

Recognition Of Prior Learning (RPL) As A Specialised Pedagogy: Inclusion And Degree Apprenticeships

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Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a specialised pedagogy: inclusion and Degree Apprenticeships. Helen Pokorny, University Campus St Albans. It is interesting to note how the profile of RPL waxes and wanes with initiatives to bring together the world of work and academia. In 2007, HEFCE declared APEL [RPL] a national priority area in the context of provision developed with employers and employer bodies (Kewin et al., 2011). Originally, APEL [RPL] was a key feature of Foundation Degree frameworks. However, to date it remains a marginal practice in Higher Education even though the most efficient and effective route through Higher Education for a large proportion of adult learners would be one that recognises the considerable skills, knowledge and expertise gained through work. Perhaps as Bravenboer (2019) commented ‘...the incentive of meeting the ESFA apprenticeship funding rules will encourage universities to ensure that the entitlement to RPL is placed more centre stage.’

Introducing an individualised process into a system of mass higher education is problematic and RPL has traditionally been developed as an individualistic assessment process. More recently there has been a move to conceptualise RPL as a specialised pedagogy (Cooper et al., 2017; Brenner et al., 2021). Such a conceptualisation can support access to fast-track Degree Apprenticeships by cohorts of experienced learners seeking career development opportunities. It is also a move away from a tick box RPL exercise to that of academic judgements made within a pedagogical framework.

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This presentation discusses how a Degree Apprenticeship open to cohorts of mature learners, provides a specialised pedagogy that not only puts RPL centre stage but also creates a community of learners. For mature learners with complex lives Apprenticeships pose significant potential risks of time and self-esteem. Key to promoting successful engagement and progression has been the strong sense of learner identity gained through the recognition participants get from others as well as from assessors through this process (Pokorny and Fox, 2019).

Keywords: degree apprenticeships, recognition of prior learning (RPL), fast-track apprenticeships, mature learners