

## Does RPL match academic learning?



“Business internationally has criticised the recognition of prior learning (RPL) system by stating that those people who go through an RPL process after 5 year’s working experience are not as good as those who acquire it formally – they just didn’t cut it, states Mark Orpen, CEO of Institute of People Development (IPD)

“They speak of something missing – ‘a graduateness’. Graduates are able to produce work outputs and solve problems by reflecting and referencing the theories, models and techniques they were taught. RPL candidates, by contrast only had the trial and error method to fall back on and this included both good and bad habits.

In addressing this major concern, IPD has gone out on a limb and took on this task to prove it could be done differently and in fact produce ‘graduates’. More controversially, it decided to test this with vocational educators and workplace trainers, who themselves have been heavily under the spotlight of transformation of education and training.

A sample of 60 participants towards certificates and diplomas in OD ETD practices at Level 4 and 5 were identified and a rigorous RPL process initiated. The sample showed most participants had in excess of 10 years experience in industry training but more than 90% lacked an understanding and experience in Outcomes Based Education (OBE)

Furthermore, more than 95% lacked the ‘professionalism’ required. Given an educational task, they took it, implemented it, and got paid. Few reviewed the work in relation to curriculum requirements, customising the learning programme to context of participants or integrating workplace specific outputs to be accredited learning programme outcomes.

IPD developed a heavily supported best practices model for the RPL that both the accrediting body, the ETDQA (serving the industry) and the Council for Higher Education (serving education) can be proud of.

“The company is now poised to fastrack this model to serve the private and public FET College Sector by ‘professionally’ qualifying vocational educators and workplace trainers so that education can be made more responsive to local economic requirements,” concludes Orpen.

Started in February 2000, IPD has established itself as a market leader in the provision of Education & Training Development (ETD best practices. This has enabled thousands of Skills Development Facilitators (SDFs) and hundreds of ETD provider companies that have gone through IPD’s rigorous training to render an invaluable service to the public and private sectors in South Africa, through the provision of skilled occupation directed education, training and development practices to further the goals of the NSDS.