

## New Zealand Case Study: World of Work

### Assessment and recognition of workplace learning

#### Background

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) promotes the recognition and assessment of learning in the workplace. The NZQF is responsible for maintaining the mechanisms for the recognition of the outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The NZQF integrates:

- Formal learning, which is deliberate and assessed through recognised tertiary education and training courses.
- Non-formal learning experiences, which occur on-the-job or through structured programmes, but do not lead to qualifications. Informal learning, which is incidental and occurs through life experience.

The formal learning that is assessed on the job leads to recognised qualifications. If assessment can occur for non-formal and informal learning, this can also lead towards a qualification.

#### Main activities

Validation occurs through expert practitioners following the process of *profiling*, *facilitation* and *assessment* and *awarding of credit*.

- Within *profiling*, candidates have an interview to discuss their experiences, understandings, and goals. This is to ensure that the candidate is suitable for the RPL process and to help the candidate to consciously match their learning from experience to the components of qualifications.
- *Facilitation* is the step where each candidate is supported to prepare for the assessment. Expert facilitators enable each candidate to express their understandings of their knowledge, skills and competences appropriately and to understand the requirements of the components of the qualification. The facilitators take a holistic approach to ensure all of a candidate's knowledge, skills and competences are valued, explored and expressed. Facilitation can be on an individual basis or including group work.
- *Assessment* occurs when assessors use outcomes of qualifications listed on the NZQF and learning outcomes of standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards to measure and validate the informal learning by expert facilitators.
- *Credit is awarded* for recorded success, whether or not it forms part or all of a complete qualification. Learners should be able to carry the credit and transfer it across sectors.

A key element of RPL is the ability to make consistent judgements about qualification outcomes. The NZQF focuses on three approaches to consistency: establishing the expected outcomes of qualifications, then assessing the achievement against criteria, and then moderating the assessment.

Recognition practices are inherent in the NZQF through the qualification outcome statements, which provide learners and prospective employers with an idea of what the qualification holder should have achieved. The outcome statements describe what skills a learner can demonstrate, their understanding of the subject and how they can apply the knowledge gained upon completion of a qualification.

Providers can determine specific recognition practices in collaboration with the learner as long as they comply with the overall *Supporting Learning Pathways: Credit recognition and transfer policy* and meet assessment and qualification requirements.

## **Outcomes and ways forward**

RPL procedures have benefited employers for purposes of validation of employment skills. They have also helped groups to enter further education and training. In the case of policy changes in professional qualifications, for example, when the qualification requirements for early childhood education teachers changes, those without a tertiary qualification are able to be assessed against existing teaching competences and experience.

The costs of these activities are dependent on the level of assessment required and are met both by the individual and the TEOs or education providers involved.

Some of the challenges to be addressed in the future relate to the lack of awareness and understanding of the RPL process by individuals, employers, and training providers; the costs associated with RPL, and the time taken to collect and collate evidence.

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