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The Legitimation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as Redress Mechanism for Work Spaces in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Narrative of a Black Master Builder

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ABSTRACT Prior to the first democratic elections in 1994, historically disadvantaged populations (blacks) in South Africa were subjected to Eurocentric learning content that discriminated against any validation of examples relevant to their lives. Invariably, the site and practitioners in prior learning processes are located in work spaces which are often outside formal institutions. RPL as endorsed by post-Apartheid legislation and structures, such as the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the National Qualifications Framework (NRF) recognise knowledge and skills learnt from experiences through informal settings. In this paper, the narrative of a black master builder is presented as a case for RPL. Our contention is that learning experiences acquired from work spaces such as the building industry, are equally legitimate, so too are their 'knowers'. Transformative redress mechanisms should recognise diverse 'ways of knowing' and the assessment of quality and enskilment. Our case, reflected in narrative form, will indicate the quality and social benefit of workspaces, historically undervalued and unaccredited due to what SAQA (1995) terms lack of 'certification' rather than merit.