and argument'. The RPL candidate is required to identify the stakeholders in the industrial relationship, including the labour collectives, the employer collectives, and the state and its role. The applicant is required to understand the role of workplace forums, councils and other bodies.

iv) Learning Unit 4:Maintenance of employment

RPL Learning Unit 4 is identical to the requirements for the FP students in Learning Unit 5. Maintaining the working relationship within an organisation deals with the role of the labour relations practitioners, harmonious communication in the workplace, the establishment of workplace communication structures, dealing with grievance procedures and applying analytical skills to solving employee grievances. The candidate needs to be able to design the communication necessary structure to maintain the employment processes that employees have lodged and assist in their resolution.

The candidate is required to design a disciplinary code and the procedure required to manage disciplinary action and facilitate its resolution in accordance with the prevailing legal framework.

v) Learning Unit 5:Termination of employment

The final learning unit that RPL applicants are required to submit is evidence dealing with the termination of the employment relationship. This is a combination of Learning Units 6 and 7 from the formal programme that requires basic knowledge of the LRA. The concepts of procedural and substantive fairness are dealt with in Learning Unit 5. Learning Unit 7 in the formal programme deals with retrenchment.

Depending on the IR issues an RPL applicant deals with, s/he might not be able to provide all the evidence required by the department. The size of the organisation, also plays a role in this regard and influences the type of IR issues that middle management deals with or not. In a large organisation, serious IR problems, for example retrenchment, will be dealt with by top management and the HR department.

6.3.3 Comparison of learning outcomes in the formal and RPL programmes

The learning outcomes of the formal and RPL programmes were coded on the T&CKT. In this section, I discuss the analysis of the comparison of the LOs of two programmes that are brought together in one comparison on the T&CKT in Appendix 6.1.

Appendix 6.1 indicates both the learning outcomes of the formal programme (in blue) and the RPL programme (in pink)[21], located in all the knowledge dimensions (T) and cognitive dimensions of (C). Both programmes find themselves in approximately the same areas on the revised taxonomy, indicating that the nature of the knowledge involved and the cognitive abilities required from the individuals on the formal programme and the RPL applicants are similar. To determine whether this statement is true, I identified concepts in each learning outcome in the formal and RPL programmes for comparison purposes to identify similarities and differences between the formal and RPL programmes. For example, LO 1.2:'Summarise and evaluate the Unitarist, Pluralist and Marxist approaches to the labour relationship' – the concept is 'Approaches' (Tables 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7).

i) *Learning Unit 1:Overview of SA labour relations*

The first learning unit in the formal and RPL programmes deal with an identical topic – labour relations, its stakeholders, approaches and history (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4:Learning Outcome 1: Formal Programme Compared to the RPL Programme

LO 1.1 (FP & RPLP) (Tripartite)	Discuss how the different role players of the labour relationship interact with each other	C1, T2
LO 1.2 (RPL) (Approaches)	Summarise and evaluate the Unitarist, Pluralist and Marxist approaches to the labour relationship	C5, T1
LO 1.2 (FP) (Approaches)	Summarise and evaluate the various approached to the labour relationship	C5, T1
LO 1.3 (RPL) (History)	Give an overview of the SA labour history and its impact on the industrial relations frontier	C4, T4
LO 1.3 (FP) (History)	Give an overview of SA labour history	C1, T1

[21] Type and Complexity Knowledge Taxonomy (T&CKT) 'T' refers to Types of knowledge and 'C' refers to the Complexity of knowledge. T1, T2, T3 and T4 refer to the different levels to Types pf knowledge, C1 to C 6 refers to the level of knowledge complexity as discussed in Chapter 5. Appendix 6.2. is the T&CKT for HRM.

I coded the LO 1.1 from the RPL Programme in C1, T2. Thus, the complexity and type of knowledge in the formal and RPL programmes are the same as indicated in Table 6.4.
LO 1.2 in the FP and RPL P is identical. LO 1.3 is about the history of labour in SA, but the LO for RPL requires reflection on ‘impact’ in labour relations – placing this LO in C4, K4, whilst the LO in the FP only requires the students to ‘Give an overview’, thus placing it in C1, K1 – less complexity involved. Placing the RPL LO (C4, K4) into a higher level of complexity presupposes that the RPL applicant to reflect on the topic at hand based on their work experience and/or what they have read in the media or in books.

ii) Learning Unit 2:Participants in the labour relationship

In the RPL programme learning outcome two deals with various aspects of different learning outcomes in the formal programme. A student in the formal programme learns first about the legislation and how it impacts on the organisation (Learning Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2.). Once the student develops detailed knowledge of the legal framework, the student is required to 'Identify workplace issues' and 'Provide legal advice' (Learning Outcomes 2.3 and 2.4). The formal programme only deals with the 'state as employer' in the third learning outcome (Learning Outcome 3.3), highlighting the difference in information flow, but not the concepts as indicated.

The LO 2.2 (RPL P) states: ‘Discuss the role of the state as mediator' rather than 'The role of the state as employer' as listed in the formal programme (LO 3.3). The difference is focus – a labour relations practitioner directly deals with the working relationship. The person might have been to a consolidatory hearing and can submit evidence and write reflectively.

'Keep the peace', 'solve problems' and 'demonstrate clear reasoning' are LOs found in both the formal programme and the RPL requirements. The emphasis is placed on the role of the practitioner and the role of the person in the workplace. In the formal programme the topics are addressed in a preparatory manner, but the RPL applicants are required to submit evidence of 'workplace documentation such as grievance handling'; the evidence required are 'minutes of meetings' and 'reflective writing' (RPL Portfolio Building Guideline)

Both the programmes explore the role of the various stakeholders in the labour relationship in some detail, I coded three of the four LOs into the same dimension, namely C2:Understand and T2:Conceptual Knowledge.

Table 6.5: RPL Learning Outcomes Compared to the Formal Programme

LO 2.1 (RPL) (Interests)	Discuss how the parties can unite in their common interests.	C2, T2
LO 3.2 (FP) (Interests)	Discuss how the parties can unite in their common interests.	C2, T2
LO 2.2 (RPL) (State)	Discuss the role of the state as a mediator.	C2, T2
LO 3.3 (FP) (State)	Discuss the state as employer.	C2, T2
LO 2.3 (RPL) (Peace)	Explain how government manages to 'keep the peace' amongst all the role players.	C2, T2
LO 2.3 (FP) (Peace)	Explain how government manages to 'keep the peace' amongst all the role players.	C2, T2
LO 2.4 (RPL) (Workplace issues)	Correctly identify workplace issues and possible institutions to seek solutions from.	C3, T3
LO 3.5 (FP) (Workplace issues)	Correctly identify workplace issues and possible solutions.	C1, T2

The second LO deals with the state's role, and the difference between the formal and RPL programmes is interesting. Both require the student/applicant to 'Discuss', placing it in C2, but what needs to be discussed is different. RPL applicants should reflect on the state as a mediator, while the formal programme students deal with the state as an employer. The knowledge component deals with conceptual knowledge, so I coded both in T2, although this does not indicate the full picture. This difference between 'mediator' and 'employer' is significant – using the word 'mediator' indicates a specific role that is more than just an employer. Provision is made for this role in the legislation, but working individuals might have more insight and experience regarding mediation and how this issue plays out in the workplace than someone without relevant work experience.

I asked the academics about this difference. Academic B explained:

> The state might not be an employer for that applicant. But it does not matter. Because, even if they work in the private sector, they use the state processes for mediation, arbitration and consolidation, and any other type

> of employment forum or any other body. But the state might not be their employer.

Academic A added:

> Depending on where the applicant works, they might have sectorial determination – for example Bargaining Councils. My colleague's change in the RPL programme to the 'The state as a mediator' covers a wider range of aspects, providing the RPL candidate space to indicate what aspects of mediation they have been involved in. For example, resolving a grievance (as in the case of Capt. Ruby) or being a shop steward, which will give an applicant different exposure to the role of the state depending on where the person's works. This change to the LO is important because it accommodates the scope of the individuals' work.

The third LO is identical – dealing with the state as a peacekeeper, coded in C2,T2.

The fourth LO dealing with workplace issues in the RPL programme is similar to LO in the formal programme (LO 2.3); however, the RPL applicants are required to indicate which institution they would seek solutions from. An example in this case would be a bargaining council or even the CCMA. This affords space for the RPL applicants to provide evidence and indicate their interaction with these institutions, whereas a person who has no work experience cannot be expected to do the same.

In the second learning outcome, the verbs for the dimension of cognitive complexity are identical. Dealing with the approaches to labour relations, the wording for the knowledge dimension differs slightly, because the RPL LO mentions the various approaches, though it refers to the same knowledge. I coded both in C5, T1.

iii) Learning Unit 3: Establish a labour relationship

Learning Outcomes 2.5 and 3.5 (both FP) were condensed into one LO for the RPL. This learning unit has only one LO in the RPL programme:

Table 6.6: Establishing a labour relationship.

LO 3 (RPL) (Relationship)	Identify and describe the factors regulating the interaction between employer, employee, and trade unions.	C2, T2

This LO is very broad; the interaction between employer, employee and trade unions is mediated via legislation. I coded it in C2 and T2.

Table 6.7: Maintenance of Employment

LO 4.1 (RPL) (Practitioner)	Fulfil the role of a labour relations practitioner.	C5, T4
LO 5.1 (FP) (Practitioner)	Fulfil the role of a labour relations practitioner	C5, T4
LO 4.2 (RPL) (Communication)	Ensure sound and harmonious communication within the workplace.	C5, T4
LO 5.2 (FP) (Communication)	Ensure sound and harmonious communication within the workplace.	C5, T4
LO 4.3 (RPL) (Structures)	Establish workplace communication structures.	C6, T3
LO 5.3 (FP) (Structures)	Establish workplace communication structures.	C6, T3
LO 4.4 (RPL) (Grievance procedure)	Comprehend the grievance procedure theory and key concepts.	C2, T3
LO5.4 (FP) (Grievance procedure)	Comprehend the grievance procedure theory and key concepts.	C2, T3
LO 4.5 (RPL) (Problem solving)	Apply analytical skills to solving employee grievances.	C4, T4
LO 5.5 (FP) (Problem solving)	Apply analytical skills to solving employee grievances.	C4, T4

A number of the LOs in the formal programme deal with the legislation, but for the RPL applicants, the LO presumes that they are familiar with the legislation. Their knowledge of the legislation will enable them to mediate between employers, employees, and trade unions, presuming that the organisation they work for is unionised.

In the formal programme, assessment is done by means of a theory test, while the requirements for the RPL applicant are more flexible: ‘This knowledge can be assessed verbally in an interview, or in written format or via evidence in problem-solving commonplace workplace matters that incorporate a fundamental understanding of the history’ (RPL Portfolio Guide).

iv) Learning Unit 4:Maintenance of Employment

This unit has the most comprehensive (broad) list of objectives (LOs) in the RPL programme and covers many activities performed on a daily basis by an IR practitioner. The associated LOs in the formal programme prepare the student accordingly. Communication is crucial to any human interaction, and problem-solving is also a key activity in the workplace. If these processes are unsuccessful, the appropriate and formal processes such as a grievance procedure, can be used. The problem can be escalated through the appropriate structures if the grievance is not resolved.

v) Learning Unit 5:Termination of Employment

Table 6.8:Termination of Employment.

LO 7 (RPL) Termination	To end the working relationship using the correct policy and procedures, ensuring that the applicable legalisation or bargaining council agreement guidelines are adhered to.	C3, T4

The final learning unit that RPL applicants are required to submit evidence for deals with the termination of the employment relationship. This is a combination of Learning Units 6 and 7 in the formal programme. The concepts of procedural and substantive fairness are dealt with in Learning Unit 6,explicitlly referencing the LRA.

After I completed the above analysis and Appendix 6.1 I realised that the RPL process in IR involved detailed recontextualisation of the LOs. The developers (the academics) of the curriculum map and guideline gave a lot of thought to the LOs from the formal programme, recontextualising for the context of the workplace, Academic B, who developed the IR Guideline, is a labour lawyer who represents clients in the Labour Court, has a Ph.D. and knows and understands the IR field. He understood that he had to change the LOs to accommodate the RPL applicants. (From interview data)

Even with this recontextualisation, the LOs of both programmes are coded in the same or similar categories on the T&CKT which makes for an interesting case of what can be seen as boundary crossing. Most of the LOs for the RPL P are in the same categories as the FP, both as Knowledge type and as Complexity type. For example, the grievance procedure in both programmes has been categorised as Procedural knowledge (T3) and Understand (C2) as

level of complexity. The conclusion can be drawn here is that the boundary of IR as a discipline is weak (Harris and Wihak, 2017).

Table 6.9:Concepts in the Formal Programme and the RPL Programme – IR1

Disciplinary knowledge	Industrial Relations 1: Disciplinary knowledge re-organised for vocational purposes and the workplace.		
	Academic subjects	***Formal programme***	***RPL Programme***
		Factual Knowledge (and Complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		History (C1) Workplace issues (C1) Sector orientated (C1)	
		Conceptual knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		Tripartite (C1) Approaches (C5) Interests (C2) State (C2) Peace (C2) Workplace issues (C1)	Tripartite (C1) Approaches (C5) Interests (C3) Peace (C2) Relationship (C2)
		Procedural knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		Grievance procedure (C2) Termination of employment (C3)	State (C2) Grievance procedure (C2) Workplace issues (3)
		Meta-cognitive knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		Termination of employment (C2 and C4) Practitioner (C3) Communication (C5) Problem solving (C4)	Termination of employment (C3) Practitioner (C3) Communication (C5) Problem solving (C4)

Table 6.9 summarises the concepts coded against the T&CKT (Appendix 6.1), indicating which concepts have been coded where on the taxonomy. There are no concepts located in the factual section of the RPL P.

In the conceptual section, a number of the concepts are on both sides of the table for example: 'Tripartite', and 'Approaches and Peace'; all three are also at the same level of complexity. 'Relationship' is only found on the RPL P side, while state and workplace issues is only on the FP side.

Procedural knowledge: 'Grievance procedure' is on both sides of the table and at the same level of complexity. This includes that the same procedure is taught in the FP and used in the

workplace, regardless where it is taught. This point is illustrated in the evidence submitted by Capt. Ruby as will become clear in the next section.

In the metacognitive knowledge section four concepts are listed, on both sides of the table; termination of employment, practitioner, communication and problem-solving. Termination of employment is the only one not at the same level of complexity as was indicated earlier, this LO was combined for the RPL P.

In the next section, I will discuss Capt.'s Ruby RPL application and the evidence, mainly naturally occurring evidence (NOE), she submitted.

6.4 RPL Applicant: Capt. Ruby as HR practitioner

The RPL applicant, Captain Ruby, worked in the South African Police Service (SAPS) in South Africa for 22 years. She has an incomplete school leaving (matriculation) certificate and has completed a wide variety of in-house training programmes, including grievance procedures, conducting disciplinary hearings, managing absenteeism, junior management, human rights and policing, as well as dealing with domestic violence while working for the Police.

Captain Ruby submitted a portfolio of evidence as required by the academic department. The RPL learning outcomes of all the subjects in the Diploma were given to Capt. Ruby and she could select which subjects she wanted to apply for credits.

Country-wide student protests took place in South Africa between 2015 and 2020, referred to as #Feesmustfall and #free-education[22] campaigns, which resulted in episodes of closure of various higher education institutions in the country, including the research site. This situation had an impact on members of the public, including the RPL applicants, because the premises were unavailable. As a result, the department could not meet with Capt. Ruby to brief her on what was required from her in the portfolio. Captain Ruby thus compiled her portfolio on her own and did not include any reflective writing.

[22] #Feesmustfall and #free-education campaigns took place due to increased student fees and where of such a disruptive nature, that institutions of higher education, closed campuses. This led to a situation where no one was permitted onto the campuses until negotiations between the students, the institution and government were completed, and peace was restored. This situation had a detrimental effect on not only learning and teaching, but also the RPL process.

6.4.1:Analysis of the portfolio of evidence submitted by Capt. Ruby.

The portfolio Capt. Ruby did submit included evidence of her work in the field of labour relations, but she completed the curriculum map for the subjects HRM 1 and 2, and not any of the other subjects of the Diploma. However, most of the evidence relates mainly to the subject IR 1, for which she was given credit. The evidence she did submit makes for interesting reading.

Capt. Ruby worked at one of the largest police stations in one of the metropolitan cities in SA, located in a community with a high unemployment rate, especially amongst the youth, suffering gang-related violence and high crime rates. She started her work in the policy as a Constable and worked herself up through the ranks of the police service. She was appointed as a Captain after 13 years of employment.

She worked as an HR practitioner responsible for performance management, which included investigating disciplinary cases, verbal grievances, and conflict management among staff. She also had to monitor the utilisation of staff members, late coming, absenteeism and sick leave. If a staff member was absent from work regularly, she was required to follow up with the individual concerned, which might require home visits, providing support to the person and liaison with medical practitioners. She was also involved in general HR tasks such as recruitment and selection, staff transfers and probation, and job descriptions. She submitted a portfolio of evidence reflecting her work as an HR Practitioner.

Being an HR practitioner, Captain Ruby, used a hands-on approach to her work and developed a variety of documents as a result. Her portfolio included:

- a motivational letter, written by hand, explaining her reasons for applying for RPL,
- her CV and certificates of the in-house training /non-formal learning she had completed as well as letters of reference.
- Naturally occurring evidence as part of her portfolio such as evidence of dealing with incapacity and absenteeism cases which she recorded in her diary by hand. The evidence indicates the steps she followed in the cases of absenteeism, grievance procedures and termination of employment. She documented what was outstanding in the cases not resolved or how she resolved other cases. She included verbatim records of meetings held with her colleagues dealing with staff-related matters such as late coming; the documents and notes she generates in the course of her work.
- She submitted her job description and recent performance review.

I analysed her evidence per learning unit from the RPL programme, relying to some extent on my own[23] knowledge of IR to interpret the evidence. I discussed my interpretation with Academics A and B, and have included their comments.

Learning Unit 1:Overview of SA labour relations

No evidence was presented. The assessors did not perceive this as a problem because the topic covers 'only 10% of the subject' (from the assessor's report).

Learning Unit 2:Participants in the labour relationship

This learning unit deals with communication, identification of workplace issues and seeking solutions. She demonstrated this ability in the verbatim minutes of support services meetings which she chaired. In the two sets of minutes that she presented, one of the topics discussed was the late coming of staff members. Capt. After some discussion, Ruby points out that 'Flexi hours are not allowed', indicating knowledge of rules and the ability to apply them. Later in the same meeting, she pointed out that she was addressing the issue of late arrivals with various line managers.

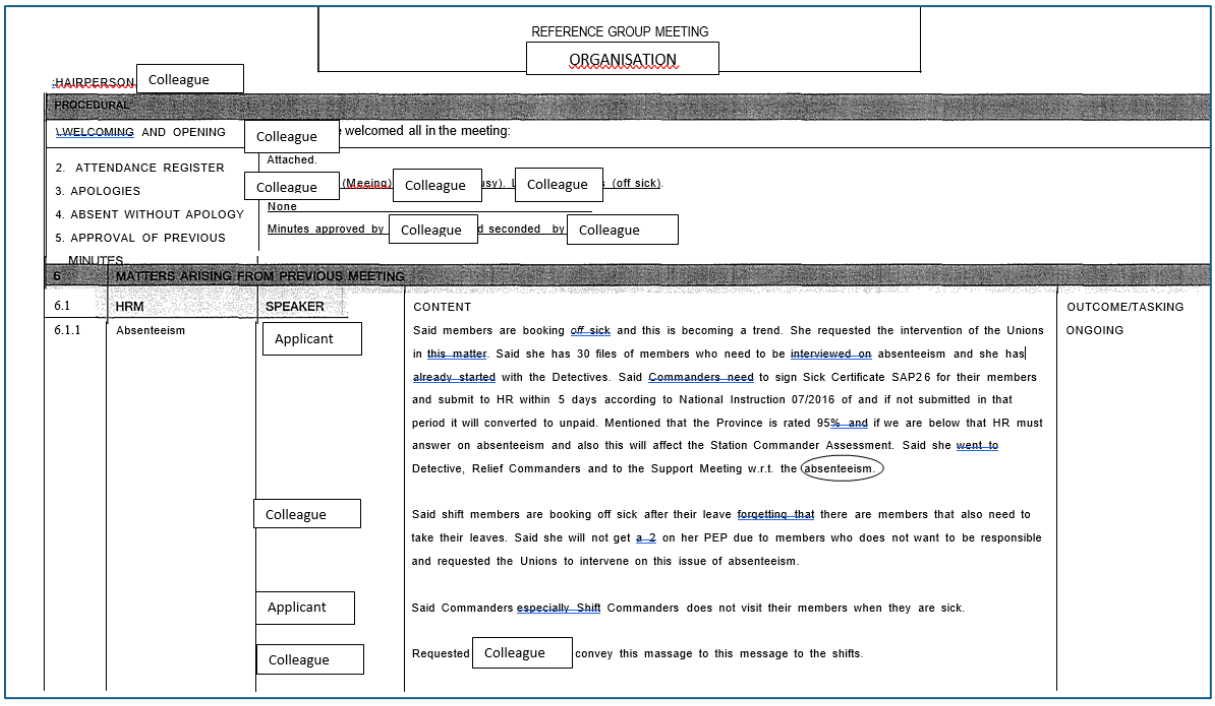


Figure 6.3: Minutes: Dealing with Staff Issues

[23] I trained on labour legislation via a short course I completed at Damelin. Subsequently I used to run an in-house programme on labour practice at a previous employer, giving have a fairly sound understanding of IR and the associated standards and practices.

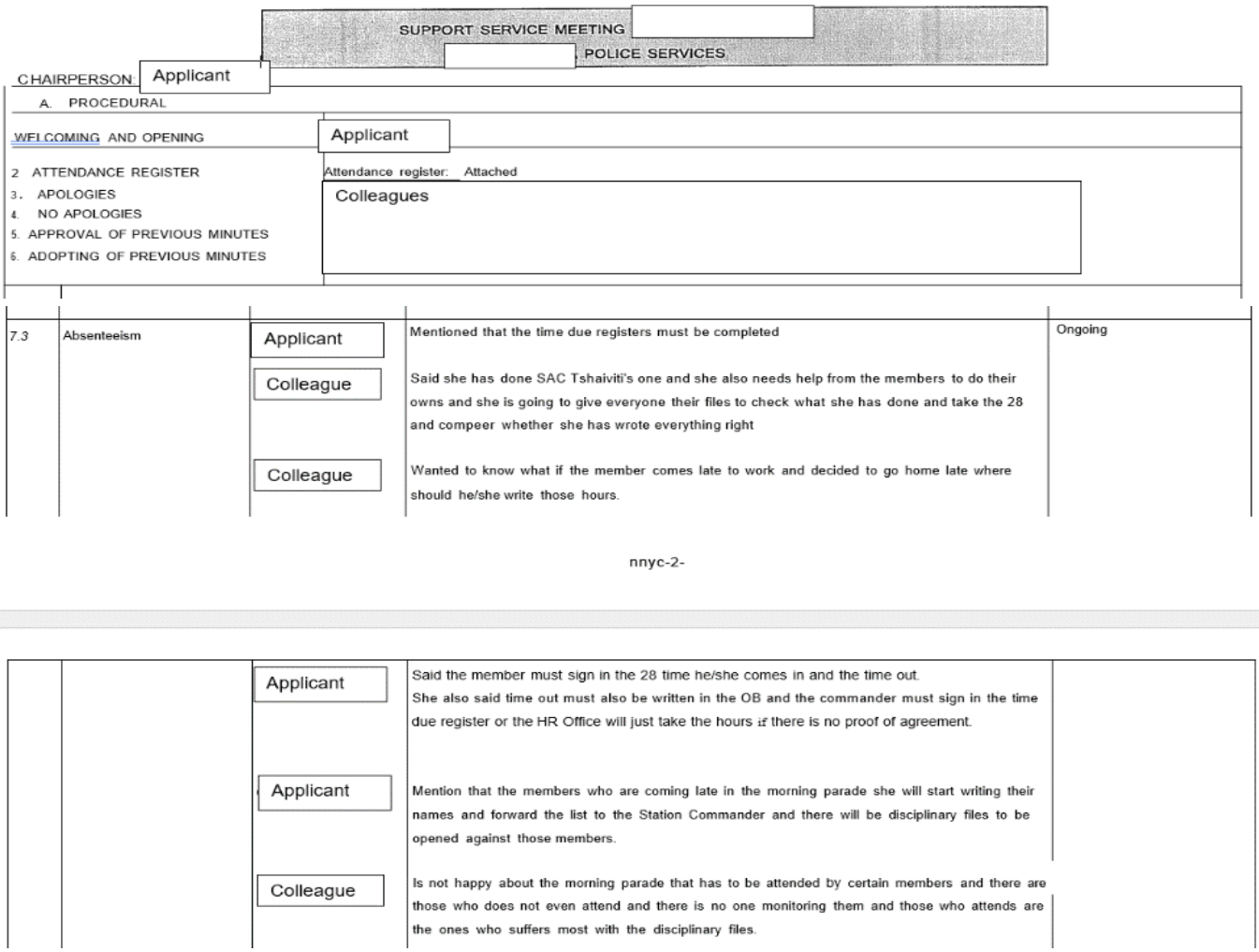
Figure 6.3 is a section from minutes, evidence of the staff relationships Capt. Ruby dealt with. Working as an HR and IR practitioner, she played a conciliatory role within the police station. The minutes are a reflection of this role. I did not include the full set of minutes, but she dealt with a variety of issues such as absenteeism, late coming, training requirements, disciplinary matters and staffing.

Learning Unit 3:Establish an employment relationship

From the evidence submitted, Capt. Ruby did not seem to be dealing with the employer-employee-trade union relationship. This is understandable considering the large organisation she worked for – her focus was on individual staff members rather than the collective.

Learning Unit 4:Maintenance of employment

This learning unit deals with a number of issues: communication and the promotion thereof as an HR Practitioner using the appropriate structures, grievance procedure and analytical skills. She submitted a copy of minutes of a meeting she chaired entitled 'Support services meeting'. (Figure 6.5) One of the topics discussed was absenteeism and late coming, highlighting an ongoing concern amongst Capt. Ruby and her colleagues.



SUPPORT SERVICE MEETING

POLICE SERVICES

CHAIRPERSON: Applicant

A. PROCEDURAL

WELCOMING AND OPENING		Applicant	
2 ATTENDANCE REGISTER 3. APOLOGIES 4. NO APOLOGIES 5. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES 6. ADOPTING OF PREVIOUS MINUTES		Attendance register: Attached Colleagues	
7.3	Absenteeism	Applicant	Mentioned that the time due registers must be completed
		Colleague	Said she has done SAC Tshaiviti's one and she also needs help from the members to do their owns and she is going to give everyone their files to check what she has done and take the 28 and compeer whether she has wrote everything right
		Colleague	Wanted to know what if the member comes late to work and decided to go home late where should he/she write those hours.
		Applicant	Said the member must sign in the 28 time he/she comes in and the time out. She also said time out must also be written in the OB and the commander must sign in the time due register or the HR Office will just take the hours if there is no proof of agreement.
		Applicant	Mention that the members who are coming late in the morning parade she will start writing their names and forward the list to the Station Commander and there will be disciplinary files to be opened against those members.
		Colleague	Is not happy about the morning parade that has to be attended by certain members and there are those who does not even attend and there is no one monitoring them and those who attends are the ones who suffers most with the disciplinary files.

Ongoing	

nnyc-2-

Figure 6.4; Minutes: Absenteeism and Late Coming.

The minutes indicate that they planned to take appropriate steps to monitor staff members who did not attend the morning parade and escalate the matter to the station commander, utilising the appropriate structures within the organization.

Absenteeism is an ongoing issue that is prominent in Capt. Ruby's diary. As indicated in Figure 6.4 of one of her diary entries, a staff member was absent without leave and she followed up with the staff member by visiting the person at home. The entry in her diary was an account of a follow-up meeting, Captain Ruby required documentation regarding the person's health. From the note she was concerned about the ‘Misuse of sick leave’; she also notes that ‘services delivery’ was affected due to an employee addiction.

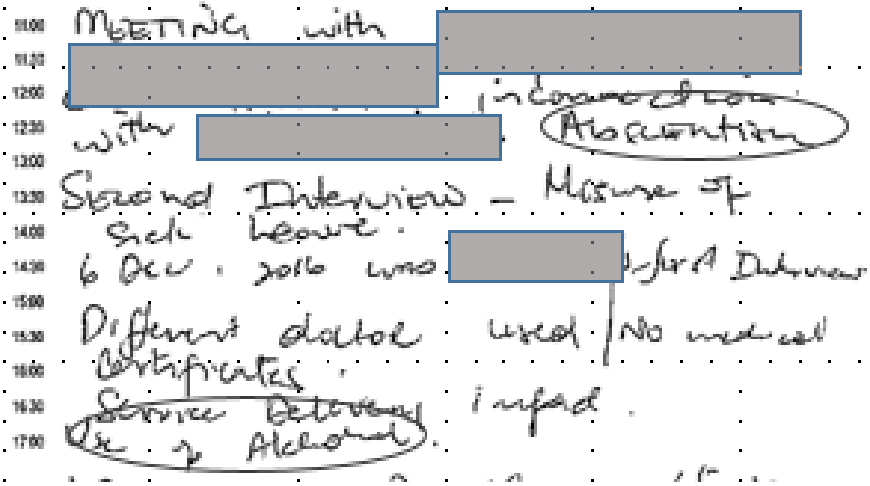


Figure 6.5 :Diary Entry Dealing with absenteeism

I concluded from this diary entry that Captain Ruby knew the procedure that should be followed, this being a follow-up meeting. A note was also made of a doctor's appointment that would be made by one of the other staff members to ensure that the person's health was attended to. She made another note indicating ‘absenteeism’ and ‘a date in two months’ time to monitor’ the situation, once again referring to the procedure.

This specific piece of evidence (above) can be linked to the learning outcome, 'maintenance of employment'. The assessment criteria emphasise that the 'correct policy and procedure' and 'necessary substantive and procedural fairness' must be followed. The diary entry reflected this crucial principle of procedure: having a meeting, second interview, second medical opinion, and mentioning the issue of correct documentation. It highlighted the impact that incapacity due to mental health was having on the work of the organisation. The record in her diary also reflects the requirements, within the context of this case, as stipulated in the SABPP standards. These inferences were confirmed by Academic B during my interview with him. Capt. Unfortunately, Ruby did not unpack her knowledge or reflect on it.

The grievance procedure is another aspect of this learning unit. Capt. Ruby had to deal with a grievance from a staff member against a line manager. In Figure 6.6, Capt. Ruby recorded that a ‘staff member completed a grievance form, the member indicated he is [ag]grieved against line manager who is arguing [about the] doctor's [certificate] given to him before he goes on leave’. The line manager is recorded as pointing out that ‘(the employee is) not allowed to be given doctor's letter before leave, had a discussion and the matter is now resolved.’ Capt. Ruby was informed and signed off the grievance form.

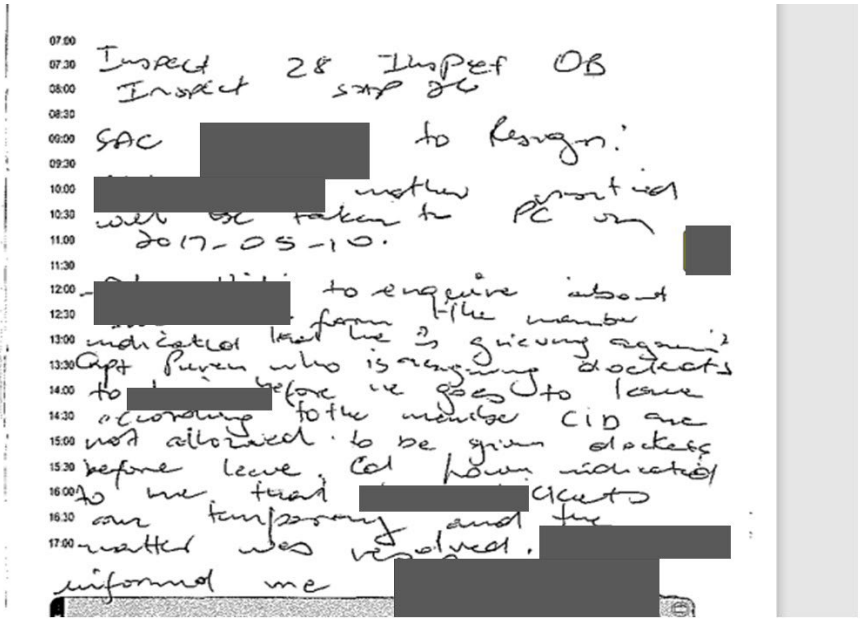


Figure 6.6::Diary Entry Grievance and Sick Leave

The fact that the RPL applicant recorded this in her diary demonstrates the seriousness of the issue. The fact that she signed it off also indicated that procedures were followed within the organisation.

For this learning unit Capt. Ruby was required to fulfil her role as a labour relations practitioner. A verbal grievance is usually a minor disagreement between two or more employees, which might involve line management. Once all aggrieved parties are together, a reasonable person will attempt to use reason, organisation rules, and common sense to resolve the matter verbally. The type of knowledge involved deals with problem-solving and logical thinking.

The applicant's diary entries reflected her ability to apply rules governing the employee-employer relationship. The assumption could be made that the applicant had knowledge of all the relevant rules and regulations within the organisation, which in turn are based on legislation. Although she did not point this out in her portfolio, due to the fact that it this not include reflective writing, one can surmise that she had knowledge of the legislation such as the LRA and BCOE.

Academics involved in the assessment confirmed my inferences (Hendricks & Volbrecht, 2003), I refer to this type of interpretation as ‘tacit-to-tacit’ knowledge between the academic and the RPL applicant, which is only possible if both are in the same field, or have the same 'gaze' as Bernstein (1999) would have described it.

In Figure 6.8 is a diary entry about the temporary incapacity of a staff member. In the note she records that the person has been absent, and that she visited the staff member at home. She had him complete the form for temporary incapacity. She also asked the staff member to see another medical practitioner and return to work by a specific date.

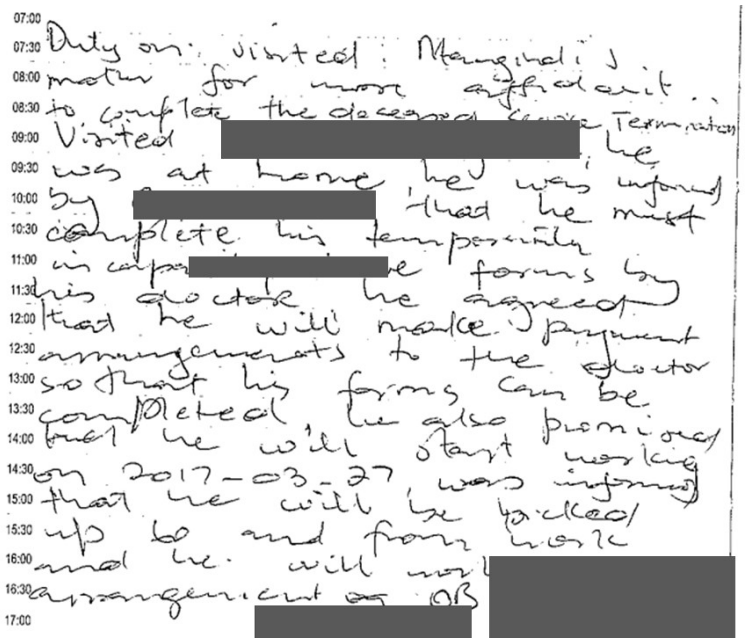


Figure 6.7:Diary Entry: Temporary Incapacity

Learning Unit 5:Termination of employment

The last learning unit deals with the termination of employment. The evidence presented by Capt. Ruby was about the death of a staff member. Capt. Ruby described how she assisted the family with finalising of documentation required for the payout of the pension. (Fogure 7.)

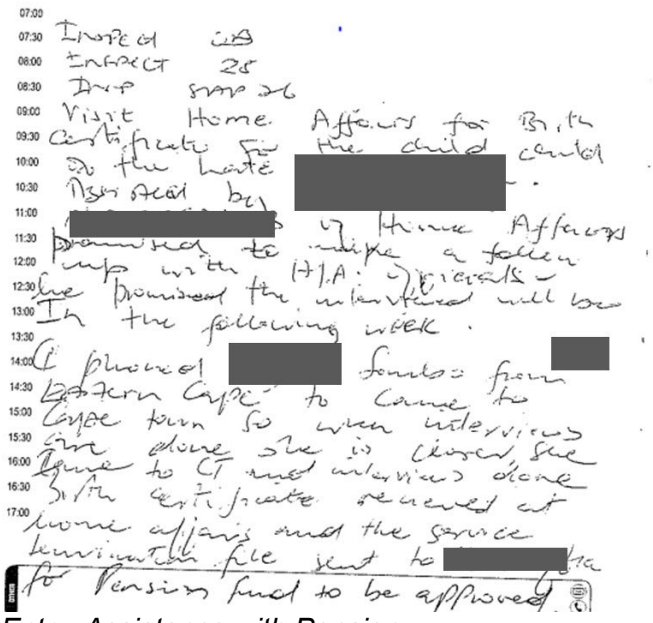


Figure 6.8:Diary Entry; Assistance with Pension

No evidence for disciplinary action or resignation was included in Capt. Ruby's portfolio. This was not seen as a problem in the interview with the academics, as I will discuss in the next section.

6.4.2 Interpretation of the evidence by the assessors

I interviewed two academic staff members from the HRM department: the RPL Facilitator. Academic A and the IR lecturer, Academic B. Appendix 6.2 lists the topics I discussed in a joint interview with both academics. I also sent the T&CKT to them before the interview so they could have a look at it and for triangulation purposes. This section draws on email correspondence with Academic B, my interview, and the assessment report.

In my interview with the two academics, we discussed the RPL process in general and the development of the curriculum maps specifically. We discussed Capt. Ruby's RPL application and the naturally occurring evidence she submitted. Lastly, we discussed their interpretation of her portfolio.

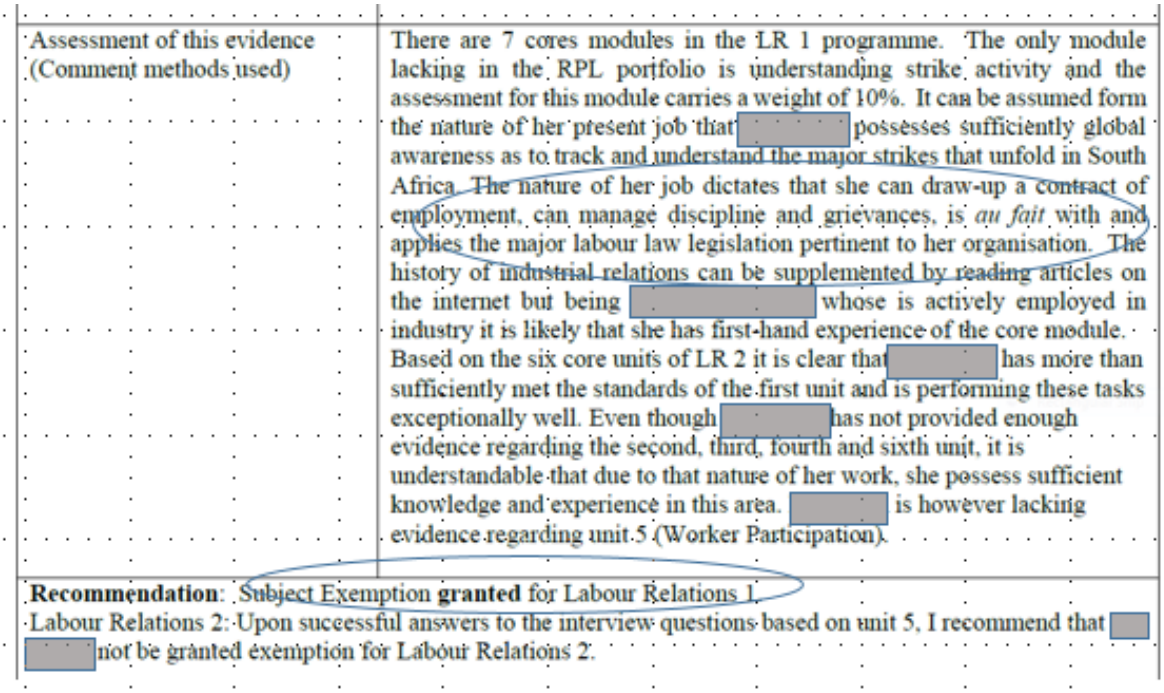
As mentioned previously, Academic B stated in an email, that while developing the RPL guideline and curriculum map, he 'condensed them (the learning outcomes) for ease of use'. Academic A pointed out that they (the academic department) took 'cognisance of the form that evidence takes in the workplace'. The grouping of the learning units accommodates naturally occurring evidence and makes provision for how the evidence can be presented in a portfolio of evidence'.

Discussing the development of the curriculum maps, Academic B commented:

> 'Your document (curriculum map) is not easy to fill in, but once completed it, I find it works; I can now look at the evidence and I get to know the person'. The map is a clever document, you need to put at the top the gravity of the activity – it needs to be done properly and filled in by the individual, it needs to be taken serious by everyone involved.'

The assessment of the evidence for IR 1 in Capt. Ruby's application was conducted by Academic B as the subject expert and discussed with Academic A. In the assessment report, the learning outcomes of the formal programme are listed, the evidence submitted by Capt. Ruby is recorded, and the interpretation of the evidence in relation to the learning outcomes is explained. Bearing in mind that Capt. Ruby did not complete her section of the curriculum

map, the assessment report attempts to make up the difference. Figure 6.10 shows a part of the report, assessing the evidence.



Assessment of this evidence (Comment methods used)	There are 7 cores modules in the LR 1 programme. The only module lacking in the RPL portfolio is understanding strike activity and the assessment for this module carries a weight of 10%. It can be assumed form the nature of her present job that [redacted] possesses sufficiently global awareness as to track and understand the major strikes that unfold in South Africa. The nature of her job dictates that she can draw-up a contract of employment, can manage discipline and grievances, is *au fait* with and applies the major labour law legislation pertinent to her organisation. The history of industrial relations can be supplemented by reading articles on the internet but being [redacted] whose is actively employed in industry it is likely that she has first-hand experience of the core module. Based on the six core units of LR 2 it is clear that [redacted] has more than sufficiently met the standards of the first unit and is performing these tasks exceptionally well. Even though [redacted] has not provided enough evidence regarding the second, third, fourth and sixth unit, it is understandable that due to that nature of her work, she possess sufficient knowledge and experience in this area. [redacted] is however lacking evidence regarding unit 5 (Worker Participation).
Recommendation: Subject Exemption **granted** for Labour Relations 1. Labour Relations 2: Upon successful answers to the interview questions based on unit 5, I recommend that [redacted] not be granted exemption for Labour Relations 2.	

***F**igure 6.9: Extract from the Assessor Report*

This is the interpretation of the evidence by Academic B:

> ‘The nature of her job dictates that she can draw up a contract of employment, can manage discipline and grievances, is *au fait* with and applies major labour law legislation pertinent to her organisation…… being an African lady who is actively employed in industry it is likely that she has first-hand experience of the core module.’

From the interpretation, which seems relatively brief, one can see that Academic B understood Capt. Ruby's evidence and because of his own professional experience could relate to such naturally occurring evidence. The statement that because she is employed, ‘it is likely that she has first-hand experience’ underscores academic B's professional interpretation of the evidence. Academic B explained:

> I look at it, because I have experience [from the workplace], what would they perform in the workplace, I know what an HR Officer has to do and quite a bit of the work she is doing is in line with that.

The assessment report notes Captain Rudy's evidence as: ‘First-hand experience of the core module.’ The assessors point out that she is ‘*au fait* with and applies major labour law legislation pertinent to her organisation.’ In the report, the assessors agree to grant Capt. Ruby credit for Industrial Relations 1. It is stated clearly that she will not be granted credit for Industrial Relations 2. In further discussion about the importance of the labour legislation, Academic B pointed out:

> The importance of knowing [these] Acts, they impact on policy and procedure in the workplace. If the legislation and fairness is not inculcated into their everyday practice, the unions will nail them [referring to the HR practitioner].

Academics A and B both pointed to the explicit knowledge included in Capt. Ruby's diary which is based on legislation: ‘It can be assumed from the nature of her job that [she] possesses sufficient global awareness …’ Academic B explained, referring to the knowledge required for IR 1:

> ‘It is **bedrock knowledge:**(Bold added) you can't function in any of those outcomes without this. Without this knowledge it is like building a house without a foundation. The knowledge of labour legislation …. Even operating as an HR Officer you have to understand the parameters of those Acts and the ramifications it has on your job.’

The applicant did not link the evidence presented to the learning outcomes of the IR1 in the RPL programme. The academics made the link. I mentioned to the academics that ‘I [myself] could link [the evidence] to the LO, i.e., understand and apply labour legislation in an organisation – but it is implied’. They agreed, implicitly pointing to Capt. Ruby's tacit knowledge and their own which are inherent in interpreting the evidence presented. I interpret this as a situation of ‘tacit-to-tacit knowledge’ between the RPL applicant and the Assessors.

Academic B:

> That's why in the RPL you look for evidence that they have applied. That is what attracted me to the police captain, what you were talking about, I could see the procedures and processes put in place, although it was badly written, but it is correct.

Putting together the learning outcomes from both programmes and Capt. Ruby's evidence leads me to the question of type of knowledge in IR 1 and the knowledge claims made by various parties in the case study.

6.5 Interpreting the structure of knowledge in IR

The application of knowledge is crucial in qualification-specific RPL. When granting credits, the question that academics must answer is whether the RPL applicant possesses the underlying knowledge required for the subjects.

In the case of Capt. Ruby, part of the underpinning knowledge of the subject is labour legislation – the ‘bedrock knowledge’ as Academic B stated (Figure 6.11). Academics were of the opinion that an RPL applicant such as Capt. Ruby would not be able to apply procedural knowledge if she did not know the legislation.

The evidence submitted by Capt. Ruby clearly shows her application of the various labour laws and their associated procedures. That is the reason why the concepts found in the curriculum were also identified in the RPL application.

The underpinning knowledge of IR that was referred to by Academic B as the 'bedrock knowledge' which includes all legislation is part of the bigger field of law (Breier, 2005), but this subject is specific about in IR. I interpret this component of knowledge of law as hierarchical in structure to some extent, not entirely horizontal as Breier did. The IR subject provides a base for HR and IR practitioners to work.

All legislation and its practice are based on human rights and the South African constitution; each piece of legislation is a 'segment' dealing with a specific aspect of the law. Therefore, law also has an element of horizontal knowledge structure to it.

From this base, various aspects of IR, such as the disciplinary and grievance procedure, are procedural knowledge and built upon the bedrock of legislative knowledge but segmented in nature; thus, the segments are horizontal in structure. Having coded the types of knowledge involved, in IR they are therefore both horizontal and hierarchical in structure.

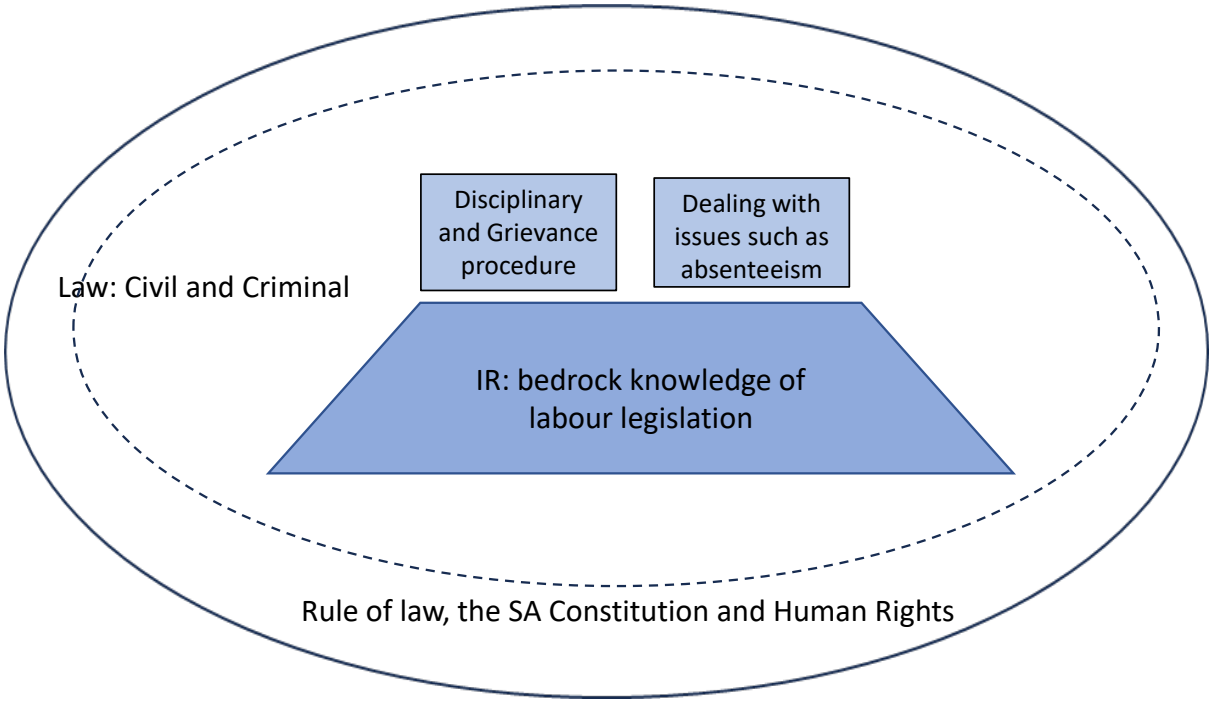


Figure 6.10.: Knowledge types found in Industrial Relations

Although the knowledge structure of law is segmented, it has a standard repertoire that is used across the field. The repertoire is important because in an RPL application, the applicant must speak, write (in the case of IR), and understand using the same language or repertoire (Bernstein, 2000) as those in academia. Because if Capt. Ruby did not share some of this repertoire, she would not have been able to make the diary entries that she made.

The implications of my findings for the subject IR are that although law as a discipline and profession has a strong boundary, it has segmented components within the strong boundary. Because Capt. Ruby had an opportunity to work and develop knowledge within a sub-field of law, that knowledge, due to its segmented nature, could provide an opportunity for RPL credits.

6.6 Conclusion

The RPL process for Capt. Ruby, who had no formal training, led the credit-granting via RPL. It presented the academic department and the RPL Unit with the challenge of Utilizing and modifying the formal program to facilitate the transfer of informal and non-formal learning, thereby enabling a process of RPL.

Coding of the type of knowledge against the T&CKT categories indicated which concepts were of which type and at which level of complexity, making comparison possible. It became clear

that for IR1, most concepts in both the FP and the RPL P were on the same level for type of knowledge and complexity.

The identification of the different types of knowledge and levels of complexity has demonstrated the possibility of a bridge between the academy and RPL, because the differences between the two types of knowledge are not very great. Looking at the LOs and the T&CKT from the point of view of a knowledge claim, crossing the boundaries became possible, indicating that workplace knowledge can be recruited against a formal subject at a V/PHEI within a professional qualification.

The recruitment of knowledge from workplace learning to a formal setting was possible due to three aspects of the RPL process. Firstly, recontextualisation (Barnett, 2006) of the learning outcomes from the FP to the RPL P. This is an acknowledgement by the academics that similar knowledge exists in the workplace and the academy, but its format, workflow and application is different in the workplace compared to an academic subject. Secondly, the knowledge of the academic and the evidence submitted by the applicant led to the identification of knowledge not explicitly spelt out or reflected upon by Capt. Ruby. This led me to note that the Academics were making connections and drawing conclusions based on the evidence and their own knowledge of IR is a situation, what I refer to as, where tacit-to-tacit interaction occurs. Thirdly, the hybrid nature of IR knowledge makes boundary crossing (Bernstein 2000) possible through a chain of recontextualisation (Evans, 2009).

Chapter 7: Nala: Designing and building one project at a time and the subjects Architectural Practice 4 and Architectural Literacy 4

7.1 Introduction

When I think of architecture, I think of the Guggenheim in New York and Fallingwater House, both designed by the architect Frank Lloyd Wright,[24] the Notre-Dame du Haut designed by Le Corbusier,[25] and the various buildings in Barcelona designed by Antoni Gaudi,[26] including the La Sagrada Famila (which is still not yet complete). Although designed by architects, these amazing buildings would not have been built (and are still being built in the case of the La Sagrada Famila) without the support of architectural technologists.

Constructing a building, be it a house, an office block, residential units in one building or a complex, or buildings for industrial use or leisure, takes a team of various professionals to bring the idea from a sketch to a completed building. This team is usually led by at least one architect, if not a team of architects, supported by architectural technologists (called draughtsmen in the past), quantity surveyors, project managers, engineers, and sometimes interior designers. The building team consists of electricians, plumbers, bricklayers, and other appropriate tradespersons, managed by a builder and/or project manager. The focus of this chapter is the work of the architectural technologist.

My focus for this case study is on the RPL application of an individual I call Nala, who worked in the architectural field for 15 years. He worked with architects and engineers, developing his knowledge of architecture so that he could register with the South African Council of Architectural Practitioners (SACAP) as a professional architectural draughtsperson.

He applied for and was granted access to the Advanced Diploma: Architectural Technology (AT). In addition, he was also granted RPL credits for Architectural Practice 4 and Architectural Literacy 4.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the nature of the architectural discipline and profession, focusing on South Africa, including an explanation of the role of the South African

[24] Frank Lloyd Wright (1867 – 1959) American architect and designer
[25] Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, (1887-1965) Swiss-French architect known as Le Corbusier
[26] Antoni Gaudi (1852-1926) Catalan/Spanish architect.

Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP), the professional body representing the architectural profession in South Africa.

The second section of the chapter discusses the RPL requirements and process in architectural technology at the V/PHEI.

In the third section, I analyse the learning outcomes involved in the formal and RPL programmes. After plotting the learning outcomes on the revised taxonomy, I discuss the changes made to the learning outcomes for the RPL process compared to the learning outcomes in the formal programme.

In the fourth section of this chapter, I discuss Nala's case study, analysing the naturally occurring evidence he submitted. I analysed all the evidence in his portfolio, such as design and working drawings, artefacts, and assignments from his short courses, including the sketchbook he submitted. Lastly, in this section, I consider the assessment and interpretation of the portfolio by the assessors/academics.

In conclusion I analyse the knowledge claims made by Nala and the academics concerned. I discuss the levels of complexity based on the levels concepts that I have identified in the knowledge claims based on the concepts I identify in this chapter.

7.2 The Architectural Discipline and Profession

In South Africa, an overarching body named the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) oversees six professions: architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, project and construction management, property valuation, and quantity surveying. SACAP, as a professional council for architecture specifically, works under the ambit of CBE.

In this section, I discuss the architectural profession, encompassing various professionals, from professional draughtspersons to professional architects, along with their respective qualification requirements. The suite of architectural qualifications offered in SA is developed based on a ‘scope of work’, the framework regulating the architectural profession, developed by the CBE. The classification of work in the architectural profession is based on two aspects, according to the Council for the Built Environment Act No. 43 of 2000a (CBE Act) (Republic of South Africa, 2000:52):*The complexity of the building and the complexity of the site.* The scope of work as determined by this legislation provides clear parameters as to the work that the various professionals are permitted to do.

7.2.1 *The Architectural Field and its Scope of Work*

In the 15th and 16th centuries, architecture was studied through an apprenticeship system whereby a student would observe and mimic a master, usually a successful architect, linked to the guilds. With the Renaissance, the practice of architecture moved into a professional field, ‘promoting the ideals of the courts and the aristocracy’ (Luckan, 2021:49, 50). This change led to a paradigm shift, resulting in the academicization of the profession.

According to Luckan (2021:50) 'architectural narratives and theory are alternately embedded in the making of architecture as a manifestation of culture in time and place.'

Different buildings and different sites require different design experiences and are influenced by the size and budget of the projects. The architectural work of the various professionals in the architectural field is based on the scope of services that architectural professionals do. Two levels of complexity are at play in the architectural profession as defined by the CBE: complexity of work and complexity of site.

- The ‘complexity of work’ is determined by the type of building involved. For example, the complexity of designing and building a warehouse is lower than the design and development of an office building covering four city blocks.
- ‘Complexity of site’ is determined by aspects such as the location of the building site, its orientation, the slope of the land, geological considerations and weather in the area.

The interaction of those two levels of complexity determines the type of work that can be undertaken by the four categories of professionals in the field. The knowledge base associated with these two levels of complexities are linked to the competencies explained below:

- The *professional architect* can work on a multi-story, multifunctional building consisting of complex building types. The professional architect can work on sites of high complexity and buildings of high complexity. An architect's focus is on the design of the building, but also all the complexities involved in its design and building. The person is skilled in all the categorise of competencies as stipulated in the legislation (SACAP, 2010:3; CBE Act 43 of 2000a:53).

- A *professional senior architectural technologist* (PrSArchT) can work on building sites of low building complexity and medium to high complexity buildings with low to medium site complexity. The PrSArchT can work on all these stages of service within the

confinement of a simple multi-storey building or long-span structures 3000 m² or smaller (SACAP, 2010:3; CBE Act 43 of 2000a:54).

The PrSArchT's ‘main activities associated with the field are the production of drawings, detailing, presentation of drawing, model making, site supervision and monitoring and liaison with clients, engineers, municipalities, quantity surveyors and contractors. Once the necessary experience has been gained, the senior architectural technologist can competently handle small to medium size work independently’ (V/PHEI website).

- A *professional architectural technologist* can work on simple double-story buildings. A professional AT is a person ‘over and above that of a professional architectural draughtsperson' (SACAP, 2010:3; CBE Act 43 of 2000a:54).

- The *professional architectural draughtsperson* can work on a single dwelling unit, and should be registered with SACAP (SACAP, 2010:3; CBE Act 43 of 2000a:54).

The scope of work for the four types of professionals in architecture is governed by a set of competencies, which are explained in the next section.

7.2.2 *The Competencies involved in Architecture*

A body of knowledge for the architectural profession in South Africa is specified by SACAP and referred to as ‘competencies’. These competencies are linked to the scope of work, and the complexity of the site and building.

SACAP defines competencies in terms of the interaction between knowledge, skills and competence. SACAP does indicate that the competencies can be ‘acquired through formal academic learning and acquired through work integrated learning to allow for the diversity of philosophies and focuses that exist in tertiary institutions in particular, some competencies are indicated as optional outcomes and suitable for learning through either route’ (SACAP, 2010:2). This interpretation of the value of non-formal and informal learning provides affordances for RPL. SACAP has its own RPL process, which Nala used to register as a draughtsperson. In this chapter, I use the word ‘competency’ as SACAP interprets it.

SACAP has identified ten competencies (Table 7.1), with the detailed list of competencies in Appendix 7.1, which are required to practice as an architectural professional in a ‘sustainable,

social responsible and financially viable way [which] are clustered into a range of ten specific outcomes' (SACAP, 2010:2). Each cluster has associated 'specific outcomes'. SACAP uses four verbs: 'Awareness', 'Knowledge', 'Understanding', and 'Ability' (SACAP, 2010:2-3) to describe the cognitive dimension of these outcomes, with 'Awareness' being the least complex and 'Ability' the most complex.

The SACAP document 'Competencies for the Architectural Professions (2010), gives a detailed breakdown of the specific outcomes in the ten competencies categories (SACAP, 2010:5-11). I have only included these for the professional architectural technologist because that is the focus of my study. The competencies for the professional architectural senior technologist are at NQF 7, in line with the level descriptors from SAQA.

Table 7.1:Competency Groups from Architecture

Competency
1. Architectural design
2. Environmental relationships
3. Construction technology
4. The structure of buildings
5. Contextual and urban relations
6. Architectural history, theory and precedent
7. Building services and related technologies
8. Contract documentation and administration
9. Computer applications
10. Office practice, legal aspects and ethics

These competencies are grouped into two categories: Competencies one to seven apply to the architectural concept, including aspects such as design, environmental considerations, and construction technology (as listed above), while competencies eight to ten deal with the design development phases of practice, including aspects such contracts, computer applications and office practice (Luckan, 2021:76).

7.2.3 *Qualifications in the Architectural Profession*

The qualifications in the architectural profession are as follows in SA. The V/PHEI is accredited to offer (at the time of this study) the Advanced Diploma (in blue, table 7.2), which is the focus of my study. It is an NQF level 7 qualification consisting of 120 credits on the HEQSF. Graduates with the Advanced Diploma: AT can register with SACAP as 'Senior architectural technologists'.

Table 7.2: Qualifications in the South African Architectural Professional (SACAP)

Professional registration	*Acronym*	*Qualifications*	*NQF*
Professional Architect	PrArch	Professional master's degree in architecture	9
Professional Senior Architectural Technologist	**PrSArchT**	B Arch (Prof) (4 years, 480 credits) PG Dip	8
		Advanced Diploma and one year of Work Integrated Learning (WIL)*	7
Professional Architectural Technologist	PrArchT	Diploma (3 years, 360 credits)	6
Professional Draughtsperson	PrArchDraught	Advanced Certificate or higher certificate and one year Work Integrated Learning (WIL)	6/5

** Focus of study indicated in blue.*

7.2.4 The Advanced Diploma in Architectural Technology

The Advanced Diploma (AD) in Architectural Technology follows a 360-credit Diploma in Architectural Technology. The AD can be seen as the fourth year of study for an architectural technologist. Once graduated with the AD, the candidate becomes a professional senior architectural technologist (PrSArchT) registered according to the Architectural Profession Act No. 44 of 2000b (Republic of South Africa, 2000). The Diploma and Advanced Diploma in AT consist of five subjects (Table 7.3) from the first year to the fourth year.

Table 7.3: Qualification Structure for the Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Architectural Technology

Year	Subjects				
Diploma: Architectural Technology					
1st year	Technology 1	Design 1	Practice 1	Literacy 1	Environment 1
2nd year	Technology 2	Design 2	Practice 2	Literacy 2	Environment 2
3rd year	Technology 3	Design 3	Practice 3	Literacy 3	Environment 3
Advanced Diploma: Architectural Technology					
4th year	Technology 4	Design 4	**Practice 4**	**Literacy 4**	Environment 4

(Source:V/PHEI qualification information and brochure, registration in NQF, subjects in blue are focus of study)

These qualifications are based on the SACAP competencies listed above for all architectural qualifications in the country. The competencies are linked to the NQF levels and provide a guideline for higher education, which they have to incorporate in their qualifications. How the competencies are combined in subjects and modules is up to the individual institutions to decide. The academic department recontextualises the competencies from SACAP into a curriculum that enables the students to meet the requirements of SACAP.

The Architectural Technology programme at the V/PHEI focuses on enabling students to register as senior architectural technologists with SACAP upon completion of the Advanced Diploma. They should be able to:

> Independently research technological innovation and perform professional architectural services in technology, design, and management. The graduates can assimilate broad aspects of information, analyse complex problems and compile findings into coherent, relevant, and appropriate architectural design solutions. Graduates are aware of environmental and social sustainability and understand their responsibility in this regard.' (Information from V/PHEI website).

Individuals who want to do the programme part-time must be employed full-time or on a two-year contract with an architectural firm. This requirement is because the person has to be mentored by a professionally registered senior architectural technologist or a professional architect for the duration of their studies. Thus, RPL applicants who join the part-time programme, and working in the profession already fulfil this requirement by providing a letter of support from their employer as part of the RPL application. This requirement is a form of boundary crossing between the workplace and higher education. Students in the part-time programme are requested to register with SACAP as candidate architectural technologists for the duration of their studies.

7.2.4.1 Formal Curriculum Development for the AD: Architectural Technology (AT).

The Advanced Diploma in AT was developed by the V/PHEI in this study in consultation with professionals in the professional in the architectural field and SACAP. As explained in Chapter 2, the department had to consult with all stakeholders to ensure that the qualification meets the requirements of the field and the professional body. The department needs to ensure that the Advanced Diploma prepares the students for the complexity of site and building according to the scope of work as explained above.

The curriculum development process resulted in the recontextualisation of the SACAP competencies. A case for reclassification recontextualisation (RR) (Barnett, 2006) could be made here. Both academics C and D are professional architects who had worked for architectural firms before they became academics. As RPL Facilitators, they had 'crossed the boundary' between the workplace and higher education and understand what an architectural firm requires from a Professional Architectural Technologist.

As Academic C explained:

> We relied on personal experience from industry, indicating 'what we see as shortages in the work of the students and projects that they are involved in. Because we have experience in practice, [we] feel confident to determine what

> should go into a qualification. We presented it to a various of practitioners for input and received feedback. We were not too far of the mark! SACAP Competencies were also used – this is a framework derived from practice and a handy framework for curriculum development.

Discussing the implications of the SACAP competencies in HEQSF-aligned qualifications, academic C indicated that the competencies are at different levels of complexity, and this has makes possible a potential learning pathway (which is a boundary-crossing mechanism in and of itself) from an institution such as the V/PHEI to a traditional university. *Academic C* said:

> Now, with the HEQSF-aligned qualifications, a student with an Advanced Diploma can go seamlessly across to a [traditional] university. We end up at the same point as a traditional university, just in a different way. Preference is given to technology but not to the detriment of the rest.

During my interview, *Academic C* said the following regarding the interaction between the SACAP Competencies, curriculum development and the scope of work in the classroom:

> While teaching on the AD, we [as lecturers] are not teaching them anything new – as you are indicating on your framework[27] – none of the LOs are in factual knowledge [level of the T&CKT]. We teach them {the AD student] to apply their existing knowledge [from the Diploma] in more complex situations and applications. The SACAP competencies are scaffolded as such as well. If you look at someone with a diploma, [they deal] with all the SACAP competencies, but it is the level of engagement that differs, i.e., level of awareness, knowledge of, self-critical, these are the levels in our body of knowledge [SACAP competencies].

In my interview with both Academics C and D, they indicated that the SACAP competencies 'provide us with a lens, pragmatic, [part of the] identity of the UoT, the focus is more on the technology side'. *As Academic C* explained:

> The fact that our learning outcomes need to satisfy the SACAP competencies, provides clarity – and indeed, the V/HPEI learning outcomes on AdvDip (NQF Level 7) match the SAP competencies for SArchTech fully (being a technologist role).

The comments made by the academics regarding curriculum development and teaching indicate the influence of the professional body, SACAP, on the process, where the department and its academics ensure that the qualification content meets the requirements for the PrSArchT. The involvement of the department's advisory committee and other stakeholders

[27] Academic C referred to the curriculum maps matrix in this chapter. He referred to learning outcomes as plotted on the T&CKT.

indicates a recontextualisation process from the competencies as stipulated by SACAP to the formal curriculum, with input from the architectural fraternity.

7.3 The RPL Process for the Advanced Diploma in Architectural Technology

This section discusses the RPL process in Architectural Technology at the V/PHEI. Firstly, I explain the RPL requirements for applicants to be considered for RPL. Secondly, I discuss the evidence required by the academic department. These requirements make up the department's RPL plan.

I am focusing on the academic subjects of Architectural Practice 4 (AP4) and Architectural Literacy 4 (AL4). I used these two subjects because Nala received credits for them. Only three subjects in the AD:AT are available for credits: Architectural Literacy, Architectural Practice (the subjects used in this study) and Architectural Environment. The evidence submitted by Nala did not cover this subject.

The other subjects in the Advanced Diploma, Architectural Technology 4 and Architectural Design 4, cannot be exempted via RPL. Architectural Design 4 is an integrated subject, as *Academic C* explained:

> These two studio subjects bear the highest credits and provide the space where the deepening of existing skills in design and technology are proven by the student, based on their completion of studio-based assignments that simulate practice work at the level of SArchTech (i.e., the academic outcome level as aligned with the SACAP registration category). The other subjects are more theoretical in nature and bears fewer credits and the learning outcomes can be attained in practice (hence the opportunity to map prior experience against the outcomes of these subjects in the RPL process).

The decision to make only three subjects available for RPL credits was influenced by the stipulation in the CHE policy, limiting RPL credits to 50% of a qualification. The department opted for these three subjects, 46% of the programme. The other two subjects, especially the subject of Architectural Design, is an integrative project, drawing on all the learning in the other four subjects. I agree with Harris and Wihak (2017), that this situation might be a case of ‘low hanging fruit’, but at the same time, the limitation of government policy also influences the choice of subjects.

The learning outcomes in consist of the following:

Architectural Practice 4 – subject outline

Architectural Practice 4 prepares a student for working within an architectural firm. The emphasis of the subject is practical, focusing on three concepts: conduct, contract, and communication as stipulated in the subject guide:.

- *Conduct* refers to professionalism; alternative practice including social design; working with other built environment professionals; administration; and professional development;
- The *contract* covers all documentation, drawings and specifications; the contractual obligation of the AT in designing and developing relevant drawings, both design and technical, and the oversight of the construction process, also referred to as project management.
- *Communication:* various forms of written, verbal and graphic. It could be two-dimensional (2D), a visual presentation of a building on paper or digital, or three-dimensional (3D) such as a physical model of the building to scale, or a 3D digital representation. This includes the development of design drawings, the presentation of the planned building in both 2D and 3D, and the description thereof.
- The subject also prepares students for professional registration with SACAP.

Architectural Literacy 4 – subject outline

Architectural Literacy 4 comprises two main knowledge areas according to the study guide as used at the V/PHEI: discourse and research.

- Discourse fosters an understanding of current and past architectural philosophies, movements, and theories in relation to the South African context. It covers historical references and precedent, design informants, principles and process, and design vocabulary to engage in design conversation.
- Research covers research design and methodology and the formulation of logical and systematic argumentation (study guide of AL Subject).

The concepts of 'precedent' and 'design informants' refer to other architectural designs, ideas, and physical buildings. This practice can also be referred to as ‘case studies’. Using other architectural designs is a teaching tool to look at all the aspects that go into putting a building together: material usage, impact of weather and the environment/site, usage of resources, purpose of the building and most appropriate use of materials and design, and

impact of the building on the environment, including the most appropriate design for a specific location.

For access via RPL into the Advanced Diploma, the required work experience is a minimum of eight years. The person is evaluated against the third-year subjects of the Diploma. If, the applicant has 15 years of working experience, an application can be made not only for access into the Advanced Diploma, but also for credits via RPL for three subjects: Architectural Literacy 4, Architectural Practice 4 and/or Environmental Studies.

The department explains the application process for RPL in AT in an 'RPL matrix' rather than a curriculum map. The matrixes (Appendixes 7.2 and 7.3 one for each subject) are a different interpretation of the curriculum map template (as discussed in Chapter 5) and from the method used by the HRM department (Chapter 5). In the case of HRM (and many other departments that undertake RPL at the V/PHEI) the applications are screened first and only then does the rest of the RPL process take place.

However, the AT department uses an integrated method when requesting evidence in their RPL process. They have a matrix for each subject that the applicant applies for. Each matrix provides directions about the evidence required. These matrices guide the applicant to put together their portfolio of evidence, which consists of four sections:

i) Personal Portfolio:

- This consists of a detailed curriculum vitae with an emphasis on architectural work indicating the duration of employment, different employers, list of design and building projects worked on, highlighting the capacity in which the applicant was involved in the projects.
- Motivation for the RPL application, with reference to work experience and reasons for applying for RPL, and plans to undertake the Advanced Diploma study in AT.
- Copies of all certificates obtained, such as the school-leaving certificate and short courses (either face-to-face or MOOC), were successfully completed.

ii) Work portfolio:

The work portfolio must include evidence of the relevant years of work experience. A sample of 2D and 3D drawings, both computer-generated and freehand, is required. This includes a range of technical and design process documentation

and photographs of physical models if available to be included. Requests are made for reports of minutes of site meetings and a letter of reference from the employer.

The ability to draw is crucial to aspect of architecture. To visualise a design is a method of communication. One could refer to this practice as the architectural 'gaze' (in Bernsteinian terms) or repertoire. Although nowadays drawing is done using appropriate software as well, the ability to draw freehand remains a requirement.

iii) Academic portfolio:

The third portfolio includes certified copies of any courses, such as short courses in computer software or architectural or design-orientated courses. The RPL applicant is asked to provide an example of their work they regard as their best, reflecting on that work the applicant regards and indicating non-technical and technical books read with notes, summaries, and/or sketches.

iv) 'What inspires me?'

The fourth portfolio required is a section on what inspires the RPL applicant, consisting of two assignments to 'provide evidence of knowledge, skill and attitude'. The applicant must demonstrate communication/presentation skills in written, graphic and verbal form as well as knowledge of architectural vocabulary and design theory, academic literacy, design thinking mindset, motivation, independence and ingenuity. This part of the portfolio includes a three-minute video that provides a personal background. The RPL applicants must reflect on what they hope to gain from the programme and why they should be accepted.

This part of the portfolio is a space for the applicant to briefly discuss a precedent in architecture that inspires him/her, referred to as *'What inspires me'.* The department requires a discussion of a local and an international example of a building that intrigues the applicant and is seen as a precedent to look into and learnt from. The applicant explains why these designs are inspirational in the form of a mood board with photographs and a paragraph of 150 - 200 words. In the write-up the applicant discusses the architectural interventions in terms of their contextual responses, functional organisation, technological and material execution, and

spatial qualities. The name of the architect, date and location, and freehand sketches and diagrams are also required.

The four sections of the portfolio combine all the evidence as the department requires for all the subjects the applicant wants credits for. As I will explain in this Chapter, this is an integrated approach. The portfolio is evaluated by an RPL Committee in the department in line with the learning outcomes of the subjects as stipulated in the matrixes. Depending on which learning outcomes are met, the committee will determine which subject(s) the applicant will receive credits for . In the next section, especially the section discussing Nala's evidence, it will become clear how the matrixes guide this RPL process.

7.4 Analysis of learning outcomes in the formal and the RPL programmes

I analyse Architectural Practice (AP) and Architectural Literacy (AL) learning outcomes in this section. I focus on the learning outcomes of the subjects in the formal programme (FP) and their learning outcomes as redescribed in the RPL Programme (RPL P). As in the HRM RPL process, academics in Architectural Technology did not simply replicate the LOs from the formal programme, but recontextualised them. The AT department developed matrixes to list the Learning Outcomes of both subjects (Appendixes 7.3.1 and 7.4.1).

I have coded the LOs of both subjects against categories of the Type and Complexity of Knowledge Taxonomy (T&CKT) to identify the types and complexity of the knowledge. As noted in Chapter 5, I opted to code AP and AL immediately onto the taxonomy - the evidence, which will become apparent in this Chapter, is visual in the form of drawings such as; architectural drawings generated electronically and by hand, and photographs. Because I am able to read architectural drawings, I identified the concepts, which I have placed brackets on the T&CKT (Appendixes 7.3.2 and 7.4.2).

7.4.1. Architectural Practice 4

The themes for Architectural Practice are: 'Conduct, Contract and Communication'. The subject prepares the student for work as a senior Architectural Technologist (SArchT) in an architectural firm or independently.

The matrix (Appendix 7.3.1), and the information from the P/VHEI study guide provided to the students in the formal programme are combined with the RPL requirements on the matrix. The matrix consists of:

- The overall aim of the subject – same for the formal and the RPL programme.
- The learning outcomes from the formal programme, and
- The learning outcomes for the RPL application.

I first analyse Architectural Practice 4 and in the second part of this section, Architectural Literacy 4.

7.4.1.1 Learning Outcomes for Architectural Practice 4 –Programme and the Placement on the Revised Taxonomy

In addition, to the themes of the subject, Architectural Practice 4 has two overall aims. The first deals with project management, contracts, and administration, while the second deals with social responsibility within the architectural profession, as indicated in the matrix (Appendix 7.3.1) and the comparison between the FP and the RPL P in Appendix 7.3.2

Overall Aim 1: Define and explain the management of a building project and the administration of a building contract through sound administrative and architectural practices and procedures. The following learning outcomes make up the subject's learning:

1.1 ‘Appraise and evaluate the principles and application of office administration for a specific real-life architectural practice.’

Coding this learning outcome presented me with a problem because the department uses the verbs 'appraise' and 'evaluate'. Although this verb 'appraise' is not included in T&CKT, I decided to include the LO in C4:'Analyse'. The other verb 'evaluate' is in C5, where I coded the LO, reflecting the level of cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity is at a relatively high level and requires independent thinking.

I coded types of knowledge in T4 because the LO refers to procedures (office practice) and practices. This LO requires integrated knowledge to be applied – which I regard as metacognitive knowledge.

1.2 'Explain the principles and application of building project management.'

I coded this LO in C2 - Understand. The LO requires an explanation of project management: Procedural knowledge – T4. Although low in complexity, this learning outcome covers important aspects in any building project, namely the planning and monitoring of the project itself.

1.3 'Interpret and appraise problems arising from contract administration problems and suggest solutions.'

I slotted this LO into meta-cognitive knowledge (T4) because it involves problem-solving, which requires a high level of cognitive ability. I found that this LO adheres to the 'Analyse' dimension, placing it in C4.

1.4 'Communicate appropriately and clearly with the various role players in professional architectural practice.'

I coded this in C4 because it requires the application of sound communication, which is based on analysis. However, it could also include an evaluation that would place the LO in C5. I coded it in T3:Procedural knowledge. However, communication can also involve conceptual knowledge, which is T2.

Overall Aim 2: Describe and defend the social responsibility role of an architectural professional in broader society.

2.1 Define and explain the concept of alternative practice.

I coded this LO in T2 – Conceptual knowledge. It requires an explanation of alternative practice. Explanation falls under C2 for the cognitive dimension, reflecting the scope of the overall aim of social responsibility.

2.2 Identify opportunities for the architectural profession to become involved in social design projects.'

I coded this in T3 because it requires the application of the architectural practice in 'social design projects', which is conceptual by nature. I coded it in C3:Analyse.

Reference to design projects places this LO in the Conceptual knowledge type because design is conceptual.

As indicated above, this subject requires professional conduct, office administration, contract development and various forms of communication. Working in the architectural field as a draughtsperson or with an architectural firm might put such a person in a strong position to be considered for RPL.

7.4.1.2 Analysis of Architectural Practice 4 learning outcomes for the RPL Programme

In this section I analyse the LOs developed by the academic department for the RPL process. The LOs in the RPL programme are more integrated than those in the formal programme and I had difficulty analysing them against T&CKT, I decided to break them up into subsections that allowed me to code the LOs:

Below is my interpretation and explanation:

1.1 [Demonstrate] 'Knowledge of professional conduct, contract and communication, alternative architectural practice (including social design), professional bodies, professional registration and;
(a) working with other built environment professionals, as well as office administration and systems, and professional development, for example, self-regulation and metacognition attitude of professionalism and ethics.
(b) and professional development, for example, self-regulation and metacognition, as well as an attitude of professionalism and ethics.'

1.2 [Demonstrate]

(a) 'Knowledge of the contract: documentation and specification;
(b) alternative architectural practice (including social design),
(c) and includes various forms of written, verbal and graphic (two-dimensional, three-dimensional, physical and digital) communication necessary to practice architecture.'

I coded the first and third part of this LO in T2, C3 because it deals with documentation and specification.

I coded the second part of the LO in T4 because the LO refers to contract documentation and specification in the appropriate format, which is the application of knowledge at an

integrated level – metacognitive knowledge. The reason is that this LO refers to the development of various forms of documentation, which requires creative ability, placing the LO in C6:Create.

1.3 [Demonstrate] 'Attitude to responsibly, professionally, ethically practice architecture.'

I coded this in T4 because it refers to responsibility, which is an integrated and critical activity. On the T&CKT makes provision for ‘Attitude’ under T4 by listing – ‘self-knowledge.’ I coded the LO in C5, Evaluate, because it requires critical thinking.

1.4 [Demonstrate] 'Attitude of professionalism and ethics.' This LO is not very clear, but inferences can be made that professionals will include criticism and self-knowledge. I coded it under Conceptual knowledge (T2). These are soft skills that are crucial for any professional. I coded it under Apply (C5) as the cognitive complexity because professional self-knowledge must be applied.

The coding I explained in the previous two points enabled me to compare the two sets of learning outcomes – which I explain in the next session.

7.4.1.3 Comparison of Learning Outcomes of Architectural Practice 4 in the formal and RPL programmes

Having coded Architectural Practice 4 against the revised taxonomy for the formal and RPL programmes, I could then compare the two sets of LOs. In Appendix 7.3.2 the coding of LOs for both programmes are compared. At a quick glance, one can see that the LOs for the formal programme are less complex than those required for the RPL programme.
The LOs in AP4 for the formal programme are specific, listing various concepts covered by students with no workplace exposure. In contrast, the RPL P LO are integrated and involve conceptual and metacognitive knowledge types. Integrated learning outcomes better accommodate workplace learning.

Factual Knowledge and Remembering

Neither programme's learning outcomes were categorised as T1: Factual knowledge nor C1: Remembering because this is a fourth-year programme. It is important to remember that factual knowledge forms part of the earlier years of studying at the diploma level.

Academic D, upon reviewing my coding of the learning outcomes on the T&CKT, noted in a written response to my research questions that:

> *Factual knowledge and procedural knowledge can be reasonably easily gained in architectural practice, but conceptual and metacognitive knowledge are more difficult to gain in practice.*

Learning outcomes coded in a conceptual type of knowledge - T2:

- Two learning outcomes from the formal programme, 2.2 were coded as T2, namely 2.1 in C2 and 2.2 in C3. These LOs deal with a project in social design and alternative practice. Both deal with conceptual knowledge concepts: alternative practice and social design projects.
- LO 1.2 (a and c) from the RPL P (Appendix 7.3.2) is from the integrated LO, which covers more than one type of knowledge and type of cognitive area on the T&CKT.
- LO 1.4 (RPL P) was coded as T2, C5 dealing with professional conduct).

The learning outcomes coded at T3 – Procedural knowledge:

- Learning Outcome 1.2 from the formal programme was coded as C2 and T3 – dealing with building project management is Procedural knowledge because it deals with the process of managing a project, which involves distinct stages.

Project management is a concept that is only explicitly used on the formal programme side. My interpretation is that the department does not require explicit information about Project Management from the workplace because without knowledge of Project Management, none of the RPL applicants would be able to complete any of the building projects they are involved in. Academic C confirmed my interpretation when I discussed this observation with him.

- Learning Outcome 1.4 (FP) was coded as C3 and T3: dealing with communication and various role-players. LO 1.4 (AP4 FP) is about communication with various role players within the architectural practice.

The learning outcomes coded at T4 – Metacognitive knowledge

- LO 1.1 from the FP was coded as Metacognitive knowledge – C5 and T4. LO 1.1 (AP4 FP) in T4 is about the principles and application of office practice. This LO links to LO 1.1

(RPL P), which is in C3 and T4, which are part of the integrated LOs. This section deals with office administration.

- LO 1.3 (FP) was coded as C4 and T4: problem-solving of an administrative nature LO 1.3 (AP4 FP) in C5 is about contract administration. This LO links to LO 1.2 (RPL P) (integrated) (AP4 RPL P).

- LO 1.1 and 1.2 from the RPL programme was coded as C6 (Create) and Metacognitive knowledge. Both are sections from the integrated learning outcomes.

- The LO 1.2 (AP4 RPL P) was coded as D6, although this is one of the integrated LOs for RPL, it does refer to 'alternative practice'. I also linked LO 1.3 (AP4 RPL P) to this LO from the formal programme because it refers to 'ethical practice'. Although I could make linkages, I could not code the LOs from the RPL programme onto Procedural knowledge, due to the integrated nature of the LO in the RPL programme. This is not only boundary crossing between the workplace and higher education, but also recontextualisation.

In this sub-section I have discussed the LOs: the RPL P LOs are more integrated than the LOs in the FP, placing them as a higher level of complexity. In addition, the RPL LOs fall into the conceptual and metacognitive types of knowledge, indicating the types of knowledge involved are of a higher complexity required from the RPL applicant.

7.4.1.4 Concepts of Architectural Practice 4 – Formal Programme compared to the RPL Programme

A comparison of the concepts associated with each of LOs as these were coded onto the T&CKT is illustrated in Table 7.4.2 that is based on Appendix 7.4.1. The RPL LOs are found mainly to have been coded as conceptual knowledge and metacognitive knowledge. In contrast, the majority of concepts for the FP were found to be procedural knowledge.

In this subsection, I focus on the subject of Architectural Practice 4's three main areas but interlinked themes: **Conduct:** Ethics, professionalism, social responsibility; **Contract:** Legal aspects of the profession; and **Communication:** Documentation including 2D and 3D**.**

Table 7.4: Concepts in Architectural Practice on the T&CKT

Disciplinary knowledge	**Architectural Practice 4: Disciplinary knowledge re-organised for vocational purposes and the workplace.**		
	Academic subjects	***Formal programme***	***RPL Programme***
		Conceptual knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		Alternative Architectural practice (C2) Social Awareness (C3)	Professional development (C3 and C6) Ethics (C5)
		Procedural knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		Building regulations and project management (C2) Communication (C3) Problem solving (C5)	
		Meta-cognitive knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		Professional practice (C3)	Office Administration (C3) Ethics (C5) Alternative Architectural practice (C6) Design Fundamentals (C6)

Table 7.4 indicates that the concepts associated with the LOs differ in complexity between the FP and the RPL P. Four of the RPL P LOs in C6 'Create' the highest level of complexity, while none of the LOs in the FP are at the highest level of complexity. Except for two concepts (Professional development and ethics), all the concepts in the RPL P (Office administration, ethics, Alternative Architectural Practice and Design Fundamentals) fall into the Metacognitive level of knowledge, although with different levels of complexity. This matter was discussed with the academics and is explained further on in this chapter.

7.4.2 *Architectural Literacy 4*

Architectural Literacy (AL4) deals with the development of coherent architectural arguments in terms of the design and the methodology used (from the matrix for AL, Appendix 7.4.1 and 7.4.2). As noted earlier, this subject deals with two knowledge areas:'(Architectural) discourse fosters an understanding of architectural philosophies, movement and theories within the South African context'. The second area deals with 'research design and methodology, formulating a logical and convincing design argument'.

The guide provided to the RPL applicants includes the 'Subject outline' that is identical to the formal programme. In addition, the matrix (Table 7.4.1) for the RPL portfolio-building process

provides a guideline with learning outcomes to demonstrate the work, skills, competencies, and thinking of the applicants as part of their work. The department requires the submission of naturally occurring evidence.

7.4.2.1 Analysis of Learning Outcomes for Architectural Literacy 4: formal programme

In the first knowledge area, discourse fosters understanding of current and past architectural philosophies, movements, and theories within the South African context. Covering historical and precedent references, design informants, principles and processes, and design vocabulary to engage in design conversation.

This statement carries a lot of meaning within the architectural field. The concepts: ‘Precedent', 'Design informants', 'Principles and process' and 'Design' form the foundation of the 'architectural speak', in other words the 'gaze' or 'repertoire' in Bernstein's' (2000) terms:.

The second knowledge area: ‘*Research* covers research design and methodology and formulating a logical and convincing design argument - ’:Research design, Methodology and Design argument.

The two knowledge areas, lead to the overall aims and supporting learning outcomes:

Overall Aim 1:‘Using a variety of media, communicate own ideas, in well-formed arguments, as a professional senior architectural technologist’. The programme aims for the student to qualify and register as an architectural technologist.

I did not code the overall aim against the taxonomy because it is a statement underpinning the learning outcomes. The following are the learning outcomes for the discourse knowledge area:

LO:1.1 ‘Prepare and present advanced graphic three-dimensional computer work in written, oral, digital, and graphic format as appropriate to the required documentation.’

> I coded LO 1.1 as C6 and T3:The requirement of ‘advanced graphic computer work’ indicates metacognitive knowledge. The LO also refers to the use of various formats of presentation, such as written, oral, digital and graphic, referring to ‘appropriate

contextual and conditional knowledge'. I interpreted this learning outcome as 'application' falling into the 'apply' cognitive type. C6 – Create.

LO 1.2 'Communicate appropriately and clearly with the various role players in professional architectural practice' refers to preparing the students for professional practice.

I coded LO 1.2 as T3 and C3:'Communicate appropriately' referring to the application of subject-specific skills, placing the LO in the 'Apply' complexity type. Communicating appropriately with various role players places this LO in the Procedural knowledge type.

Overall Aim 2:'Research, critically appraise, synthesise and prioritise technological, contextual, spatial, social and environmental conditions that influence the design of an architectural project.'

The following learning outcomes make up the research knowledge area:

2.1 'Critically appraise contemporary architectural theories in relation to the South African context.'

I coded this LO as C5 because the topic requires critical evaluation of architectural theories, which involves the conceptual knowledge type – T2.

2.2 'Identify, analyse and critically discuss selected relevant precedent studies.'

I coded this as C5 because this LO also deals with conceptual knowledge of design, requiring students to critique and thus requires an evaluation using architectural examples to set the current standard. Because the LO involves the use of precedent studies (examples of architectural work), I coded it as T4, Metacognitive knowledge.

2.3 'Identify and explain the environmental, economic and social aspects to be considered in the design of a building.'

I coded this LO as T2 because it deals with conceptual knowledge focusing on design aspects such as environmental, economic and social issues. These are important issues for the architectural profession to be aware of in developing appropriate

designs. I coded it as C5 and T2 because evaluation is required, as well as an awareness of the environmental, economic and social aspects.

2.4 'Develop well-formed arguments to complex architectural problem and present this research as an academic paper.'

This LO requires the student to develop a well-formed argument – placing it in C6:Create and T4 – Metacognitive type of knowledge because it requires integrative thinking and the development of a paper.

2.5 'Identify and explain a research design and methodology that is appropriate to the problem under investigation and justify the decision taken.'

I coded this as T2, because it requires explaining and reflecting on the understanding of appropriate methodology but at an integrated level, placing the LO in D 4 – Metacognitive knowledge.

7.4.2.2 Analysis of Learning Outcomes for Architectural Literacy 4 for the RPL Programme

Architectural Literacy 4, deals with 'discourse' and 'research' as the formal programme study guide indicates. The same guideline includes the RPL information that focuses on intellectual, reflective and analytical skills, using the same parameters as in the formal programme.

Keeping in mind that architectural work is visually based, I decided to analyse what kind of competency I thought was being drawn on in each learning outcome as I coded the LOs on the T&CKT. My coding was confirmed as correct during my interview with the academics:

1.1. [Demonstrate:] 'Skill (intellectual, reflective and analytical) to formulate coherent architectural arguments, develop design methodologies to solve architectural challenges, and present these in a scholarly way.' The important aspect of this LO is the requirement to 'Formulate coherent architectural arguments'. I interpret the activity required as the verb, coding it as Create – C6.

LO 1.1 I coded as C6 and T4. I coded it on the Metacognitive knowledge dimension because the LO requires integrated arguments 'to solve architectural challenges'. I interpreted the verb 'solve' as creative (C6), generating, planning and producing

a solution to an architectural problem. This LO also requires the applicant to present their work in a ‘scholarly manner’.

1.2 [Demonstrate:] ‘Knowledge of discourse: current and past architectural philosophies, movements and theories (in South African context), historical references and precedent, design informants, principles and process, and design vocabulary.’

LO 1.2 makes explicit reference to the ‘knowledge of discourse’ requiring in-depth knowledge of architectural history, benchmarks, principles and procedure and ‘vocabulary’, placing the LO in the conceptual knowledge dimension – T2. The LO requires ‘knowledge of the discourse of specific aspects of architecture such as history, benchmarks, principles and procedure’, placing this LO in the apply category on the complexity level – C3. The word 'vocabulary' is explicitly used in this LO, requiring the use of correct terminology or repertoire.

1.3 [Demonstrate:] 'Skill to engage in design conversation.'

Engaging in an architectural conversation requires metacognitive knowledge. I coded this LO in the metacognitive knowledge type – T4. A conversation requires the ability to evaluate information, including checking and critiquing. I coded it as 'Analysing' in view of the cognitive complexity – C4.

1.4 [Demonstrate:] 'Knowledge of research: research design and methodology.'

The LO refers to the other knowledge area of the subject – research. I coded it as T2 – Conceptual knowledge. The LO involves research placing it in the Analyse Cognitive Dimension – C4. The LO requires decisions made through research.

1.5 [Demonstrate;] 'Skill to formulate a logical and systematic argument.'
LO 1.5 requires the formulation of a logical argument, requiring analysis and cognitive skills. I coded it as conceptual knowledge (T2) and as analysis (C4) in terms of cognitive skill.

1.6 [Demonstrate:] 'Attitude to responsibly, professionally, ethically do research and address problems.' This LO is broad but refers to the attitude required within the architectural field. I coded it as C5 – evaluate cognitive complexity because it

requires professional conduct. Metacognitive knowledge type is in this LO and was coded to T4 because it includes self-critique and awareness.

7.4.2.3 Comparison of Learning Outcomes of Architectural Literacy 4:formal and RPL programmes

The comparison between the Learning Outcomes of the formal programme and RPL programme is done in Appendix 7.4.2. As in Architectural Practice, none of the learning outcomes were coded on T1 – Factual knowledge or C1 – Remember.

Two LO of each programme are in C2: Conceptual knowledge dealing with design:

- LO 2.3 (AL4 FP) of the formal programme is T2: dealing with the design of a building and the impact of environmental, economic, and social aspects of design, which is coded in T2. These topics are not explicitly mentioned in the RPL Guide.

- LO 1.2 for RPL: dealing with architectural philosophies, principles and process of design – this LO is more integrated in the RPL guide compared to the formal programme LO, but the concepts (from LO 2.3 (FP) can include those of the RPL programme. The RPL LO is more flexible, as I interpret this LO.

- Research is dealt with in T2:one of the FP LOs and two from the RPL Programme: LO 2.1 in the FP requires critical discussion of precedent studies, while LO 1.4 in the RPL deals with research, research design and methodology; LO 1.5 (RPL) pertains to arguments.

LO 1.2 in the formal programme is the only LO in T3 – procedural knowledge, dealing with communication with professionals in the architectural fraternity. No procedural knowledge is specifically or explicitly required from the RPL applicants. The RPL applicants being working adults, higher cognitive functions; this procedural knowledge is taken to be in place by the academics.

The themes of the subject areas ‘discourse’ and ‘methodology’ are included in both sets of LOs, which is the starting point towards determining equivalence. The levels of complexity are similar between the two programmes – especially LOs 2.4 (FP) and 1.1 (RPL P), both of which require the presentation of a paper.

- LO 1.1 (AL4 FP) in C3, deals with an architectural presentation in written format, but also in two- and three-dimensional form as well as sketches and computer drawings. This LO links LO 1.1 in the RPLP, in C6.
- Two of the LOs from the RPL programme are coded into this category: LO 1.6 (C5) and LO 1.1 in C6. As with the formal programme LO 2.4 , the RPL LO is a presentation of design LO 2.4 (AL4 FP), which requires an academic paper.

This LO links directly to the LO 1.1 (AP4 RPL P), requiring an assignment written in a 'scholarly way'. Both the FP and the RPL P are in D6. All three of these LOs deal with the development as an assignment. Although the wording is different, I see this as the exact requirement for the students in the formal programme and the RPL Applicants.

- LO 2.5 (AL4 FP) was coded as T2 is about research and methodology. The RPL LO deals with research, research design and methodology, and design conversation.

- LO 2.5 FP is about research methodology. I coded it in C2; understand that this LO is about research design and methodology, I also coded it on Metacognitive D4.

- An attitude of the profession is only in RPL requirements (LO 1.3 and 1.4. I coded the RPL P on C5.

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The detailed coding is contained in Appendix 7.4.2. In the next section is a summary of the comparison between the RPL P and the FP

7.4.2.4 Concepts in Architectural Literacy 4: Comparing Formal Programme to the RPL Programme

As the in the case of AP, the LOs in AL of the RPL programme were written more broadly and are more integrated than those of the FP. In addition, the RPL programme LO 1.3, LO 1.5 and LO 1.6 focus on soft skills, referring to attitude, conversation and formulating an argument. The subject Architectural Literacy has two interlinked themes: discourse and research. The LOs are discussed in this section.

Table 7.5: Concepts in Architectural Literacy on the T&CKT

Disciplinary knowledge	**Architectural Literacy 4: Disciplinary knowledge re-organised for vocational purposes and the workplace.**		
	Academic subjects	***Formal programme***	***RPL Programme***
		Conceptual knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		Environmental (C2) Precedent studies (C5)	History (C6) Design and Vocabulary (C4 and C6) Methodology (C4) Communication (C4)
		Procedural knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		History (C6) Design and Vocabulary (C4 and C6) Methodology (C4) Communication (C4)	
		Meta-cognitive knowledge (and complexity of knowledge in brackets)	
		Research (C2) Computer usage for communication (C3) Design (C6)	Communication (C4) Research (C5) Design (C6)

I coded the learning outcomes of the formal programme as conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge and metacognitive knowledge. The learning outcomes of the RPL P consist only of conceptual and metacognitive types of knowledge. No factual knowledge or remembering are present in the two subjects because they constitute the underpinning knowledge which is part of the first three years of the Diploma level – the 'ABC of architecture' as *Academic C* referred to it. He explained more about the underpinning knowledge:

> There is a theory component in the Diploma, mostly centred on architectural history and construction knowledge. Then lots of skills: information literacy, visual literacy, presentation skills, computer skills, etc.

LOs 2.4 (FP) and 1.1 (RPL), both at D6, were at the highest complexity level. Both these deal with the presentation of a research paper. This indicates that the formal programme and RPL

requirements are the same for these two learning outcomes. Other LOs are not at the same level of complexity.

In discussion with the academics, I asked why some of the LOs for RPL seemed more complex than in the formal programme: *Academic D* said that:

> The RPL students, because they are in practice for many years it is quite obvious that their portfolios are more technical. The aspects of their work that they are strong in, due to the nature of their work are the technical parts. We brought in higher complexity, because there will be parts missing [such as] high order thinking, the design, the theory which they are unable to pick up in practice. Although there is problem-solving in practice (workplace) more technical and less conceptual, less abstract, {there is} also a lack of research methodology. We, keeping Bloom's higher order thinking in mind, we placed a magnifying glass over the aspects which, we expected the applicants would not be able to demonstrate (shortcomings) we are able to test through the assessment tools we choose to use the POE, interview and the video.

Academic D said that the academic department took the applicants' own knowledge and experience from the workplace and made inferences (Hendricks & Volbrecht, 2006) on what an RPL applicant might already know – the technical aspects. The portfolio focuses on what might be missing – abstract thinking, design and research. In the next section I will indicate how Nala addressed his own shortcomings in this regard.

Academic C added:

> It is also about bringing [in] tacit knowledge, stuff that happens in the workplace to the surface. it is about self-reflection of the applicant/reflective practitioner. It is a question of whether the applicant knows what he/she knows or does not know.

Academic C also referred to metacognitive knowledge, self-awareness and the ability to think critically. Before I can take this point further, I need to discuss the case study of Nala, the RPL candidate in this study.

7.5 RPL Applicant – Nala's Story

Nala could not go to a tertiary education due to his low marks in matric, forcing him to start working straight after school. He decided to seek work as a draughtsperson. He lived in a small town 130 km northwest of Cape Town. The area is known for its fruit farms, mountains, and wine production. With a total population of 30 000 people, this town offers opportunities

for those who seek them – to which Nala's working life history is a testament (information from Nala's portfolio of evidence including his CV, certificates and naturally occurring evidence).

Being a young man of 18 in the first year of his career, Nala, undertook a short course in Caddie, a mid-range computer-assisted draughting (CAD) software package for 2D and 3D design. Created by South Africans in the mid-1980s, it is mainly used by architects and draughtspersons, with tools for creating and editing common entities such as lines, arcs, construction lines, splines and images. It uses engineering and construction (AEC) intelligent objects such as walls, windows, doors, openings, slabs, roofs and trusses for the development of technical drawings. The software also incorporates digital terrain modelling (DTM), including tools for creating and manipulating live size, cross sections, and cut and fill volumes for site development. The software has country-specific applications with additional tools for creation and editing of architectural objects relating to specific regions. The South African module contains tools for doing SANS 204 energy efficiency calculations as required when submitting building plans in South Africa (information from the academic department).

The implication of using software such as Caddie is the computerisation of skills and competencies that one would have had to learn in a formal setting. Having this software, with the built-in specifications and calculations, provides a novice with the opportunity to engage with work done by more skilled individuals in the days before computers, presenting the RPL practitioner with the challenge of interpreting and evaluating this type of computerised knowledge. Nala was trained on the software before he used it. One could argue that this is an example of the proceduralising of knowledge. This knowledge is linked to the building regulations in SA.

Learning the Caddie package placed Nala on a good footing to work as a junior architectural technologist, working at an architectural firm in the small town where he was born. For the first two years of his career he not only used Caddie, but was also introduced to the basics of architectural work: analysis and brief preparation, site investigation and survey, presentation to a client, development of working drawings and detailing, scheduling, local authority approval and site visits.

He joined an engineering company where he had the opportunity to work with engineering designs. His work as a structural steelwork detailer included detailing and work drawings for manufacturing – quite a different environment to architecture, but related. After another two years, he decided to return to the architectural environment, returning to the small town and being appointed as a senior architectural draughtsperson at another architectural firm. This

gave him an opportunity to work on more complex projects such as the expansion of existing buildings and refurbishment of old buildings.

Nala continuously upgraded and improved his own knowledge by attending various workshops and short courses on the following topics: Energy efficient buildings (2012), professional-client relationships (2014), urban development (2016), theory and history in architecture (2016), construction technology (2017), architectural imagination (2018) and methodology in architectural design (2019). He completed three short courses at a traditional university: Introduction to spatial design studio, Introduction to design computing and Drawing for design (2020). In consultation with the academic department, he completed these three courses in preparation for his RPL application.

Thirteen years ago, Nala decided to start his own company, which allowed him to expand his work experience and enable him to take on medium-sized projects independently. In 2009, a year after he started to work independently, he was registered as a professional architectural draughtsperson with the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP)[28]. In 2018 he became a full member of the South African Institute of Architectural Technologists (SAIAT).

7.5.1 *Portfolio of Evidence Reflecting Architectural Work*

Nala had been involved in variety of projects over the past 20 years as demonstrated in the portfolio of evidence he submitted. He included naturally occurring evidence (NOE) from various projects: an apartment building, a car dealership and the expansion of a Cape Dutch house. The evidence he submitted was integrated as per the department's instructions into four different portfolio sections. It is not possible to separate the evidence, because the nature of the work is integrated, as will become clear in this section.

6.5.1.1 Work portfolio

Early in Nala's career, he worked on an apartment building of 30 units, a total of 3000m².

[28] SACAP has an RPL programme, which Nala used to obtain his registration as a Draughts person.

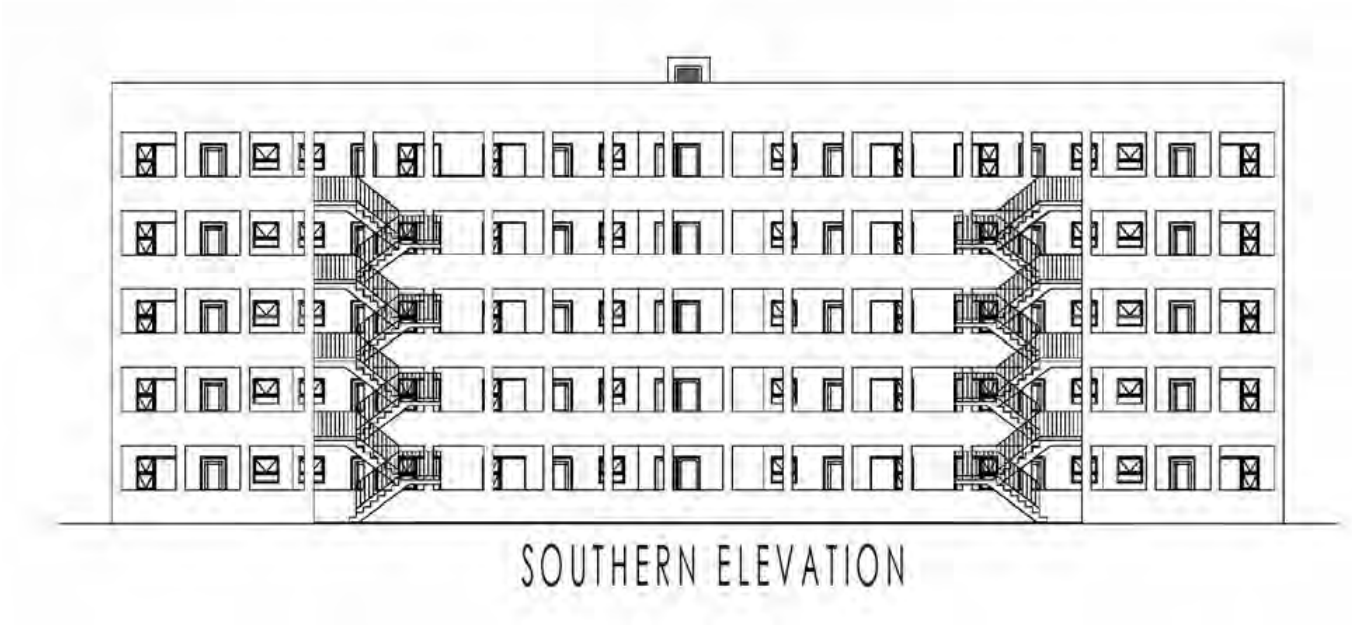


Figure 7.1: From Nala's Work Portfolio: an Example of the Southern Elevation of the Apartment Building

Nala submitted the design drawing, which provided a view of the southern side of the apartment building. This type of drawing provides an image of the completed building.

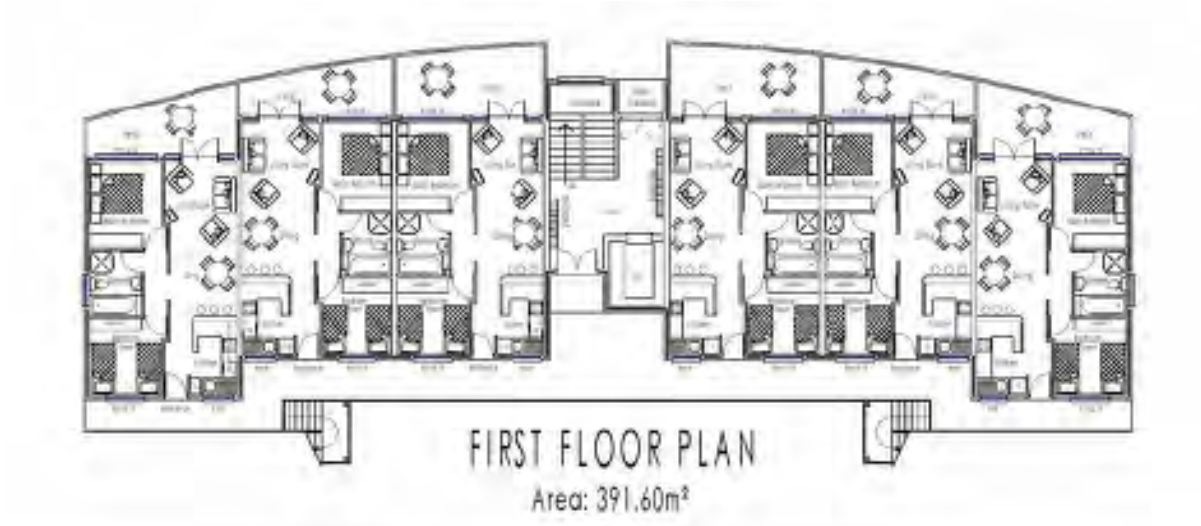


Figure 7.2: Detailed Floor Plan of the Apartment Building (Figure 7.1) indicating the Outlay of each Flat

Figure 7.2 shows the floor plan of the same building as in Figure 7.1, indicating what each apartment would look like and what its features are, such as the bathroom, kitchen, and balcony.

Nala's involvement in this project was the analysis and preparation of the brief, investigation of site and survey, presentation, development of the working drawing and details, schedules and local authority approval.

Another significant project Nala was involved in early on in his career was a housing project of 12 houses in a security complex. The evidence he submitted was a site plan:

Figure 7.3: Part of the housing complex in the development plan with the entrance and three planned houses

The section above was taken from Nala's portfolio, and the labels are in Afrikaans: 'ingang' means entrance, 'pad' means road, in this case within the complex itself.

Nala was also involved in the development of drawings of residential units as part of a golf estate. The units were between 150m² and 200m² in size. On the drawing in Figure 7.4 the layout of a part of the housing complex is indicated, including the entrance to the complex.

Figure 7.4: Preliminary Design Drawing and Floor Plan of a Single House at a Golf Course

Nala was involved in the analysis and preparation of the brief, investigation of site and survey, presentation, development of working drawing and details, scheduling, local authority approval and site visits. Seven years into his career, Nala worked on the refurbishment of a car dealership, the drawing in Figure 7.5. Nala's involvement with this project was also the analysis and preparation of the brief, investigation of site and survey, presentation, working drawing and detailing, schedules, local authority approval and site visits.

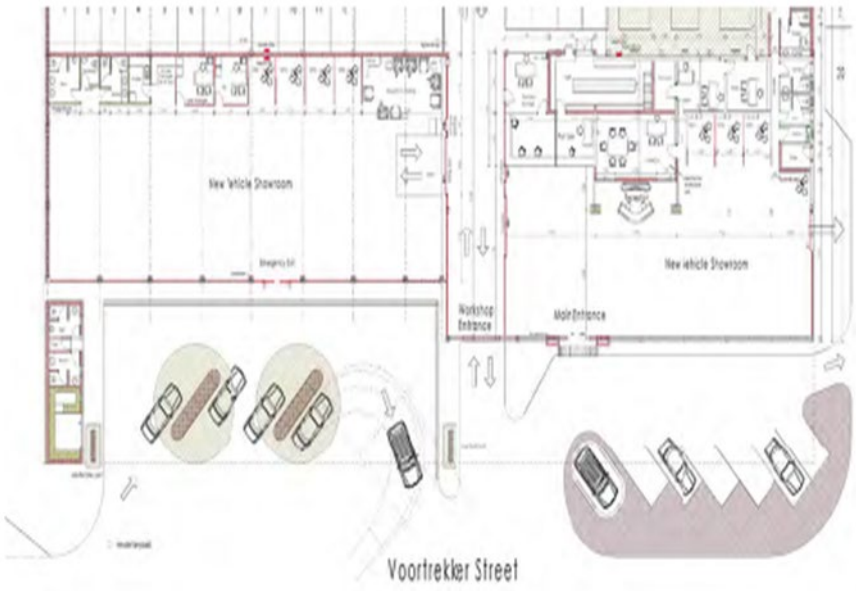


Figure 7.5: Design Drawing indicating the Refurbishment and Extension to a Car Dealership

Developing technical drawings is a large part of an architectural technologist's work, even though he was registered at this stage as a draughtsperson. Nala submitted various examples of the technical drawings that he submitted as part of his portfolio. He submitted drawings from recent years that he developed since he started working in his own company.

In 2017 he worked on the renovation and extension of a Cape Dutch house (a historical building), the extensions indicated in yellow in Figure 7.6 from the North-East Elevation.

Figure 7.6:Drawing regarding Cape Dutch House Renovations and Extensions

The drawing in Figure 7.6 is an elevation drawing, indicating in yellow the additions to the Cape Dutch house as these were planned. Although he was now working for himself, his role was still to analyse and prepare the brief, investigate the site and survey, present work drawings and details, schedules, local authority approval, and site visits.

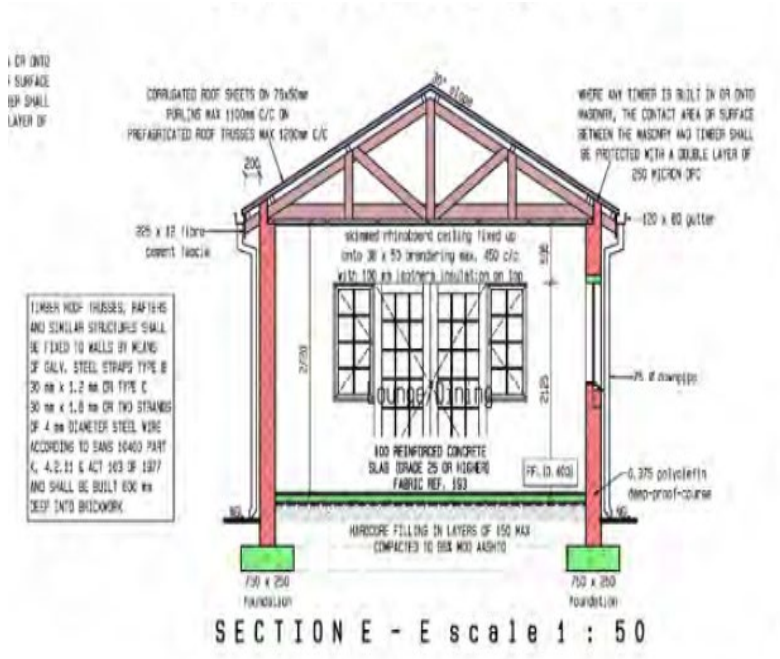


Figure 7.7: Drawing Regarding Detail of Windows, Roof and Foundation of the Extension on the Cape Dutch House

Figures 7.7 and 7.8 are the assembly drawings for the Cape Dutch house, providing information to the builder, indicating the details of how the foundation and wall, including the windows and the roof, are detailed. In Figure 7.8, detailed building instructions are provided on the connection between the old part of the house and the new section.

In these five projects, although projects are very different in nature, I could identify that the various roles Nala performed in the projects were very similar:

- analysis and preparation of the brief,
- investigation of site and survey,
- presentation,
- working drawings and detailing,
- schedules,
- local authority approval and,
- site visits.

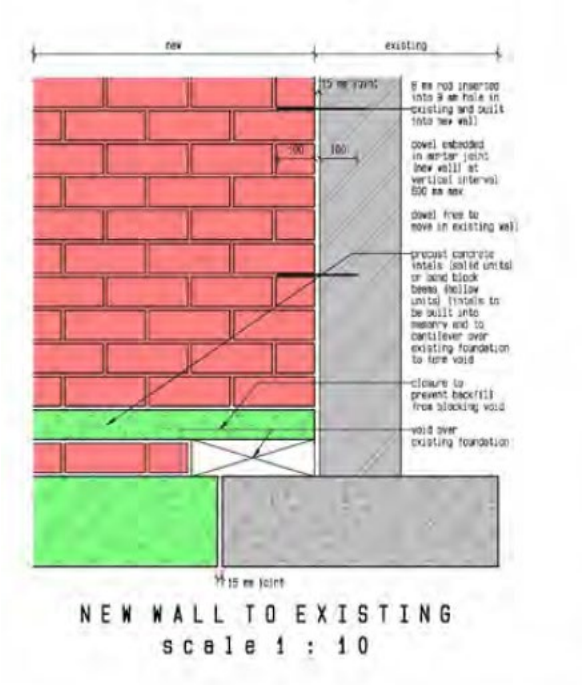


Figure 7.8:Technical Detail on the Linkage between Existing and New Section Wall

This is within the scope of an architectural technologist, and as I understand the architectural field, a bit beyond the scope of a draughtsperson, regarding site and building complexity, as explained in the first section on this chapter. This was confirmed *by Academic C:*

> Yes, for sure. If you look at the newly promulgated Identification of Works (IDOW) matrix of SACAP, you will see that he has been working on projects way above his competency. This is evident in the fairly basic layout and architectural language of the apartment building (facades not designed with care, very repetitive) and the stylistically dubious additions to the Cape Dutch house (good architecture does not mimic the historic, it reinterprets in a contemporary idiom). This is why in the subject ArchDesign4, it is very challenging for RPL applicants to break 'bad' habits and to open themselves to a more critical and reflective design process.

The work included in Nala's work portfolio covers several of the ten competencies as specified by SACAP[29] of a Senior Professional Architectural Technologist:

> *Competency 1:* Architectural design, specifically the 'ability to do a competent design of a simple multi-storey building' and 'ability to develop the design to ultimate and rational conclusion.'
>
> *Competency 3:* Construction technology, specifically 'Understanding of construction methods and use of materials related to simple multi-story buildings.'
>
> *Competency 4:* Building structures, specifically 'Understanding of basic structural concepts pertaining to buildings and 'ability to integrate structure and building design.'
>
> *Competency 7:*'Building services and related technologies' – Nala's work included all these competencies.
>
> *Competency 8*:'Ability to produce a set of working drawings as part of a set of contract documents.'
>
> *Competency 9:'*Computer applications.'
>
> *Competency 10:* Office practice, with regard to 'Understanding of terminology and basic concepts and principles of architectural practice'.

6.5.1.2 Academic Portfolio

For the requirements of the academic portfolio, Nala included the following evidence:

- Design computing: using the work of a landscape architect, incorporating different software packages.
- Drawing for design: develop an understanding of representative models used in landscape architecture and urban design. As indicated in the previous section, drawings are the 'language of architecture' to facilitate communication. Buildings cannot be built without drawings of various types used in the profession. These different drawings, such as the design drawing, is followed up with various technical drawings indicating

[29] I linked Nala's portfolio to the relevant SACAP competencies, not all the competencies.

the detail of different aspects of the building and how it should be built e.g. the fundament and the wall on top, with the roof.

- Introduction to spatial design: introduction to history and theory of spatial design.
- Framed structures: evaluation of precedents (examples) in steel, wood and concrete.
- Urban mapping: examples of urban planning.
- Hand drawing: submission of a variety of hand drawings including a house, interior of rooms, face, human figures and a hand. A letter of reference about the course is included in his portfolio, which indicates that Nala obtained 75%. The hand drawings are required to evaluate the artistic ability of the applicant. The department evaluates all applicants' artistic abilities, not only those of the RPL candidates.
- Design work: Hand drawings of a protea and a lamp developed from the concept. Pattern design based on abstraction and repetition, can lead to inspiration for design.
- Published article summary.
- Book review.

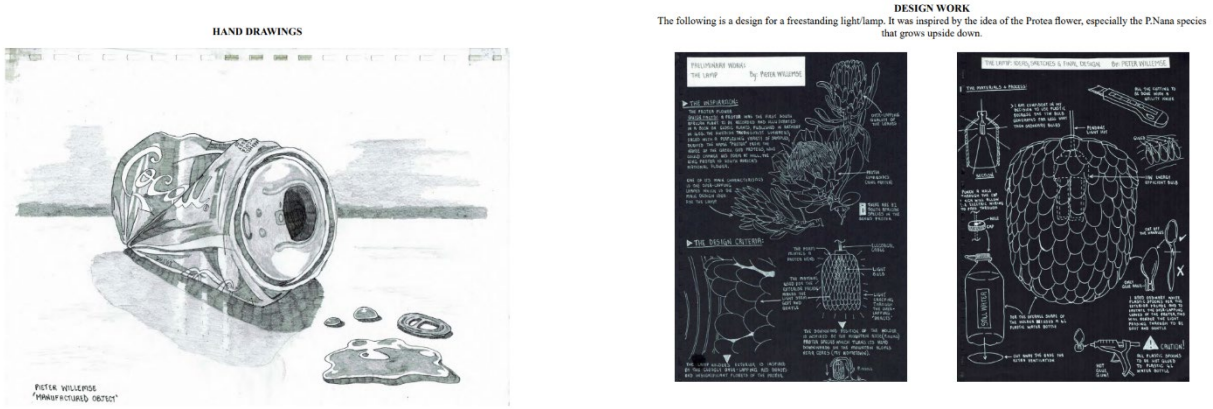


Figure 7.9: Hand Drawing and Mood Board done by Nala

Nala submitted a hand drawing of a can. He also submitted what is known as a ‘mood board’ of a protea, which lead him to the design of a lamp (Figure 7.9). He made the lamp physically and submitted photographs of it. He did short courses in architecture at a traditional university to reflect on his learning, which he completed in recent years. In discussing his RPL application, Academic D reflected on Nala's determination to succeed in his RPL process – he applied three times, being successful in the last attempt.

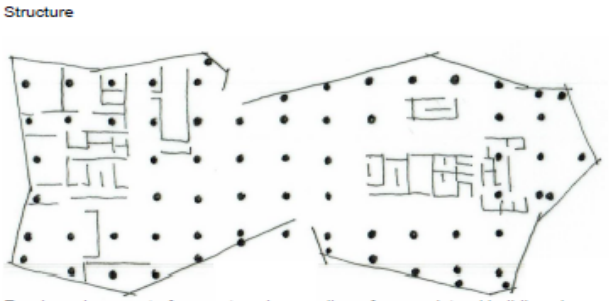
Academic D:

> The context in which Nala found himself ….. I originally gave him advice … that 'Nala you are in small town, working in a small practice, where you are not learning more'. He reached a ceiling of what he could learn in the context where he was. 'Ideally you should come to [a bigger] town and work for a bigger practice where you can work on multistorey buildings, more complex projects'. He was not able to change jobs, so he did what he could under his circumstances to improve himself like doing on-line courses, read books.

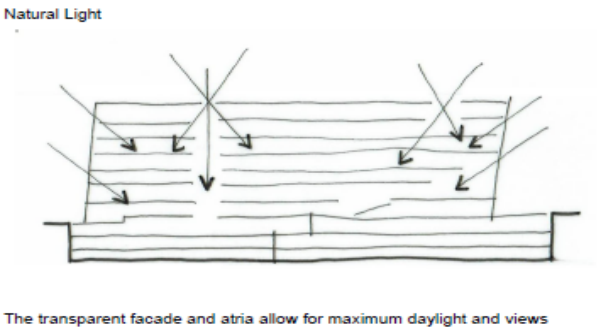
Figure 7.10 below shows evidence of one of the courses Nala did. This one focused on spatial design, fulfilling one of the LO requiring the assignment.

Library in Freiburg
Architects: Degelo Architekten, Itten+Brechbuhl
Location: Freiburg, Germany
Date: 2015

The building expresses subtractive form modulation by cutting away parts as a means to react to its diverse urban context. Being a public building and located on a busy road side the building uses an open floor plan configuration for easy interaction between interior and exterior circulation. To maximize views of the surrounding urban space, the building's sculptural form is authored by an electrochemically treated chrome steel façade design to maximum natural light but restrict excessive ultraviolet rays. The unique façade design and the random placement of the concrete columns allows for irregular and beautiful elevations. As a result of the façade design the building benefits from unrestricted views, abundance of natural light, and also allows the surrounding to be mirrored or the interior to be visible from outside at various stages of the day. This allows the building to interact or blend in with the environment.



Random placement of concrete columns allows for a sculptural building shape. The facade forms the external perimeter.



The transparent facade and atria allow for maximum daylight and views

Figure 7.10: Overview of Spatial Design Work

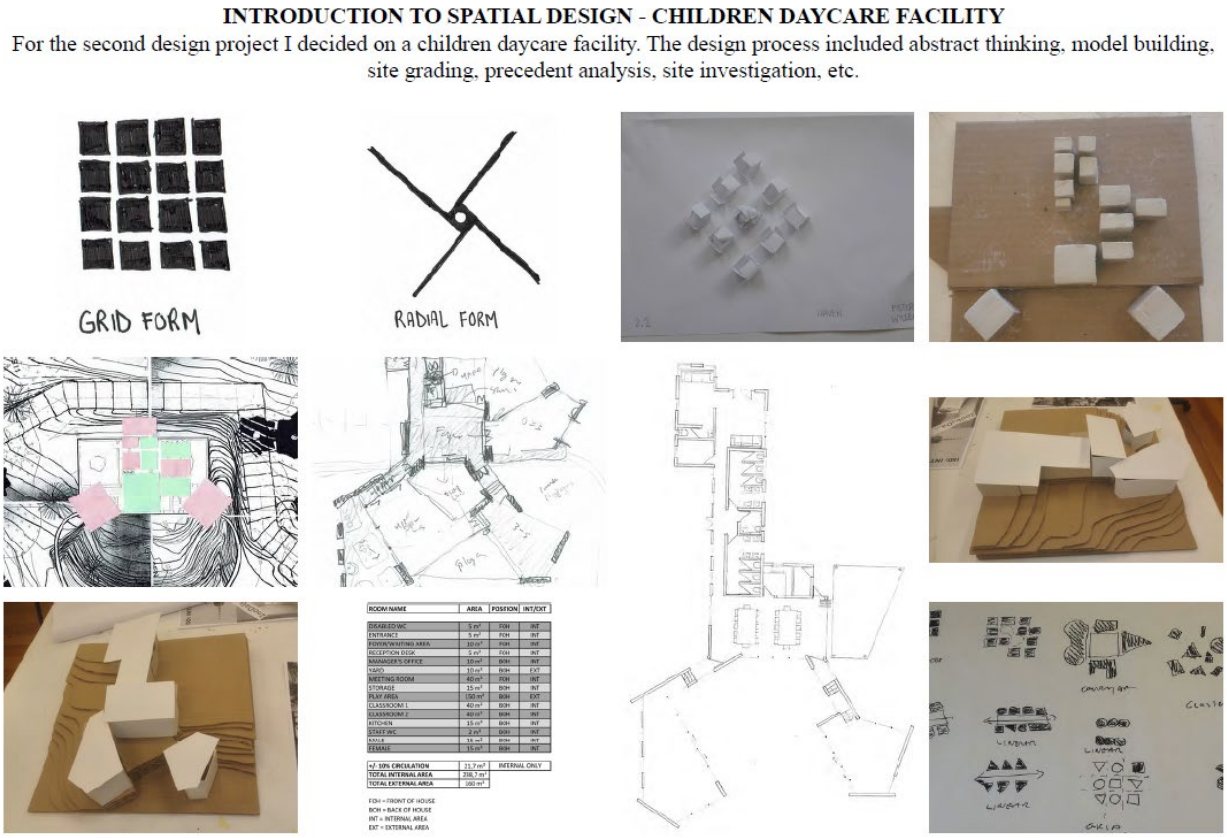


Figure 7.11: Precedent Building and Explanation

7.5.1.3 What inspires me' - portfolio

The fourth part of the POE is the personal reflection as requested by the department, entitled 'What inspires me?'. This could be a precedent or example of a building which the applicant finds inspirational.

Nala included two architectural designs in his portfolio, as requested in this section. One was a building in Johannesburg and the other a building in Germany (Figure 7.11), Both buildings have a glass façade, admitting light, as evident in this extract from his portfolio, he indicated the position of the various pillars holding up the building in a non-intrusive manner, allowing light into the building, creating open spaces and an abundance of light.

7.5.2 *Assessment of Portfolio by the Academics*

Two types of RPL were used to facilitate Nala's RPL application: Access into the Advanced Diploma: AT as Nala does not have a three year diploma, and RPL credits for two subjects.

The academics involved in the assessment of Nala's portfolio conducted the assessment for both types of RPL, using all the evidence submitted. Once the assessment was done, it was also moderated. An RPL assessment and moderation report was completed and submitted to the RPL unit, Faculty and Senate as outlined in Chapter 2.

Five third-year subjects in the Diploma: AT were used to determine if Nala qualified for access into the Advanced Diploma. Below is a short summary from the assessment and moderation report (taken from the Assessment and Moderation report as used at the V/PHEI) because this is not the focus of this study:

- Architectural Technology 3 I it was found that Nala had an understanding of ‘the principles of advanced and complex construction methods and materials’. He also demonstrated that he had the skill to apply knowledge in ‘the explorative detailing of the equivalent 2-3 story building’.
- Architectural Design 3: the academics were of the opinion that his portfolio indicated his knowledge of spatial awareness, and his ability to analyse precedent and critically evaluate information gathered for application.
- Architectural Practice 3: Nala's 15 years' work in the architectural field was deemed sufficient to meet the learning outcomes of this subject.
- Architectural Literacy 3: The submission made by Nala in his academic portfolio and video demonstrated his skills in communicating via visual literacy, various drawing types, use of conventions, model making and digital literacy.
- Environmental Studies 3: Based on the evidence submitted, the academic found that Nala had developed knowledge about architectural work's responsibility and environmental impact.

While evaluating Nala's portfolio for the third-year subjects, the academics found that his portfolio exceeded the requirements of the third year and continued with their evaluation. The quality of Nala's portfolio resulted in the credits he was granted for Architectural Practice 4 and Architectural Literacy 4.

From the RPL assessment and moderator's report (taken from the Assessment and Moderation report as used at the V/PHEI) the findings by the academics on the evidence submitted for Architectural Practice 4 were the following:

'The applicant's extensive 15 years' work experience, and PoE provides evidence of:

- skill and experience in practice, professional registration at least at the level of architectural technologist.
- knowledge of professional conduct, contract and communication, alternative architectural practice (including social design), professional bodies, professional registration and working with other built environment professionals, as well as office administration and systems, and professional development, for example, self-regulation and metacognition
- attitude of professionalism and ethics
- knowledge of the contract: documentation and specification; and communication includes various forms of written, verbal and graphic (two dimensional, three dimensional, physical and digital) communication necessary to practice architecture
- attitude to responsibly, professionally, ethically practice architecture.'

The same finding was found for Architecture Literacy 4:

'The applicant's extensive 14 years' work experience, and PoE provides evidence of:

- skill (intellectual, reflective and analytical) to formulate coherent architectural arguments, and to develop design methodologies to solve architectural challenges, and to present these in a scholarly way.
- knowledge of discourse: current and past architectural philosophies, movements and theories (in South African context), historical references and precedent, design informants, principles and process, and design vocabulary
- skill to engage in design conversation.
- knowledge of research: research design and methodology
- skill to formulate a logical and systematic argument.
- attitude to responsibly, professionally, ethically do research and address problems.'

In both the assessment reports indicated above, the academics confirmed that Nala met all the requirements for Architectural Practice 4 and Architectural Literacy 4.

They did not explicitly reflect on how the evidence submitted by Nala enabled him to meet these LOs. Conversation with the academics made it clear that they had studied Nala's portfolio extensively. Nala did not explicitly link his naturally occurring evidence to the learning outcomes. Although it accorded with the matrix, the evidence submitted, was different from the assignments and exams they conducted with the students, which in many cases included oral presentations. I asked the academics how they had made the link. Both acknowledged that this was a 'difficult question'.

Academic D expanded on her comment and said:

> It is a process of elimination. When you look at the portfolio, there are things you see immediately and you tick them off [mentally], but then there are things you look for. For example: the video is a good tool to look at the metacognitive abilities of the applicant, i.e., how does the applicant make sense of the process. We are using more than one assessment tool, and the evidence links to the LO at more than one place – it is not neatly packed! There are overlaps. One should not go with your intuition, but to a certain extent you do use your gut feel and then you look for evidence.

Academic C added:

> The portfolio itself and the way we ask the students to organise it, helps a lot to link it to the subjects. I don't like doing the RPL because it is a very intuitive process. Firstly, I look at the quality of the POE has the person included everything we asked for, is it well organised? This is all metacognitive knowledge. The video is also informative and indicates what the person wants to do [in the future/reason for the RPL application]. It is a very intuitive process, and I am also always grateful we are [a team of] three that look at the POE and write down our own opinions of the POE before we discuss each application.

Both academics emphasised that RPL applicants should be focused on why they apply for RPL and what they want to achieve in the future. These are interesting comments from both academics, who are both architects and worked as architects before becoming academics, having their own knowledge of the profession. They were both very honest about their intuition in relation to a portfolio and how they found it challenging to interpret a portfolio.

Hendricks and Volbrecht (2009:50) refer to this as the assessor reflecting on, extracting meaning and making inferences about the candidate's learning. I have described this as tacit-to-tacit knowledge within the field or profession. This process also links to what Bernstein would refers to as the ‘gaze’ or repertoire of a discipline. The drawings, both design and technical, are the 'language' of architecture and the medium through which academics can understand and evaluate naturally occurring evidence as part of an RPL application. I did not ask them whether relying on their intuition was a problem as it seemed to me that they were experiencing the RPL portfolio and the evidence they were looking at as a challenge.

Academic D:

> There are also the tacit aspects that play a role, i.e., Nala applied three times, he walked a path with his RPL application. There was communication with him, he did short courses, he developed a sketchbook. The potential was there to improve,

> and he took action, there was a willingness on his side to improve, a seriousness, this is something that can't be captured in a checklist or rubric.

Academic D acknowledges that her tacit knowledge as an academic and professional linked to the tacit knowledge of the applicant. In Nala's case, she assisted him with his RPL application over a three-year period. Her willingness to assist and guide him speaks to interpreting RPL as a specialised pedagogy (Cooper and Ralphs, 2016) in a tailor-made, one-on-one manner. Although Academic D does not explicitly refer to her approach to RPL, her interaction with Nala indicates an awareness that RPL is a mediation process and that it takes time to develop a portfolio.

Reflecting on the knowledge that the V/PHEI students graduate with, *Academic C* pointed out:

> You need to know how to draw up a drawing, and to develop a convincing drawing [the applicant] needs certain technical knowledge, e.g., the height of a washing basin, the size of a brick. You need to know how to put a building together (which) you learn in practice. You know what the picture [building] should look like but (you need to know) the logic behind it. ABC [of architecture] is about the technical knowledge – how to put a building together - the better your technical knowledge is (the) better your conceptual thinking is about how to put a building together. Do I put it together with concrete, steel or wood construction? What is important (to us) as a V/PHEI [is that] we place emphasis on the technical side, more than a traditional university.

On probing *Academic C* further on his use of the term ‘technical knowledge’, he explained:

> As I refer to it here, it is more aligned with theoretical than procedural knowledge. Knowledge of construction techniques, systems, etc. Of course, this also relates to the sequence/procedure of making a building, but I do not think this is the ‘procedural knowledge’ that you refer to in terms of architectural practice.’

Academics develop the curriculum in line with the requirements of, and in collaboration with, the professional body, taking the competencies into account, as explained above in this chapter. The point of view of the academics is that knowledge from the workplace is more than valuing experiential learning – there are other concepts involved in emphasising procedural knowledge, such as the ‘ABC of Architecture’.

Nala's evidence is the connecting factor between what he learned informally in the workplace and self-study and how these link to the formal programme. The various architectural drawings he submitted (Figures 7.1 - 7.8) illustrate his knowledge of building specifications, technical knowledge, and building regulations. The evidence indicates that informal and non-formal

learning can be compared and found equivalent to formal learning and learning outcomes. This equivalence enabled the academics to connect his learning with the formal programme.

Nala's non-formal learning in the short courses he had done and the evidence he submitted from these short courses, i.e., the special design (Figure 7.9) and the precedent study in Figure 7.10, were evidence of his ability to meet the design requirements, in line with the requirements of the formal programme and the profession. It demonstrates that his ‘gaze’ (in Bernstein's terms) was in line with the formal programme and the profession.

These four-sub sections of Nala's portfolio made up his knowledge claim. In the next section, I will discuss the three knowledge claims involved in this RPL application.

7.6 The Knowledge Structure in AT

Part of the basis of Architecture is the 'ABC of architecture' (Academic C) - which is made up of building regulations, legislation dealing with various aspects of construction, and the aesthetics of the building – thus design. The two subjects Nala received credits for were Architectural Practice and Architectural Literacy, but not the design subject.

In Figure 7.12, I argue that Architectural Technology is comparable to IR, because there is also underpinning knowledge involved in Architecture. Building regulations and knowledge of relevant software are what Academic C refers to as the ‘ABC of Architecture provides a base from which all in the Architectural knowledge and work done’. The types of knowledge based on the analysis indicate that both horizontal and hierarchical knowledge structures exist in architectural technology. Academic D pointed out that factual knowledge is covered in years one to three and not at 4th year level. I indicated the ‘ABC of architecture’ as the base of a pyramid. I have added a layer to the pyramid in the case of architecture, namely architectural design.

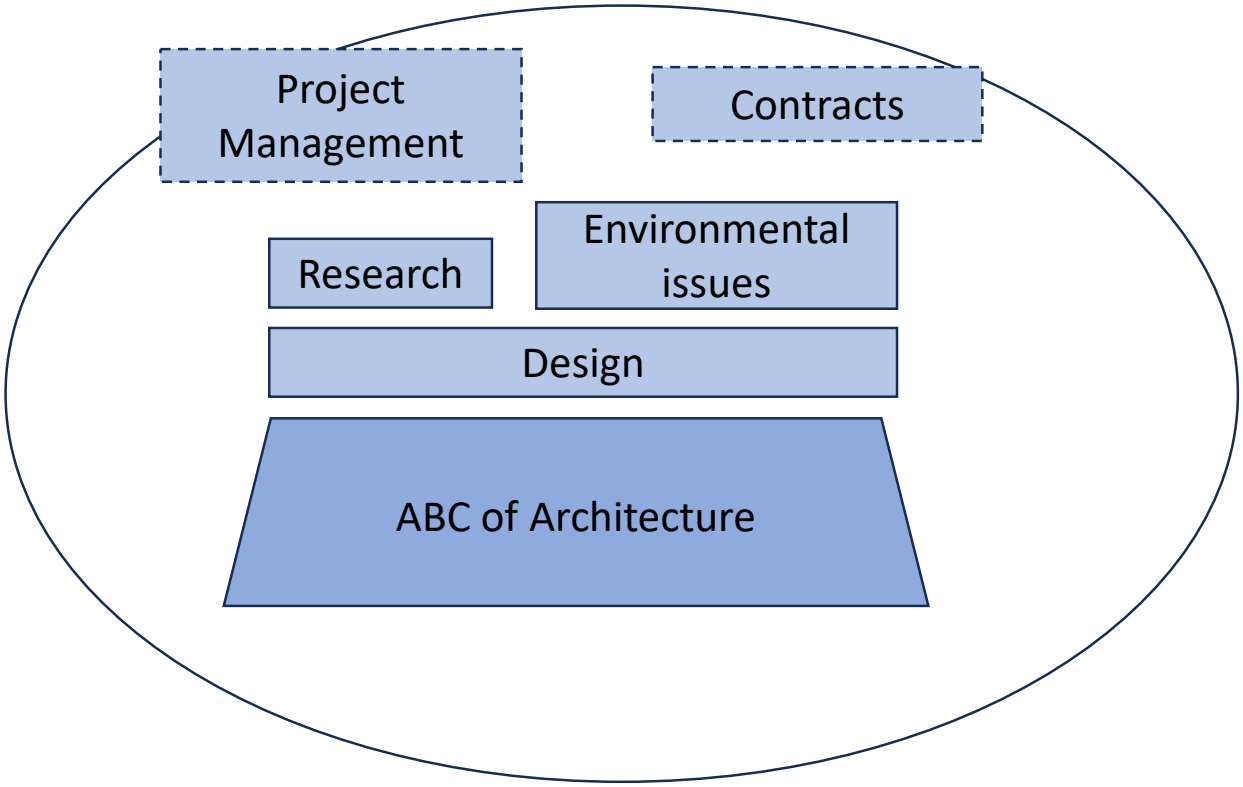


Figure 7.12: Knowledge Types in Architectural Technology

Design is an underpinning and essential aspect of architecture. I did not include it at the bottom because it is an aspect of architecture (not only architectural technology) that determines the aesthetic component of a building. Underpinning the design is the 'ABC of architecture'.

I added other layers to cover the subjects and concepts in the qualification to illustrate how I interpret the type and structure of knowledge involved, the more horizontal types of knowledge that are part of the two subjects analysed. I found different segments of Knowledge in the two subjects: AP and AL. I placed Research and Environmental issues at the same level because these are matters that influence the design of the building. I placed project management and contracts on a higher level, because these aspects are determined last for building design and construction. These knowledge aspects are horizontal segments with a dotted line, because these concepts are recruited for and used by architecture. Project management is traditionally part of management, but it is a body of knowledge incorporated into and used by various disciplines, including architecture as a management tool. It has weak boundaries, and the knowledge is horizontal in nature. The concept of contracts originates from legislation, legal aspects from contract law and case law. Environmental Issues draw more strongly on the 'hard' sciences, and the knowledge is hierarchical. Methodology has its roots in research, which is horizontal in nature, making space for both qualitative and quantitative research

methods. In my analysis, both horizontal and hierarchical knowledge structures are found in AT.

Repertoire plays a crucial role in helping all involved understand each other. Drawings are the main form of communication and are part of the discipline and profession's repertoire. The implication for RPL is that the credit can be granted if the RPL candidate is familiar with the repertoire.

The recontextualisation process of LOs for RPL candidates by academics makes relatively high-level, complex knowledge available for RPL processes. This recontextualisation process does not simplify the content – in fact, the required knowledge level is even higher/more complex than in the formal curriculum. The academics did pedagogical recontextualisation (PR) (Barnett, 2006) when they changed the LOs for the RPL process, creating a specialised pedagogy. The academics' professional experience and the experience and evidence of the RPL Candidates made this possible – which is a boundary-crossing activity.

7.7. Conclusion

This chapter shows that in the case of AT, the recontextualisation of LOs from the formal to the RPL program involves a process of increasing the complexity of knowledge and cognition as coded against the categories of the T&CKT. The integrated nature of workplace learning and experience is an important contributor to the increased complexity.

Architectural Technology is a divergent discipline. I interpret the boundaries of this disciplinary field as a combination of both a strong and weak (a broken line), where the gaps allow other disciplines and workplace practices to drawn upon, such as project management.

I interpret the department's communication with Nala as a form of Specialised Pedagogy (Cooper and Ralphs, 2016). Although the communication was one-on-one and mostly via email and telephone, the department guided Nala over three years. Although no workshops were held, this interaction and Nala's portfolio were sufficient to guide him and grant him the credits he was granted.

Chapter 8:Recognition of Prior Learning – an Interwoven Process of Knowledge Types, Learning and Recontextualisation

8.1 Introduction

In this closing chapter of this thesis, drawing on the analytical framework explained in Chapters Three and Four, I summarise my findings on the different types of knowledge at play in the RPL space. I use the conceptual themes I identified earlier to summarise my findings and provide answers to the questions I posed at the beginning of this study.

Cooper and Ralphs (2016:128-129) note that little work has been done around the specific nature of the knowledge produced and reproduced in informal and non-formal learning sites. I have tried to address this shortcoming via the two case studies making up this study.

I drew on the work of Cooper and Ralphs (2016) to interpret the RPL processes in the case studies as processes of specialised pedagogy. Interpreting RPL as a pedagogy led me to the work of Helen Pokorny (2023), who introduced the concepts of translation or transfer of knowledge during the process of portfolio development and presentation within the context of RPL being a specialised pedagogy. I added the notion of recontextualisation of prior learning (R-PL) to understand the stages of the RPL process as a recontextualisation process. Drawing on the work of Evans (et al. (2010) and the idea of 'chains of recontextualisation' referring to the same knowledge being used in different sites, the analysis suggests that the changes made to the LOs in this study may be seen as a process of recontextualisation.

In summary, knowledge is more complex than a divide between theory and practice. For both case studies of disciplines and their associated professions, academics referred to 'fundamental knowledge' underpinning the knowledge in both the curriculum/discipline and in the profession. This finding indicates a form of hierarchical knowledge in each discipline or case; however, the findings also show that some horizontal segmental knowledge is also involved and, thus, a type of hybrid knowledge is involved. These led me to conclude that recontextualisation makes RPL possible, with more than one recontextualisation process involved, resulting in a chain of recontextualising, mainly involving the learning outcomes from the Formal Programme (FP) and Recognition of Prior Learning Programme (RPL P).

In conclusion, this chapter highlights possibilities for future research in RPL, especially in granting credits for non-formal and in-formal learning.

8.2 Interpreting the Topic and Questions of this Study

I started my Ph.D. study with the aim of discovering how knowledge developed from informal and non-formal learning, mainly in the workplace, is recognised for credits within Higher Education. This led to my main question and the title of the thesis:

> *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Knowledge Claims: How can different types of knowledge identified, documented and assessed in RPL applications for credit? The role of learning outcomes in two case studies of RPL at a South African vocational/professional higher educational institution (V/PHEI).*

As I engaged with the literature on RPL and developed my analytical framework, my sub-questions developed further. I realised that recontextualisation is a critical aspect of RPL, and I added the word 'recontextualised' to question two.

8.2.1 Sub-Research Questions

1. What types of knowledge gained through informal and/or non-formal learning in the workplace can be recognised as equivalent to learning in an academic programme?

2. How is knowledge from the curriculum of specific qualifications recontextualised for an RPL process as reflected in the associated learning outcomes?

In Chapter 3, I identified conceptual themes. I used these four themes to answer my questions and draw conclusions at the same time:

- Types of knowledge and knowledge structures,
- Strength of boundaries,
- Curriculum and Learning Outcomes, and
- The process of Specialised Pedagogy.

In the following sections, I delve deeper into the above themes.

8.3 Types and the Complexity of Knowledge

In this section, I explain the types and complexity of knowledge I identified in the case studies. A discussion about knowledge structures involves an analysis of the strength of boundaries between forms of knowledge.

8.3.1 *Types and Structures of Knowledge*

As explained in the previous three chapters, I adjusted the Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002:216) to develop my framework, Type and Complexity of Knowledge Taxonomy (T&CKT) to analyse the learning outcomes in each case study, comparing those of the formal programmes with the Learning Outcomes (LOs) of the RPL programmes respectively. Coding the two sets of LOs against categories of the taxonomy did not only enabled me to compare the Learning Outcomes in terms of the level of knowledge complexity and types of knowledge, but it also illustrated the vital role or 'lynchpin' the LOs as Peters (2006) described them.

My analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 indicates the type of boundaries of the disciplines concerned. To illustrate this alignment, I developed two illustrations, Industrial Relations (Figure 6.10) and Architectural Technology (AT) (Figure 7.12), indicating the types of knowledge found in each discipline and the associated boundaries. I coded the LOs on the T&CKT, which provided me with types of knowledge (the noun), as I found these in both sets of LOs at an intersection of the complexity of knowledge (the verb). I linked all the RPL LOs to concepts that identified what the LOs were all about. I summarised these findings in the two figures named above.

The two illustrations are similar, although the two disciplines and associated professions differ. Both disciplines have relatively strong knowledge boundaries developed over a long period of time and are reinforced by the professional body through the setting of standards (HR) and competencies (Architecture). Providing a strong boundary around the discipline and profession.

The academics interviewed indicated that a certain extent of foundational or fundamental knowledge is required in the field, which underpins all other concepts. Without evidence of this underpinning knowledge, the applicants would not likely be successful in the workplace, their RPL application, or their studies.

Both have underpinning knowledge of legislation, regulations, and basic principles and procedures that guide the profession's implementation. This finding points to the existence of hierarchical knowledge in each discipline, but not exclusively so.

The knowledge in both disciplines also included forms of knowledge that are more horizontal in structure. This finding is in line with the findings of Harris and Wihak (2017) in their research on different academic and professional qualifications, each having different relationships between formal and experiential knowledge. In the case of industrial Relations (IR), this is identifiable when specific procedures used in a particular situation are segmental and topic-specific. In Architectural Technology (AT), using supporting practices for the profession, such as project management, introduces more horizontal forms of knowledge.

8.3.2 *Boundaries*

Based on my analysis and interpretation of the data in both case studies, both horizontal and hierarchical knowledge structures are represented in the requirements of both disciplines. The disciplinary knowledge is hybrid and segmented, which indicates softer boundaries *within* a strong boundary.

The boundary object is the knowledge itself as explained in Chapter 3. Wheelehan (2010: 8), quoting Muller (2000) says: ‘to cross the line [boundary] … is to know how to cross the boundary, paying attention to the politics of redescription with translation’. Social realism interprets knowledge as having ‘transcendent properties beyond the specific conditions under which it was produced precisely because it provides access to the natural and social worlds’ (Wheelehan, 2020: 10). In the analysis done in the two case studies, I indicated that although both HRM and Law have strong disciplinary boundaries, within the field there are different types of knowledge. Some of it is underpinning knowledge such as the ‘ABC of Architecture’ and the South African labour legislation in the case of IR, and this this study shows that such knowledge can cross the boundary between the academy and the workplace.

In the interviews with academics, the interwovenness of knowledge came clearly to the fore; both departments talked about the closeness of the discipline (what they are teaching) and in the profession, and the workplace, where implementation occurs. This raises a critical question about dualist accounts of knowledge such as that of Bernstein. In his own words (Bernstein, 2000:xiii) noted that boundaries are not 'etched in copper plate' nor 'a line in quicksand', and Harris and Wihak's (2017) description of knowledge boundaries as porous is

the most accurate description of the nature of such boundaries. Cooper and Ralphs (2016) also refer to the hybrid nature of knowledge. This study demonstrates how such hybridity makes possible the of granting credits, contributing to the debate in RPL circles about the differentiation of knowledge, as Cooper and Ralphs (2016) highlighted, as an important issue in the RPL literature and research.

Both qualifications are required to follow the specifications of the professional body, which both academic departments have done. The professional bodies have specified curriculum standards and competencies, adding boundary strength to the disciplines taught in the formal programme, while supporting the hybrid structure of knowledge at the same time.

8.3.3 *Curriculum and Learning Outcomes*

As a researcher, I looked at the depth of knowledge and conceptual complexity required by specific learning outcomes, how the RPL applicant understood these concepts and how the evidence submitted supported the knowledge claim made or not.

The levels of complexity of LOs in IR were the same in both the FP and RPL P, and so were the types of knowledge the subject dealt with regarding regulations such as grievance procedures and labour issues such as absenteeism. The only changes the department made to the LOs was the order or flow of the LOs, not their levels of complexity or types of knowledge involved, because there was no need for that in the implementation of IR. The legislation and regulations are very prescriptive, have been in place for a long time, and remain the same. The standards set by the SABPP also remain the same and are fairly rigid.

Recognition in an academic programme is possible if the type of knowledge and levels of complexity are either the same i.e. regulations or similar to the knowledge from the workplace. The levels of complexity are the same in two of the three subjects analysed: IR 1 and AP4. The level of complexity demanded by the RPL process may even be higher (as discussed below in regard to AP4), but only if the academic department can provide reasons for the decision to increase the level of the RPL LOs. The similarities also include the standards or competencies of the professional body and tradition in the discipline and its associated profession. Including the professional discourses in the profession. The discipline taught falls within the same discourse, introducing students to the repertoire within the specific field. The RPL process at the V/PHEI is qualification-specific, providing the academics with the space to change the LOs as discussed in great detail both chapters. The initiative in this regard came from the academics and not the V/PHEI.

However, regarding the LOs for Architectural Literacy, the LOs in the RPL Programme differed from those in FP. They required the ability to analyse, evaluate, and create. Knowledge types were coded as conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive, placing them at a higher level of complexity. The RPL LOs, as coded against the T&CKT categories, were shown to be more complex than the LOs required by the formal programme. The implication is that RPL applicants will be able to meet the requirement of a higher level of knowledge and complexity before credits are granted for the Architectural Literacy subject, with their substantive experience and informal and non-formal learning.

8.3.4 *Specialised Pedagogy*

Making use of Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device, the constitution of the knowledge field in these two case studies is clearly defined in the curriculum and includes the competencies as specified by the professional bodies. It is thus a 'curriculum that looks both ways' (Cooper and Ralphs, 2016:131). The discipline and profession share the same paradigm, enabling RPL candidates who have acquired such knowledge to demonstrate it in their portfolios.

The repertoire of the profession and discipline enabled the academics to recontextualise the Learning Outcomes, creating a specialised pedagogy for each qualification. As Barnett (2006) has indicated, the knowledge used for disciplinary subjects in formal education and the knowledge used in workplace learning are from the same source, adjusted, and recontextualised for the purposes for which it is used. Bringing RPL into the space of granting credits, as this study shows, requires an additional process of recontextualisation. As Cooper and Ralphs (2016) concluded in their interpretation of the pedagogic device, RPL ‘disrupts” the standard power relations (Cooper & Ralphs,2016:131), enabling the process to accommodate informal and non-formal knowledge. This study shows how RPL enables all stakeholders to use a broader perspective to accommodate different types of knowledge.

This study has also shown that specialised pedagogy requires not only in-depth knowledge of the workplace but it requires serious and detailed preparation for the RPL process to take place.

8.4 Chain of recontextualisation

In changing the LOs, the process followed by the academics, started a chain of recontextualisation. As explained in Chapter 4, the concept of recontextualisation was developed by Bernstein (2000) in the process of describing the pedagogic device, interpreted and used by Barnett (2006) and then re-interpreted as a 'chain' by Evans et al. (2009). This provided me with a concept that I could use to analyse the dynamic series of various knowledge claims presented within an RPL process. In this section, I summarise this process, briefly touching on each section of the chain of recontextualisation.

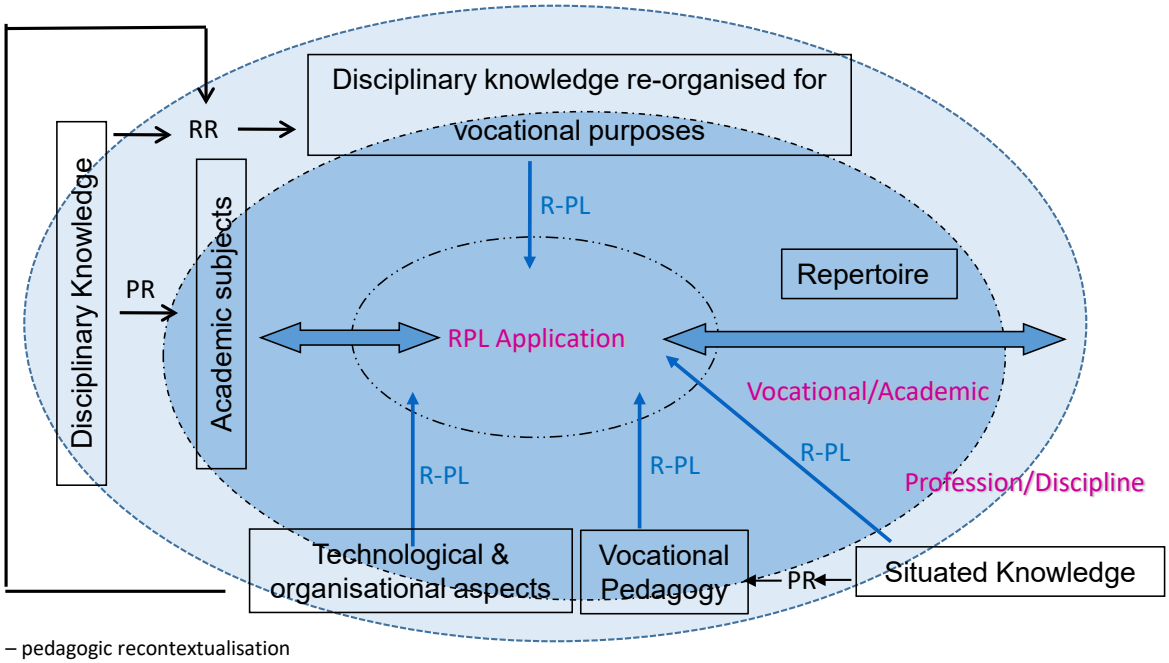
The concept of a chain of recontextualisation is explained by Evans, et al., (2009:156-158) as the process of 'how different forms of knowledge are recontextualised as people move between sites of learning and practice in universities, colleges and workplace providing new ways of understanding longstanding seemingly intractable problems relating to theory and practice' These researchers focused on how different forms of knowledge are recontextualised between different sites of learning within a specific sector. Concurrently with this analysis, I highlight how the chain of recontextualisation feeds into the concept of RPL as a specialised pedagogy (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016).

Therefore, I have identified a chain of recontextualisation in both my case studies consisting of four links, but very different to the four identified by Evans et al. (2009). My findings suggest that in the case of RPL for credits, the process consists of a number of chains of recontextualisation: (i) On the side of the academy, the development of a curriculum - is strongly influenced and controlled by the professional body, (ii) The development of the curriculum map entails a change or adaptation of learning outcomes for the purposes of the RPL process, (iii) The development and presentation of evidence by the RPL applicant involves recontextualisation of the workplace knowledge, (iv) On the part of the academic, there is an interpretation of the evidence submitted, another recontextualisation takes place of the candidate's workplace knowledge, resulting in an assessment.

8.4.1 Knowledge Claims Involved

Having identified the stages in the chain of recontextualisation, I can now explain the knowledge claims involved in this study.

The visual representation below (Figure 8.1) demonstrates the chain of recontextualisation that makes up a knowledge claim in RPL for credits. The Portfolio of Evidence (POE) is the boundary object (Pokorny, 2023), connecting the links of the chain, making the transition between different contexts possible.



PR – pedagogic recontextualisation
RR – reclassification recontextualisation (Barnett, 2006)
R-PL – recontextualisation of prior learning

Figure 8.1: Populating the Knowledge Claim

The pedagogic recontextualisation (PR) is used to create the formal curriculum and subjects, while reclassification recontextualisation (RR) is used to identify knowledge for the workplace. What is important for RPL is that both RR and PR are from the *same source* – disciplinary knowledge, as indicated on the left of the Figure 8.1. Linked to Barnett's (2006) interpretation of Bernstein's work, pointing out that a discipline and its associated profession originate from the same source, recontextualisation within an RPL process makes it possible to compare knowledge of the academy and the workplace. The source of knowledge is the disciplinary knowledge, which is recontextualised at various times: for formal education, learning in the workplace and within the portfolio of evidence.

The disciplinary knowledge being the same source for the formal programme and the workplace is important for RPL because it creates a base for the knowledge in the discipline and the profession where RPL applicants work and develop their knowledge (as indicated in

the light blue and largest circle). In addition, the RPL applicants participated in short courses or non-formal learning, which is indicated in the small dark cycle. RPL applicants such as Capt. Ruby and Nala work within this environment, enabling them to make a claim to know the content of specific subjects and receive recognition for it. The arrows labelled 'R-PL' (Recontextualisation (-) of prior learning) point from technical and organisational aspects, vocation pedagogy, situational knowledge, and disciplinary knowledge re-organised for the vocational purpose to the RPL application in the middle. A shared repertoire or gaze (Bernstein, 2000) operates within the process; without it, understanding between the different parties of the RPL process will not be possible. The shared repertoire manifests itself within the knowledge claim. It includes shared vocabulary and other communication methods, such as architectural drawings. Articulating this shared repertoire more explicitly in the Assessment and Moderation reports would help to enhance the assessment and quality processes that are part of the RPL at V/PHEI.

In the Knowledge Claim I explain the recontextualization processes involved. Firstly, the blue arrows indicate interaction between the various sets of recontextualisation. Recontextualisation is a form of specialised pedagogy for granting credits. I identified R-PL because 'Practitioners can force the chains of recontextualisation across all of these environments to maximise the integration of subject-based and work-based knowledge.' (Evans et al., 2009:14-17). The RPL learning outcomes used by both departments in the RPL process provided the bridge or the links in a chain of recontextualisation of the knowledge from the workplace to the curriculum. The knowledge could move from the workplace to the portfolio via two sets of learning outcomes to the formal curriculum.

The theories and concepts used in the study, point to RPL as a recontextualisation process in and by itself. I used the work of Pokorny, who points out that the benefit to the RPL practitioner of her findings is that some 'skills and knowledge may directly transfer across context whilst others require mediation and translation' (Pokorny, 2023:11). Pokorny's (2023) 'pedagogical pragmatism' played a role in my case studies. 'Pedagogical pragmatism' as Pokorny defines it involves 'technical rationality', which is the adherence to LOs. As explained previously, the LOs were adapted for the RPL process in my case studies. The changes made when the formal curriculum LOs were 'translated' into the LOs required for the RPL process reflect what Pokorny refers to as the 'professional artistry' of the practitioner dealing with the RPL process.

Interpreting my study as a Specialised Pedagogy (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016) in the case of granting credits involved the interpretation and changes of the subject's learning outcomes, as explained above, provide space to the RPL applicants to demonstrate their knowledge through applying these LOs. If the academic departments had not changed the LOs,

‘adherence’ (Pokorny, 2023) the RPL process as described in this study would have been more difficult, perhaps impossible. This was made possible by all parties involved' awareness and interaction within the professional field.

In the beginning of this study, I highlighted that RPL is seen as a contested field. However, my study shows less competition for working within a specific field. There may still be some contestation over whether the RPL evidence fulfils the requirements of the LOs, but such contestation takes place within very specific parameters. The recontextualisation of the LOs for the purposes of RPL plays a crucial role in mediating the RPL process and contributing to the specialist pedagogy underpinning RPL. Because credits are involved, learning outcomes became the most important aspect that I looked at. The changing of the LOs by academics is a specialised form of pedagogy.

8.5 Specialised Pedagogy

The RPL process in both case studies was developed from the point of view '[of a] curriculum that looks both ways', an RPL programme to accommodate workplace knowledge. The RPL recontextualisation led in some cases, especially in AT to very integrated LOs. In other words, even with the more complex LOs, but the concepts could still be identified. The manifestation and interpretation of the LOs requirements in the portfolio indicate how the specialised pedagogy was implemented and interpreted by the various parties involved in the process. I briefly summarise each case study:

a) Industrial Relations (IR)

Capt. Ruby handed in a very interesting portfolio from an experiential knowledge perspective. However, from a technical perspective, she did not adhere to the guidelines provided to her. Capt. Ruby's portfolio can be interpreted as 'RPL-Transfer' in Pokorny's terms because although the portfolio includes relevant naturally occurring evidence, she did not reflect on her evidence as to how it addresses the RPL LOs. In other words, she did not fulfil the 'technical rationality' as Pokorny defines it:'[of] adherence to a learning outcome-focussed output', because the LOs were taken as a 'given' by the candidate (Pokorny, 2023:11). The fact that Capt. Ruby did not complete the curriculum map for IR 1 indicates not only a 'transfer' of her workplace knowledge but the tacit-to-tacit knowledge shared between her and the academics, especially Academic B.

In Pokorny's (2023) study, some RPL applicants placed relevant evidence in a portfolio but did not interact with it, expecting the assessor to make the connections. This is what Academic B did, managing to make sense of Capt. Ruby's portfolio as a process of making 'inferences'

(Hendricks & Volbrecht, 2003) and using what both Cooper and Ralphs (2016) and Pokorny (2023,18) refer to as 'professional artistry'. This refers to the practice where the academics' interpretation of evidence is based more on their own knowledge (in this case on the academic's knowledge of IR) and work experiences rather than the applicant's adherence (in this case Capt. Ruby) to the LOs.

I have described this as 'tacit-to-tacit knowledge' where the candidate's tacit knowledge links via the portfolio, to the tacit knowledge being the boundary object of the candidate, evaluators, academics, and professionals.

b) Architectural Technology (AT)

Using Pokorny's (2023) concept of RPL-Translate or Transfer (RPL-TT), Nala's portfolio was more a case of 'translation' in nature. He followed the instructions from the department (via the matrix) and submitted a portfolio with considerable detail. Nala's portfolio also included naturally occurring evidence, but he explained the projects he engaged in as part of his career, adhering to the department's 'technical rationality' requirements. He also included an assignment, as requested by the department, and a video of himself explaining why he was applying for RPL.

Nala understood that he had to prepare for his RPL application and was in contact with the department for at least two years before he submitted his portfolio. He communicated with the department, and based on their advice, he attended a design course as part of his RPL application. Similarly, the academics understood the work he was involved in and realised that he was not ready to undertake studies at 4th year level. They provided him with advice and support, which appears to have contributed to the high quality of the final portfolio he submitted, highlighting the 'artistry' aspect of RPL achieved by Academics C and D.

RPL attempts to broaden or contest the rules of evaluation (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016,131). Not only were the LOs adjusted in both case studies to be more accommodating but using portfolios as an assessment tool provided space for the RPL candidates to present their knowledge and demonstrate their shared repertoire. The approach used by the academics in this study moves away from what de Paor (2024) has referred to as “shoehorning” experience to fit Learning Outcomes. Adjusting the Learning Outcomes does not only make the assessment fit-for-purpose, but it also takes into account the particularities of experiential learning.

8.5.1 *Shared Repertoire and Tacit-to-Tacit Knowledge*

Working within the same discourse, the academics could recognise workplace learning, especially in Capt. Ruby's case, where Academic B said she was clearly 'au fait' with underpinning knowledge in IR, or as Academic B called it, the 'Bedrock of IR', referring to legislation, rules, and procedures. In the case of AT, Academic C and D referred to Nala, knowing the 'ABC of Architecture'. They made similar comments when they pointed out that Nala's knowledge was extensive enough to grant him access to the 4th year of the programme and credits for two subjects.
Analysing the assessment reports and the discussions I had with all the academics, it became clear that they use their own knowledge of the profession to evaluate and interpret the portfolios. The AT academics were very open about using their 'intuition' (Academic C) but added that the evaluation is done in a committee, making it valid. Raciti (2024) referred to this aspect of RPL as the 'open-mindednesses' of the assessors. Hendricks and Volbrecht (2009) referred to this situation as a process of making inferences. In my own analysis, I have referred to this as tacit-to-tacit knowledge.

Osman has referred to 'the knowledge paradox' in RPL where academics value experiential knowledge, but are often required to accept only those students with theoretical knowledge (Osman, 2003:159). Contrary to her findings, I did not find that to be the case in this study. The academics valued theoretical knowledge above experiential knowledge. As I interpreted my conclusions, it seemed that the academics valued both and understood the role of each in the profession for which they were preparing students.

8.6 Future Research in RPL

Further research into granting credits based on non-formal and informal learning, focusing on the workplace, is required. As Cooper and Ralphs (2016:128) point out very little 'work has been done on :'theorising the nature of knowledge differentiation among those forms of knowledge produced and reproduced in sites of non-formal and informal learning'. In addition, more research is needed into the methods of analysing Learning Outcomes. This should include Learning Outcomes in the formal qualification and recontextualisation of the Learning Outcomes for an RPL Programme.

Not all subjects and their associated fields are RPL-able (Harris & Cooper, 2013, Harris & Wihak, 2017). RPL is a challenge, especially with a more hierarchical knowledge structure such as science. This is an aspect of RPL that needs further research. Using the T&CKT can be a template for such research, enabling researchers to identify the types of knowledge and

levels of complexity that are either similar or different. The reasons can be explored as part of the research.

The impact of knowledge development outside of higher education is another aspect that needs further consideration and research. Research and specialised knowledge production work is done outside the academy in the workplace, usually referred to as 'Research and Development'. The potential impact of such workplace knowledge production on possibilities for RPL needs further research. Such knowledge is not always included in the formal curriculum, and bringing such knowledge into academy via RPL can be an advantage not only for the RPL candidate but would also enrich the curriculum.

8.7 Contribution of the Thesis

This study set out to determine how 'different types of knowledge can be identified, documented and assessed in an RPL application'. A number of steps are involved in this process, as explained in this study. In conclusion, I would like to highlight three contributions to knowledge that this study achieves and that I think are important:

The research shows the importance of focussing on learning outcomes. Researching the granting of credits placed the learning outcomes of the subject for which credit was granted as a central focus. The need to change the learning outcomes for the RPL process, as done by the academics in the two case studies, highlighted the need to consider the workplace and the knowledge developed and used there. The professional bodies tightly specify the Learning Outcomes (and the curriculum). However, regardless, the academic departments were able to change the learning outcomes while not changing the concepts involved. It illustrates the importance of pedagogic agency.

The changes made to the LOs and the chains of recontextualisation identified not only highlight the fact that RPL is a specialist pedagogy but also illustrate the steps involved in the recontextualisation process. The most important and perhaps the most challenging step, especially for the RPL applicants, is to select and present naturally occurring evidence of knowledge appropriately – to recontextualise their prior learning, R-PL.

The assessment process is explicitly based on the learning outcomes, but it is the interpretation of the LOs by the academics/assessors that determines whether the applicant is successful or not. What became clear during my review of the evidence submitted and the assessment reports written was that the tacit-to-tacit knowledge shared between the RPL applicant and the academic played an important role in facilitating the RPL process. As

mentioned in the study, all academics (except one) involved had worked in the discipline as professionals and had an in-depth understanding of both the academic subjects and the workplace. The research demonstrates how this factor enhances the possibilities for RPL because an underlying understanding is shared within the profession and the discipline.

This study has shown that RPL does not 'drop standards' or 'give anything away'– if anything, it proves that the same standards are maintained or are even *more* demanding of the RPL applicant.

The findings in this study will help strengthen RPL practices in professionally oriented, higher education contexts and, more broadly, within vocational contexts. Changing LOs and analysing these on a framework such as the 'Type and Complexity of Knowledge Taxonomy' (T&CKT) provides a unique perspective. It could be used as a practice tool in RPL, especially when granting credits. The theoretical tools and analysis developed in this will deepen the theoretical understanding of RPL as a field of enquiry.

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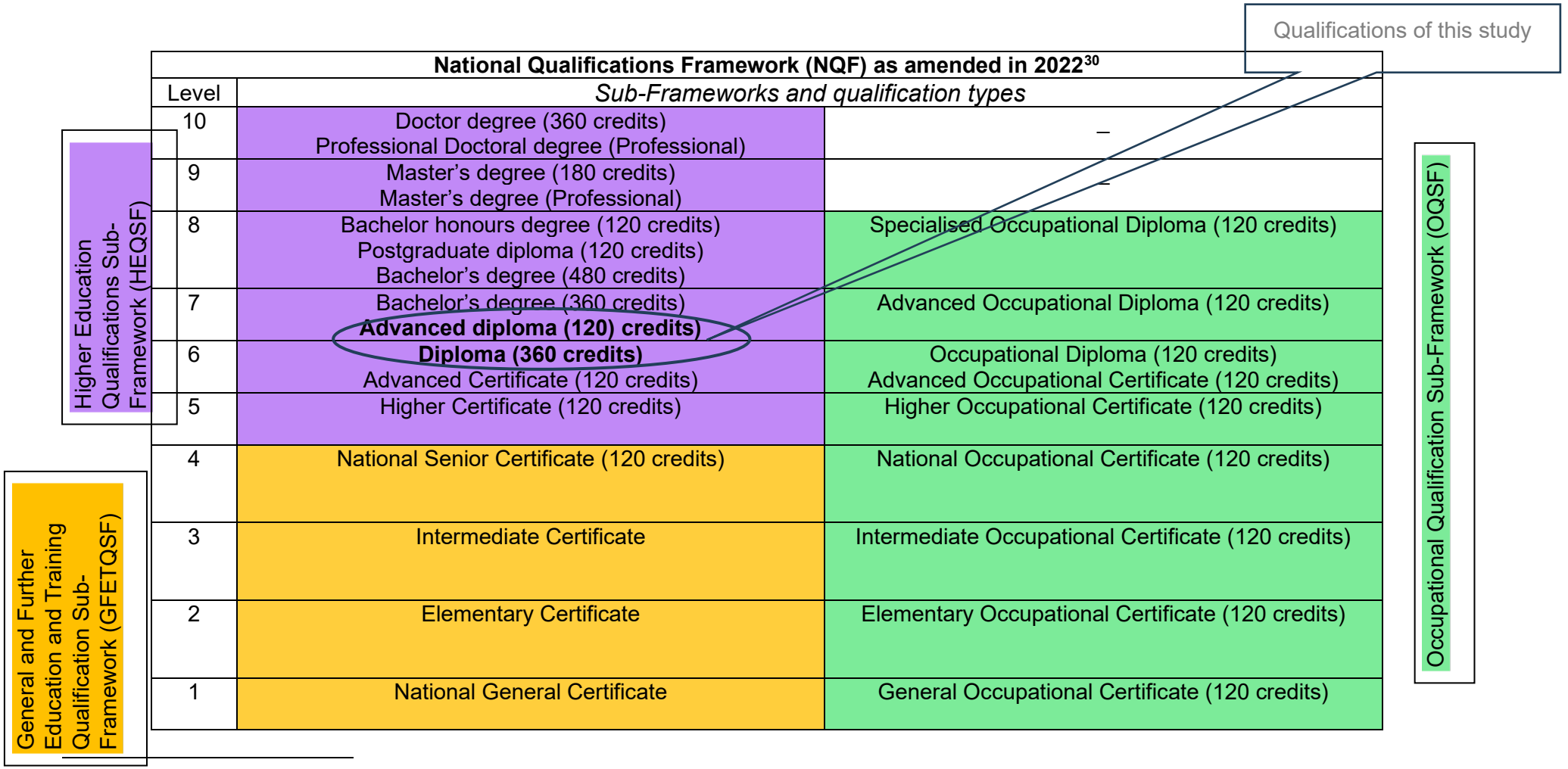
Appendixes

Appendix 2.1:National Qualifications Framework (NQF)



[30] NQF as amended 2022 from:'Guideline for the development and evaluation of qualifications and part-qualification for registration on the national qualifications framework - June 2023, published by SAQA. https://www.saqa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Guideline-Document-for-Development-of-Quals-signed.pdf

Appendix 6.1:HRM:Topics for discussion with academics involved in the RPL process

The following topics will be discussed with academics/RPL Facilitators in the RPL process as it takes place at the Institution.

Discussion with academic staff :
• Relationship with the workplace and industry. Involvement of alumni, industry and workplace partners in the development of the curriculum • Requirements of the industry professional body if applicable
• Work aspects integrated into teaching and assessment: how are students prepared for the world of work?

• The use of the learning outcomes from the formal progamme compared to the RPL programme:
  • Knowledge component of the LO in formal programme and RPL programme
  • Cognitive component of the LO in formal programme and RPL programme
  • Interpretation and changes of the RPL Programme within the context of the RPL process/workplace context
  • Changes to the cognitive component – adjustments to accommodate different cognitive abilities with the same knowledge/what the person knows?
  • Changes in the knowledge component? If any? I.e. procedural knowledge vs conceptual knowledge?
  Refer to separate document with comparison done

• RPL assessment and the interpretation of the RPL applicant's work experience: the recognition given to the RPL candidate's knowledge in comparison to the curriculum.
  • Contradictions and contestation regarding the interpretation of what count as knowledge and the academic's interpretation of the situation. The interaction between naturally occurring evidence and the learning outcomes is the space where the link between the learning outcomes and the knowledge from the workplace is made. How did you go about this process?
  • The evidence presented by Cpt Ruby was not linked by the applicant to the leaning outcomes of the IR1 How was the link made: how and by who. Subjective, tacit knowledge of the academics coming into play?
  • How the principles of assessment such as validity, authenticity, currency and sufficiency (VACS) are used?

F de Graaff – PhD Research with the HRM department – a narrative and questions.

Some time ago the HRM department agreed and gave permission to me to use the RPL process in the department for my PhD. I decided to focus on one subject – Industrial Relations 1 (IR 1), using one student's RPL submission – I'm calling her Cpt. Ruby. I have been working on the documentation from the department as well the RPL portfolio submitted by Cpt. Ruby. I have written this narrative to inform you what I have done for my research so far.

Topic: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) knowledge claims: exploring the similarities and differences between different contexts and contents. Case studies at a vocational/professional higher educational institution (V/PHEI)

This study focuses on exemptions granted via RPL and not any of the other types of RPL undertaken by the Institution. The reason for focussing on exemptions is explicitly to unpack the importance of epistemology, in other words, knowledge, in the RPL process. In the RPL Implementation policy from SAQA the following is stated: "RPL is about *what* has been learned, not on the status of the institution or place where the learning was obtained." (RPL Implementation Policy - Amended in 2019; 11)

The study aims to analyse the "what" in RPL. This statement in the Implementation policy has serious implications in how knowledge is firstly identified, evidence produced and documented and lastly assessed in the RPL process.

Exemptions via RPL are based on the subjects in a qualification - this case the Diploma in HRM. The RPL applicant makes a knowledge claim based on informal and non-formal learning in the workplace. In order to evaluate the "what" that was learned by an RPL applicant in the workplace, the Institution uses the learning outcomes of the subject for which exemption is sought, to evaluate the knowledge claim made.

The HRM academic department opted to use a portfolio of evidence as an assessment tool for IR 1. In order to develop the portfolio, a guide was developed to assist the RPL applicant, based on the learning outcomes of IR 1. The RPL applicant then uses the list of learning outcomes to present evidence against the learning outcomes, substantiating (or not) the knowledge claim made The knowledge claim, consisting of informal and non-formal learning is made against formal learning within a formal qualification. This is seen as a linking or bridging process (Cooper et al, 2016) between informal and non-formal learning vs. formal learning.

In this research, I'm attempting to investigate this bridging process, hoping that I can identify the "what" on both sides – the academic and formal programme compared to what an RPL applicant has learned.

I have collected some data and analysed it so far, including the following:

- Study guide and textbook for IR 1(referred to as the Formal Programme - FP)
- RPL Guide for IR 1 (referred to as the RPL Programme – RPLP)
- Portfolio submitted by the RPL applicant (referred to as Cpt Ruby)
- Assessment and feedback from the department (Referred to as the Assessor report)

The analysis done so far

- Analysis of the FP study guide, textbook, Cpt Ruby's portfolio and assessment based on coding done in Atlas-ti. 16 topics were identified that are interlinked within the IR subjects as well as the portfolio and assessment
- Analysis of the FP and RPLP Learning Outcomes using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2002). Various topics where identified through a manual analysis indicating topic (Knowledge dimension) and complexity level (Cognitive dimension)

In preparation for my interview with the department, I included a brief explanation of the Revised Taxonomy and indicated how I used this theory.

Analysis and comparison of Learning Outcomes (LOs) from the FP and RPLP.

The use of Bloom's revised taxonomy

Bloom's revised taxonomy as developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2002) is based on two different aspects a noun and a verb.

- Learning within the revised taxonomy is framed as a subject matter or knowledge – as a noun.
- Describing the action that should accompany the noun is a verb reflecting cognitive processes.

To the creators of the revised taxonomy, this combination makes up a Learning Outcome. (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001: 12-13)

Level of Complexity: *(Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002)*						
Cognitive Dimension / Knowledge Dimension	***C 1: Remember*** *: Retrieving relevant knowledge from long-term memory - Recognising & Recalling*	***C2;: Understand:*** *Determining the meaning of instructional messages incl. oral, written and graphic communication - Interpreting, exemplifying, classification, summarising, inferring, comparing and explaining.*	***C3 : Apply:*** *Carrying out or using a procedure in a given situation - Executing and Implement-ing*	***C 4: Analyse:*** *Breaking material into its constituent parts and detecting how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose. Differentiating, Organising and Attributing*	***C 5: Evaluate:*** *Making judgements based on criteria and standards - Checking and Critiquing*	***C 6: Create:*** *Putting elements together to from a novel, coherent whole or make an original product - Generating, planning producing*
K 1: Factual knowledge *– the basic elements that students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it.*						
K 2: Conceptual knowledge *– the interrelations among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable to function together.*						
K 3: Procedural knowledge *– How to do something, methods of inquiry and criteria for using skills, techniques and methods. Being able to determine when to use appropriate procedures.*						

Knowledge dimension: The noun providing the basis for the knowledge dimension The knowledge dimension has four categories cutting across the subject matter lines:

Factual knowledge which are the basic elements that a 'student should know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems within it". *Factual knowledge is "what of knowledge"* (Anderson and Krathwohl: 2002, 52-53) Unpacking what makes up factual knowledge, two subtypes are identified: "knowledge as terminology" and "knowledge of specific details and elements".

Conceptual knowledge refers to the interrelationships among the basic elements within "a larger structure that enable(s) them to function together". *Conceptual knowledge, as is factual knowledge, is "what of knowledge"* (Anderson and Krathwohl: 2002, 52-53), deals with knowledge of classification and categories, principles and generalisations, theories, models and structures, schemas and mental models. In this dimension, emphasis is placed on how different bits of information are interconnected and interrelated in a systematic manner and how these parts function together.

*Procedural knowledg*e is the *"knowledge of how"* (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2002, 52-55) adverts to "doing something, methods of enquiry, criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques and methods". Knowledge included in this category can be simple routine or complex problems that need to resolved; a series of steps that need to be taken including skills, subject-specific techniques and methods. Procedural knowledge is specific to a particular subject or discipline, compared to general procedures such as problem-solving.

Metacognitive knowledge includes "knowledge of cognition as well as awareness and knowledge of one's own cognition", including self-knowledge, strategic knowledge, and knowledge about cognitive tasks, as well as appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge. This dimension of knowledge is about developing an awareness with the student about their own thinking and cognitive abilities. (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2002, 55- 60)

Cognitive dimension: the verb forms the basis for the cognitive process dimension. The verb describes the cognitive ability in learning. Anderson and Krathwohl developed six categories for the cognitive processes with 19 specific cognitive processes characterising each category's breadth and depth. (Ibid, 214-5). According to the authors, the categories differ in complexity, with the first category "Remember" being the least complex and "Create" being the highest complexity. The cognitive dimension is thus a hierarchy.

The table is a two-dimensional table enabling the knowledge and cognitive dimensions to correspond in one or more cells of the table. A learning objective can be classified into one or more cell, indicating the knowledge involved but also the level of complexity. (Ibid)

Using Anderson and Krathwohl for RPL

As part of my analysis, I decided to use Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, which Anderson and Krathwohl developed. My first step in the process was to plot the learning outcomes of the FP against the criteria described above. The second process was to plot the learning outcomes of the RPLP against the same criteria.

Before I started with this exercise, I realised that the FP has seven learning units with it associated learning outcomes, while the RPLP has five learning units. In consultation with the academic department, I was told that this was done to reflect and accommodate workflow from the workplace in the portfolio. My first step in the plotting exercise was to identify the learning outcomes from both programmes and identify:

- Identical outcomes in both,
- Similar outcomes in both,
- Outcomes of the RPLP,
- Outcomes only in the FP, and

- Indicating the evidence from Cpt Ruby's portfolio against the learning outcomes.

This exercise provided me with chart/diagramme indicating the knowledge dimension of each learning outcome and the topic covered in the learning outcome. The cognitive dimension/complexity level is also plotted. The diagramme provides a visual presentation of learning outcomes of both programmes, giving a clear summary of where the identical, similar or completely different learning outcomes are within the two dimensions. (attached) The Learning Outcomes of the RPL Programme are indicated in Pink and those of the IR Formal programme in Blue.

A detailed breakdown of this diagramme, is in a separate document, which I would like to use in my conversation with the department. On the last page are the questions I would like to discuss.

Thank you for supporting my studies and the RPL process in the Institution.

Frederika de Graaff

Appendix 6.2: Comparison of formal and RPL programme – Industrial Relations 1

Comparison of the IR 1 learning outcomes from the formal and the RPL programme on the Type and Complexity of Knowledge Taxonomy (T&CKT)						
Complexity of Knowledge (C) / **Type of Knowledge (T)**	***C1:Remember:*** *1.1 Recognising* *1.2 Recalling*	***C 2:Understand:*** *2.1 Interpreting* *2.2 Exemplifying* *2.3 Classification* *2.4 Summarising* *2.5 Inferring* *2.5 Comparing* *2.7 Explaining*	***C 3:Apply:*** *3.1 Executing* *3.2 Implementing*	***C 4:Analyse:*** *4.1 Differentiating,* *4.2 Organising* *4.3 Attributing*	***C 5:Evaluate:*** ***5.1** Checking* *5.2 Critiquing*	***C 6:Create:*** *6.1 Generating* *6.2 Planning* *6.3 Producing*
T1:Factual knowledge: *Aa:Knowledge of terminology* *Ab:Knowledge of specific details and elements*	LO 1.3 Give an overview of the SA labour history (FP) (History) LO:2.3 Correctly identify workplace issues (FP) (Workplace issues)		LO:4.2 Gain a sound knowledge of conditions of service relevant to the sector and industry (FP)	LO 1.3 Give an overview of the SA labour history and its impact on the industrial relations frontier (RPL) (History)		
T2:Conceptual knowledge:	LO 1.1 Discuss how the different role players of the labour	LO:2.1 Understand and apply labour legislation in an organisation (FP)		LO:2.2 Correctly identify and assess the impact of	LO 1.2 Summarise and evaluate the unitarist, pluralist	

Ba:Knowledge of Classification and Categories. *Bb Knowledge of principles and generalisation.* *Bc:Knowledge of theories, models and structure*	relationship interact with each other (FP) (Tripartite) LO 1.1 Discuss how the tripartite role players of the labour relationship interact with one another (RPL) (Tripartite) LO 3.5 Correctly identify workplace issues and possible solutions (FP) (Workplace issues)	LO:3.1 Understand importance of the role played by trade unions in SA (FP) LO 2.1 Discuss how the parties can unite in their common interest. (RPL) (Interests) LO:3.2 Discuss how employers can unite their common interests (FP) (Interests) LO 3.3 Discuss the state as an employer (FP) (State) LO:3.4 Explain how the Government manages "to keep peace" amongst all the role players (FP) (Peace) LO 2.3 Explain how government managers to "Keep the peace" amongst all the role players (RPL) (Peace)		legislation on the organisation (FP) LO:2.5 Think logically about problems in order to solve them cost-effectively (FP)	and Marxist approaches to the labour relationship (RPL) (Approaches) LO 1.2 Summarise and evaluate the various approaches to the labour relationship (FP) (Approaches)	

T3:Procedural knowledge: *Ca:Knowledge of subject-specific skills and algorithms* *Cb:Knowledge of subject-specific techniques and methods* *Cc:Knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures*		LO 3:Identify and describe the factors regulating the interaction between employer, employee and trade unions (RPL) (Relationship) LO 2.2 Discuss the role of the state as a mediator (RPL) (State) LO 5.4 Comprehend the grievance procedure theory and key concepts (FP) (Grievance procedure) LO 4.4 Comprehend the grievance procedure theory and key concepts (RPL) (Grievance procedure)	LO:4.3 Compile both indefinite periods and fixed term contracts of employment (FP) LO:4.1 Apply and ensure compliance with labour legislation (BCOE) (FP) LO 6.2 Implement a disciplinary code and establish a disciplinary procedure (FP) LO 7.3 Implement a fair and lawful procedure (LRA) for retrenchment (FP) (Termination) LO 2.4 Correctly identify workplace issues and possible institutions to seek solutions from (RPL) (Workplace issues)	LO 4.3 Establish workplace communication structures (RPL) (Structures) LO 4.3 Establish workplace communication structures (FP) (Structures)	LO:2.4 Provide correct legal advice to a given situation (FP) LO 4.4 Advise the organisation on the correct time frame and condition for terminating the contract of employment (FP) LO 6.1 Comprehend the discipline process and relevant legislation (LRA) in order to solve problems and provide correct advice (FP) LO 6.3 Identify the principles of discipline and correctly assess the impact of non-compliance on the organisation (FP)	

T4:Metacognitive Knowledge: *Da:Strategic knowledge* *Db:Knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge* *Dc:Self-knowledge*		L O 7.1 Discuss the circumstances which could lead to retrenchment (FP) (Termination)	LO 5. To end the working relationship using the correct policy and procedures and ensuring that the applicable legalisation or bargaining council agreement guidelines are adhered to (RPL) (Termination) LO 4.1 Fulfil the role of labour relations practitioners (RPL) (Practitioner) LO 5.1 Fulfil the role of a labour practitioner (FP) (Practitioner)	LO 4.5 Apply analytical skills to solving employee grievance (RPL) (Problem solving) LO 5.5 Apply analytical skills to solving employee grievance (FP) (Problem solving) LO 7.2 Analyse employment alternatives before implementing retrenchment (FP) (Termination)	LO 5.2 Ensure sound and harmonious communication within the workplace. (FP) (Communication) LO 4.2 Ensure sound and harmonious communication within the workplace (Communication)	

Appendix 7.1: SACAP Competencies and specific outcomes for the professional architectural technologist.

Competency	Professional architectural senior technologist
1. Architectural design	• Ability to do a competent design of a simple multi-story building as well as long-span structures, based on parameters and constraints developed through independent scientific research, which are sensitive to issues of environment and sustainability, as well as cultural issues in a responsible, appropriate and economical manner in an urban, a suburban or rural context. • Ability to appraise and define the above mentioned architectural problem. • Ability to prepare an appropriate concept. • Ability to develop the design to an ultimate and rational conclusion. • Ability to present the design synthesis in a logical manner. •
2. Environmental relationships	• Understanding of the relationship between the natural and the built environment. • Understanding of landscapes and environmental structures in basic terms in an analytical, constructive and critical manner. • Knowledge of the basic spatial, functional and aesthetical aspects appropriate to landscape architecture.
3. Construction technology	• Understanding of construction methods and uses for materials related to simple multi-story building • Understanding of the demands of context, local resources and appropriate technologies that harmonise with the environment, which influence the construction of a building. • Ability to develop durable, cost-effective, climate responsive construction details. • Ability to conduct limited relevant research into construction methods and materials and the appropriate applications.
4. The structure of buildings	• Understanding of the basic structural concepts pertaining to buildings. • Ability to integrate structure and building design.
5. Contextual and urban relations	• Knowledge of critical urban issues. • Awareness of and sensitivity to urban aspects when designing individual buildings.
6. Architectural history, theory and precedent	• Understanding of architectural history and theory. • Understanding of the principles of learning from historical precedent. • Awareness of the built environment and understanding of structures an analytical and constructive, critical manner. • Knowledge of the basic spatial and aesthetical aspects appropriate to architecture. • Understanding of research processes in architectural theories.
7. Building services and	• Understanding of the integration of the various technological aspects relating to services in one cohesive design. • Understanding of the building regulations pertaining to all building services.

related technologies	• Understanding of the following technological aspects and building services: Drainage and water reticulation. Electrical and electronic services and lighting. Communications. Air and gas supply. Heating and cooling. Elevators and escalators. Fire protection and control. Acoustics and sound systems.
8. Contract documentation and administration	• Ability to produce a set of working drawings as part of a set of contract documents of a complex building to acceptable practice standards. • Ability to develop durable, cost-effective, climate-responsive construction systems and details sensitive to the contextual language of the design concept. • Ability to do component and material specification • Understanding of the relevance of applicable appropriate National Building Regulations (NBR) as well as the requirements of the NHBRC. • Ability to respond to local authority approval requirements and procedures.
9. Computer applications	• Understanding of the range of computer technology presently in use in architectural practice and ability to apply it in the execution of work. Computer software to include web browsers and communication programmes, word processing, spreadsheets, data bases, architectural drawing, 3 dimensional modelling, graphic and image editing programmes. • Ability to design, publish and maintain a website. • Knowledge of different computer hardware solutions for networking. • Ability to make informed decisions in the acquisition of networking hardware. • Ability to troubleshoot network problems on a basic level. • Knowledge of operating systems for networked machines, and, in particular, setting up work groups, setting permissions and data security. • Ability to troubleshoot, upgrade and maintain PCs at a basic level
10. Office practice, legal aspects and ethics	• Understand the terminology and basic concepts and principles of architectural practice. • Understand all the regulatory and legal aspects of the profession. • Knowledge of the contents of the various building contracts and the SAIA practice manual. Work integrated learning (WIL) • Understand the terminology and basic concepts and principles of business practice. • Understand the administrative and logistical support systems in a practice. • Understand the basic concepts of business structures and principles, pertaining to architectural profession. • Ability to design a feasible information access and retrieval system. • Ability to design a functional and integrated management system. • Ability to participate meaningfully in the management and administration of a building project. • Ability to set up and run a building project successfully.

Appendix 7.2: AT: Topics for discussion with academics involved in the RPL process.

The following topics will be discussed with academics/RPL facilitators during the RPL process as it takes place at the institution.

Discussion with academic staff:
• Relationship with the workplace and industry. Involvement of alumni, industry and workplace partners in the development of the curriculum • Requirements of the industry professional body if applicable
• Work aspects integrated into teaching and assessment: how are students prepared for the world of work?

• The use of the learning outcomes from the formal programme compared to the RPL programme:
  • The knowledge component of the LO in formal programme and RPL programme
  • Cognitive component of the LO in formal programme and RPL programme
  • Interpretation and changes of the RPL Programme within the context of the RPL process/workplace context
  • Changes to the cognitive component – adjustments to accommodate different cognitive abilities with the same knowledge/what the person knows?
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• RPL assessment and the interpretation of the RPL applicant's work experience: the recognition given to the RPL candidate's knowledge in comparison to the curriculum.
  • Contradictions and contestation regarding the interpretation of what count as knowledge and the academic's interpretation of the situation. The interaction between naturally occurring evidence and the learning outcomes is the space where the link between the learning outcomes and the knowledge from the workplace is made. How did you go about this process?
  • The evidence presented by applicant and interaction with this evidence and linked by the applicant to the leaning outcomes of the subject(s). How was the link made: how and by who? Subjective, tacit knowledge of the academics coming into play?
  • How the principles of assessment such as validity, authenticity, currency and sufficiency (VACS) are used?

F de Graaff – PhD Research with the AT department – a narrative of research done so far.

Some time ago the AT department agreed and permitted me to use the RPL process in the department for my PhD. I decided to focus on Architectural Practice 4 and Architectural Literacy 4, using one student's RPL submission – I'm calling him Nala. I have been working on the documentation from the department and the RPL portfolio Nala submitted. I have written this narrative to inform you what I have done for my research so far.

Topic: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) knowledge claims: How does the nature of a profession, its discipline and curriculum impact on the formal recognition of knowledge gained in the workplace. Case studies at a South African vocational/professional higher educational institution (V/PHEI).

This study focuses on exemptions granted via RPL and not any of the other types of RPL undertaken by the Institution. The reason for focussing on exemptions specifically is to unpack the importance of epistemology, in other words knowledge, in the RPL process. In the RPL Implementation policy from SAQA the following is stated: "RPL is about *what* has been learned, not on the status of the institution or place where the learning was obtained." (RPL Implementation Policy - Amended in 2019; 11)

Aim of the study is to analyse the "what" in RPL. This statement in the Implementation policy has serious implications in the manner in which knowledge is firstly identified, evidence produced and documented and lastly assessed in the RPL process.

Exemptions via RPL are based on the subjects in a qualification - this case the Advanced Diploma in AT. The RPL applicant makes a knowledge claim based on informal and non-formal learning in the workplace. In order to evaluate the "what" that was learned by an RPL applicant in the workplace the Institution uses the learning outcomes of the subject for which exemption is sought, to evaluate the knowledge claim made.

The AT academic department opted to use a portfolio of evidence as assessment tool for AP4 and AL 4. In order to develop the portfolio, a guide was developed to assist the RPL applicant, based on the learning outcomes of these subjects. The RPL applicant then uses the list of learning outcomes to present evidence against the learning outcomes, substantiating (or not) the knowledge claim made The knowledge claim, consisting of informal and non-formal learning is made against formal learning within a formal qualification. This is seen as a linking or bridging process (Cooper et al, 2016) between informal and non-formal learning vs. the formal learning.

In this research I'm attempting to investigate this bridging process, hoping that I can identify the "what" on both sides – the academic and formal programme compared to what a RPL applicant has learned.

I have collected some data and analysed it so far, includes the following:

- Study guide of AP 4 and AL 4 (referred to as the Formal Programme - FP)
- RPL Guide for AT (referred to as the RPL Programme – RPLP)
- Portfolio submitted by the RPL applicant (referred to as Nala)
- Assessment and feedback from the department (Referred to as the Assessor report)

The analysis done so far

- Analysis of the FP study guide, Nala's portfolio and assessment
- Analysis of the Learning Outcomes of both the FP and the RPLP using Bloom's revised taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2002). Various topics where identified through a manual analysis indicating topic (Knowledge dimension) and complexity level (Cognitive dimension)

In preparation for my interview with the department, I included a brief explanation of the Revised Taxonomy and indicated how I used this theory.

Analysis and comparison of Learning Outcomes (LOs) from the FP and RPLP.

The use of Bloom's revised taxonomy

Bloom's revised taxonomy as developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2002) is based on two different aspects a noun and a verb.

- Learning within the revised taxonomy is framed as a subject matter or knowledge – as a noun.
- Describing the action that should accompany the noun is a verb reflecting cognitive processes.

To the creators of the revised taxonomy this combination makes up a Learning Outcome. (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001:12-13)

Anderson and Krathwohl's Revised Taxonomy table

Level of Complexity:*(Anderson & Krathwohl, 2002)*						
Cognitive Dimension / Knowledge Dimension	***C 1:Remember:****Retrieving relevant knowledge from long-term memory - Recognising & Recalling*	***C2;:Understand:*** *Determining the meaning of instructional messages incl. oral, written and graphic communication - Interpreting, exemplifying, classification, summarising, inferring, comparing and explaining.*	***C3 :Apply:*** *Carrying out or using a procedure in a given situation - Executing and Implementing*	***C 4:Analyse:****Breaking material into its constituent parts and detecting how the parts relates to one another and to an overall structure or purpose. Differentiating, Organising and Attributing*	***C 5:Evaluate:****Making judgements based on criteria and standards - Checking and Critiquing*	***C 6:Create:****Putting elements together to from a novel, coherent whole or make an original product - Generating, planning producing*
K 1: Factual knowledge *– the basic elements that students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it.*						
K 2:Conceptual knowledge *– the interrelations among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable to function together.*						
K 3:Procedural knowledge *– How to do something, methods of inquiry and criteria for using skills techniques and methods. Being able to determine when to use appropriate procedures.*						
K 4:Metacognitive Knowledge *– knowledge about cognitive tasks including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge. Using knowledge to appropriately adapt the ways in which the student thinks and operates.*						

Knowledge dimension: The noun providing the basis for the knowledge dimension The knowledge dimension has four categories cutting across the subject matter lines:

Factual knowledge which are the basic elements that a 'student should know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems within it". *Factual knowledge is "what of knowledge"* (Anderson and Krathwohl:2002, 52-53) Unpacking what makes up factual knowledge, two subtypes are identified: "knowledge as terminology" and "knowledge of specific details and elements".

Conceptual knowledge refers to the interrelationships among the basic elements within "a larger structure that enable(s) them to function together". *Conceptual knowledge, as is factual knowledge is "what of knowledge".* (Anderson and Krathwohl:2002, 52-53) deals with knowledge of classification and categories, principles and generalisations, theories, models and structures, schemas and mental models. In this dimension emphasis is placed on how different bits of information are interconnected and interrelated in a systematic manner and how these parts function together.

*Procedural knowledg*e is the *"knowledge of how"* (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2002, 52-55) adverts to "doing something, methods of enquiry, criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques and methods". Knowledge included in this category can be simple routine or complex problems that need to resolved; a series of steps that need to be taken including skills, subject-specific techniques and methods. Procedural knowledge is specific to a particular subject or discipline, compared to general procedures such as problem solving.

Metacognitive knowledge includes "knowledge of cognition as well as awareness and knowledge of one's own cognition". Including self-knowledge, strategic knowledge and knowledge about cognitive tasks including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge. This dimension of knowledge is about the development of an awareness with the student about their own thinking and their own cognitive abilities. (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2002, 55- 60)

Cognitive dimension: the verb forms the basis for the cognitive process dimension. The verb describes the cognitive ability in learning. Anderson and Krathwohl developed six categories for the cognitive processes with 19 specific cognitive processes characterizing each category's breadth and depth. (Ibid, 214-5). According to the authors the categories differ in complexity with the first category 'Remember' the least complex and "Create" being of the highest complexity. The cognitive dimension is thus a hierarchy.

The table is a two-dimensional, enabling the knowledge dimension and the cognitive dimension to correspond in one or more cells of the table. A learning objective can be classified into one or more cell indicating the knowledge involved, but also the level of complexity. (Ibid)

Using Anderson and Krathwohl for RPL

As part of my analysis I decided to use Bloom's Revised taxonomy as Anderson and Krathwohl developed it. My first step in the process was to plot the learning outcomes of the FP against the criteria described above. The second process was to plot the learning outcomes of the RPLP against the same criteria.

Before I started with this exercise I realised that the learning outcomes from the FP compared to the RPL LO was different. My first step in the plotting exercise was identify the learning outcomes from both programmes and identify:

- Identical outcomes in both,
- Similar outcomes in both,
- Outcomes of the RPLP,
- Outcomes only in the FP, and

- Indicating the evidence from Nala's portfolio against the learning outcomes – to be completed.

This exercise provided me with chart/ diagram indicating the knowledge dimension of each learning outcome and the topic covered in the learning outcome. The cognitive dimension/complexity level is also plotted. The diagram provides a visual presentation of learning outcomes of both programmes, giving a clear summary of where the different learning outcomes find themselves within the two dimensions (attached). The Learning Outcomes of the RPL Programme are indicated in Purple and those of the Formal programme in Green.

On the last page are the questions I would like to discuss.

Thank you for supporting my studies and the RPL process in the Institution.

Frederika de Graaff

Appendix 7.3.1: Architectural Practice 4 Matrix

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE 4: Subject matrix for the formal programme and RPL programme</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Prerequisites: None
Credits: NQF 20 credits, NQF level 7</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Formal programme</th><th>RPL Programme</th></tr>
<tr><td>Subject outline:

The Architectural Practice 4 subject aims to reinforce students' work-based learning in architectural practice, and to prepare them for registration as professional senior architectural technologists. It broadly covers conduct, contract and communication.

Conduct includes professionalism and ethics, alternative architectural practice (including social design), professional bodies, professional registration and working with other built environment professionals, as well as office administration and systems, and professional development, for example self-regulation and metacognition. Content related to contract covers documentation and specification; and communication includes various forms of written, verbal and graphic (two dimensional, three dimensional, physical and digital) communication necessary to practice architecture.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in this subject are applied in Architectural Design 4 and Architectural Technology 4.</td><td>Learning outcomes and criteria

Overall Aim 1:Define and explain the management of a building project and the administration of a building contract through sound administrative and architectural practices and procedures:
1.1 Appraise and evaluate the principles and application of office administration for a specific real-life architectural practice.
1.2 Explain the principles and application of building project management.
1.3 Interpret and appraise problems arising from contract administration problems and suggest solutions.
1.4 Communicate appropriately and clearly with the various role players in professional architectural practice.

Overall aim 2:Describe and defend the social responsibility role of an architectural professional in broader society.
2.1 Define and explain the concept of alternative practice.
2.2 Identify opportunities for the architectural profession to become involved in social design projects.

Exam: Preparation for the Professional Practice Exam (PPE)</td><td>RPL Applicant to demonstrate Pre-requisite for RPL
Skill and experience in practice, professional registration at least at the level of architectural technologist

Learning outcomes
1.1 Knowledge of professional conduct, contract and communication, alternative architectural practice (including social design), professional bodies, professional registration and working with other built environment professionals, as well as office administration and systems, and professional development, for example self-regulation and metacognition attitude of professionalism and ethics.
1.2 knowledge of the contract: documentation and specification; and communication includes various forms of written, verbal and graphic (two dimensional, three dimensional, physical and digital) communication necessary to practice architecture.</td></tr>
</table>

		1.3 Attitude to responsibly, professionally, ethically practice architecture. 1.4 Attitude of professionalism and ethics. **Content of RPL Portfolio of evidence**'s (including reference letters), professional registration, work and study portfolio, CPD and other short courses, sketchbook.

Appendix 7.3.2: Architectural Practice 4:Comparison between formal programme and RPL programme - of the Types and Complexity of Knowledge

Architectural Practice 4: Comparison between formal programme and RPL programme - on the Types and Complexity of Knowledge Taxonomy						
Complexity of Knowledge(C) / **Types of Knowledge (T)**	***C 1: Remember:*** *1.1 Recognising* *1.2 Recalling*	***C 2: Understand:*** *2.1 Interpreting* *2.2 Exemplifying* *2.3 Classification* *2.4 Summarising* *2.5 Inferring* *2.5 Comparing* *2.7 Explaining*	***C 3: Apply:*** *3.1 Executing* *3.2 Implementing*	***C 4: Analyse:*** *4.1 Differentiating* *4.2 Organising* *4.3 Attributing*	***C 5: Evaluate:*** ***5.1** Checking* *5.2 Critiquing*	***C 6: Create:*** *6.1 Generating* *6.2 Planning* *6.3 Producing*
T1 : Factual knowledge:	No Learning outcomes from either the formal or the RPL programme could be coded to be of the functional dimension in AP 4.					

T2: Conceptual knowledge: *Ba: Knowledge of Classification and Categories.* *Bb Knowledge of principles and generalisation.* *Bc: Knowledge of theories, models and structures.*		*2.1 (AP4 FP) Define and explain the concept of alternative practice* ***(Alternative architectural practice))***	2.2: (AP4 FP) Identify opportunities for the architectural profession to become involved in social design projects (**social awareness)** 1.2 (AP4 RPL) [31] (a) Knowledge of professional conduct, contract and communication **(Professional Development)**; and 1.2 (AP4 RPL) (c) professional development, for example self-regulation and metacognition attitude of professionalism and ethics. **(Professional development)**		*1.4 (AP4 RPL): Attitude of professionalism and ethics* **(Ethics)**	

[31] **1.2 (AP 4 RPL):** Knowledge of professional conduct, contract and communication, alternative architectural practice (including social design), and professional development, for example self-regulation and metacognitive attitude of professionalism and ethics. Due to the complexity of the LO, it was placed inT2, C3 and T4, C6. Soft skills and lifelong learning are also referred to, which were not placed on the Taxonomy.

T3: Procedural knowledge: *Ca: Knowledge of subject-specific skills and algorithms* *Cb: Knowledge of subject-specific techniques and methods* *Cc: Knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures*	***No LOs could be coded because no LOs consisted of this low level of complexity***	*1.2 (AP4 FP): Explain the principles and application of building project management* ***(Building regulations and Project management)***	*1.4 (AP 4 FP): Communicate appropriately and clearly with the various role players in professional architectural practice* ***(Communication)***		*1.3 (AP4 FP): Interpret and appraise problems arising from contract administration problems and suggest solutions* ***(Problem solving)***	
T4: Metacognitive Knowledge: *Da: Strategic knowledge* *Db: knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge* *Dc: Self-knowledge*			1.1 (AP4 RPL): [32] (a) Working with other built environment professionals, as well as office administration and systems knowledge of the contract: documentation and specification **(Office Administration)**		1.3 (AP4 RPL): Attitude to responsibly, professionally, ethically practice architecture **(Ethics)** *1.1 (AP 4 FP): Appraise and evaluate the principles and application of office administration for a specific real-life architectural practice* ***(Professional Practice)***	1.2 (AP4 RPL): (b) Alternative architectural practice (including social design **(Alternative Architectural Practice)** 1.1 (AP4 RPL) (C) and communication includes various forms of written, verbal and graphic (two dimensional, three dimensional, physical and digital) communication necessary to practice architecture **(Design fundamentals)**

[32] **LO 1.1 (AP 4 RPL)** Knowledge of professional bodies, professional registration and working with other built environment professionals, as well as office administration and systems. Knowledge of the contract: documentation and specification; and communication including various forms of written, verbal and graphic (two dimensional, three dimensional, physical and digital) communication necessary to practice architecture. Due to different educational matter in this LO , it was allocated to T3, C3 and T4, C3. Knowledge of professional bodies was not plotted, because Nala is a member of SACAP.

Appendix 7.4.1: Architectural Literacy matrix

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">ARCHITECTURAL LITERACY 4 :Matrix for the formal programme and RPL programme</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Prerequisites: None Credits:10 Credits, NQF level 7</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Formal programme</td><td>RPL Programme</td></tr>
<tr><td>Subject outline: Architectural Literacy 4 stimulates intellectual, reflective and analytical skills, to formulate coherent architectural arguments, as well as to develop design methodologies to solve architectural challenges, and to present these in a scholarly way.

It comprises two main knowledge areas, namely discourse and research. Discourse fosters understanding of current and past architectural philosophies, movements and theories in relation to the South African context. It covers historical references and precedent, design informants, principles and process, and design vocabulary to engage in design conversation. Research covers research design and methodology, and the formulation of logical and systematic argumentation.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in this subject are applied in Architectural Design 4 and Architectural Technology 4.</td><td>Overall Aim 1:Using a variety of media, communicate own ideas, in well-formed arguments, as a professional senior architectural technologist
1.1 Prepare and present advanced graphic three dimensional computer work in written, oral, digital, and graphic format as appropriate to the required documentation.
1.2 Communicate appropriately and clearly with the various role players in professional architectural practice.
Overall Aim 2:Research, critically appraise, synthesise and prioritise technological, contextual, spatial, social and environmental conditions that influence the design of an architectural project.
2.1 Critically appraise contemporary architectural theories in relation to the South African context.
2.2 Identify, analyse and critically discuss selected, relevant precedent studies.
2.3 Identify and explain the environmental, economic and social aspects to be considered in the design of a building.
2.4 Develop well-formed arguments to complex architectural problem and present this research as an academic paper.
2.5 Identify and explain a research design and methodology that is appropriate to the problem under investigation and justify the decision taken.</td><td>Demonstrate:
1.1 Skill (intellectual, reflective and analytical) to formulate coherent architectural arguments, and to develop design methodologies to solve architectural challenges, and to present these in a scholarly way.
1.2 Knowledge of discourse: current and past architectural philosophies, movements and theories (in South African context), historical references and precedent, design informants, principles and process, and design vocabulary.
1.3 Skill to engage in design conversation.
1.4 Knowledge of research: research design and methodology.
1.5 Skill to formulate a logical and systematic argument.
1.6 Attitude to responsibly, professionally, ethically do research and address problems.

Examples’, work and study portfolio, reading list, MOOCs, CPD and other short courses, sketchbook.</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix 7.4.2: Architectural Literacy 4: Matrix coded from the formal programme and RPL programme

Architectural Literacy 4 : Matrix coded from the formal programme and RPL programme						
Complexity of Knowledge (C) Types of Knowledge (T)	***C 1: Remember:*** *1.1 Recognising* *1.2 Recalling*	***C 2: Understand:*** *2.1 Interpreting* *2.2 Exemplifying* *2.3 Classification* *2.4 Summarising* *2.5 Inferring* *2.5 Comparing* *2.7 Explaining.*	***C 3: Apply:*** *3.1 Executing* *3.2 Implementing*	***C 4: Analyse:*** *4.1 Differentiating* *4.2 Organising* *4.3 Attributing*	***C 5: Evaluate*** ***5.1** Checking* *5.2 Critiquing*	***C 6: Create:*** *6.1 Generating* *6.2 Planning* *6.3 Producing*
T 1 : Factual knowledge:	No Learning outcomes from either the formal or the RPL programme could be coded to the factual dimension in AL 4.					
T 2: Conceptual knowledge: *Ba: Knowledge of classification and categories.* *Bb Knowledge of principles and generalisation.* *Bc: Knowledge of theories, models and structures.*		*2.3 (AL4 – FP): Identify and explain the environmental, economic and social aspects to be considered in the design of a building* ***(Environment)***		1.3 (AL4 – RPL) Skill to engage in design conversation **(Design and Vocabulary)** 1.4 (AL4 – RPL) Knowledge of research: research design and methodology **(Methodology)** 1.5 (AL4 – RPL) Skill to formulate a logical and systematic argument **(Communication)**	*2.1 (AL4 – FP): Identify, analyse and critically discuss selected, relevant precedent studies* ***(Precedent studies)***	1.2 (AL4 – RPL) (a) Knowledge of discourse: current and past architectural philosophies, movements and theories (in South African context), historical references and precedent **(History)** (b) Design informants, principles and process, and design vocabulary **(Design and Vocabulary)**

Complexity of Knowledge (C) / Types of Knowledge (T)	***C 1: Remember:*** *1.1 Recognising* *1.2 Recalling*	***C 2: Understand:*** *2.1 Interpreting* *2.2 Exemplifying* *2.3 Classification* *2.4 Summarising* *2.5 Inferring* *2.5 Comparing* *2.7 Explaining.*	***C 3: Apply:*** *3.1 Executing* *3.2 Implementing*	***C 4: Analyse:*** *4.1 Differentiating* *4.2 Organising* *4.3 Attributing*	***C 5: Evaluate*** ***5.1*** *Checking* *5.2 Critiquing*	***C 6: Create:*** *6.1 Generating* *6.2 Planning* *6.3 Producing*
T 3: Procedural knowledge: *Ca: Knowledge of subject – specific skills and algorithms,* *Cb: Knowledge of subject – specific techniques and methods* *Cc: Knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures*			*1.2 (AL4 – FP): Communicate appropriately and clearly with the various role players in professional architectural practice* ***(Communication)***			
T 4: Metacognitive Knowledge*:* *Da: Strategic knowledge* *Db: Knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge* *Dc: Self – knowledge*	***No LOs werecould be coded because no LOs consisted of this low level of complexity***	*2.5 (AL4 – FP): Identify and explain a research design and methodology that is appropriate to the problem under investigation and justify the decision taken* ***(Research)***			1.6 (AL4 – RPL) Attitude to responsibly, professionally, and ethically do research and address problems **(Research)** *2.2 (AL4 – FP) Identify, analyse and critically discuss selected relevant precedent studies.*	*1.1 (AL4-FP) Prepare and present advanced graphic three – dimensional computer work in written, oral, digital, and graphic format as appropriate to the required documentation* ***(Computer usage for communication)*** *2.4 (AL4 – FP) Develop well-formed arguments to complex architectural problem[s] and present this research as an academic paper* ***(Design)*** 1.1 (AL4 – RPL) Skill (intellectual, reflective and analytical) to formulate coherent architectural arguments, and to develop design methodologies to solve architectural challenges, and to present these in a scholarly way **(Design)**

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26 October 2016

Ms Frederika de Graaff
(DGRFRE001) PhD
Programme

University of Cape Town

Dear Ms de Graaff,

RE: Ethical Clearance for Research Project

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance has been granted by the School of Education Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your PhD research project entitled: 'Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Knowledge Claims: Exploring the Similarities and Diversity between different contexts and contents. Case studies at a Vocational/Professional Higher Educational Institution'.

I wish you all the best with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor Carolyn McKinney

Chair, School of Education Research Ethics Committee

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Department	Adult Education
Supervisor/s	A/Prof Linda Cooper
Co-Supervisor	N/A
Thesis Title	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Knowledge Claims: How can different types of knowledge be identified, documented and assessed in RPL applications of RPL credits. Comparison of two case studies at a South African vocational/professional higher educational institution (V/PHEI).

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