Reliability of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Assessments for Teaching Practice Courses in Open Distance Electronic Learning (ODeL)

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ABSTRACT If students acquire experience of teaching without a teaching qualification they are usually allowed to apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL) for up to 50% of a formal teacher education qualification. Amongst others they may apply for RPL for the practical teaching aspects of such a qualification, in this study the Post-graduate Certificate in Education [PGCE] at the University of South Africa (UNISA). In the quest for quality assurance of RPL assessments, the objective of the research for this paper was to try and determine how reliable the RPL assessments are for the practical teaching courses. Documentary evidence in the form of RPL applications, mentor assessments and lecturer assessments were studied and compared to see if an accurate assessment is possible and which of these assessment methods (or a combination of these) is most reliable or accurate. Findings indicated that assessment of portfolios and lecturer assessments are well aligned while mentor assessments are quite often unrealistically high. It was further found that in ODeL, where the types of RPL assessments are often limited by cost and distance, portfolios do offer a reliable source of assessment evidence for teaching practice modules.