"Innovating Education and Social Science for a Sustainable Future"

5th July 2025

**Faculty of Education
Thaksin University
ISSN 1905-6923**

"Innovating Education and Social Science for a Sustainable Future"
5th July. 2025

Faculty of Education
Thaksin University

PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that we welcome all participants to the International Conference on "Innovating Education and Social Science for a Sustainable Future", held on 5th July 2025 at the Faculty of Education, Thaksin University, Thailand.

This conference serves as a platform for scholars, researchers, educators, and practitioners from diverse disciplines to share knowledge, exchange innovative ideas, and explore practical solutions in the fields of education and social sciences. In today's rapidly changing world, education and social development are crucial foundations for building a sustainable future. By fostering collaboration across cultures and academic perspectives, this event aims to generate new insights that can guide both policy and practice.

The Faculty of Education, Thaksin University, is committed to advancing research and innovation that address the challenges of our time. Through this conference, we hope to inspire meaningful dialogue, encourage the development of innovative models, and strengthen international cooperation.

On behalf of the organizing committee, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all keynote speakers, presenters, participants, and supporters whose contributions make this conference possible. We are confident that the discussions and ideas exchanged here will inspire future research, collaboration, and action towards achieving a more sustainable world.

We wish you all a successful and enriching conference experience.

Faculty of Education
Thaksin University
5th July 2025

COMMITTEES AND PEER REVIEWERS

Recognition of Prior Learning in Thailand: Toward an Inclusive Framework for Lifelong Learning

Natcha Mahapoonyanont, Wipada Phinla*, Wipapan Phinla, Nuttapong Songsang

Faculty of Education, Thaksin University, Thailand

Email: proud_phin@outlook.com (Corresponding author)

Abstract

In the face of rapid technological change and evolving labor demands, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning—known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is increasingly vital for equitable, sustainable development. This study examines the current state of RPL in Thailand, highlighting its potential role in expanding access to education and employment, especially for marginalized groups.

Through a documentary research approach, the study analyzes RPL-related laws, policies, and institutional frameworks in Thailand, particularly those led by the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE). It also draws comparative insights from advanced RPL systems in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada to identify effective practices adaptable to the Thai context.

Findings reveal key challenges in Thailand's RPL system, including fragmented implementation, lack of standard assessment criteria, limited assessor training, weak alignment with the Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF), and low public awareness—issues that disproportionately affect informal workers, rural populations, and ethnic minorities.

By contrast, countries like Australia and New Zealand offer models of integrated RPL systems grounded in national qualification frameworks, centralized coordination, and digital platforms. These systems ensure transparency, quality assurance, and alignment with labor markets.

In response, the study proposes a four-pillar framework to enhance RPL in Thailand: (1) centralized policy governance; (2) standardized, competency-based assessments; (3) institutional and human capacity building; and (4) inclusive outreach supported by digital tools. These reforms aim to make RPL a powerful driver of lifelong learning and social equity in line with SDG 4 targets.

Keywords: Recognition of Prior Learning, Lifelong Learning, Thailand, Education Policy, Inclusive Education, Comparative Education, Skills Recognition

Introduction
In the context of accelerating global changes driven by technological innovation, demographic shifts, and labor market transformation, lifelong learning has become a cornerstone of sustainable human development and inclusive economic growth. Societies worldwide are increasingly recognizing that education should not be confined to the early stages of life but must be accessible across the lifespan to accommodate evolving individual, societal, and economic needs (European Commission, 2020; UNESCO, 2016). Within this paradigm, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has emerged as a key mechanism that facilitates lifelong learning by validating individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired outside formal education systems. These include learning gained through work experience, informal training, volunteerism, and community-based activities. RPL helps integrate such learning into formal education and qualification pathways, enabling individuals to obtain academic credit or certification without redundant re-learning (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2015; OECD, 2019).

Globally, RPL is not only a pedagogical tool but also a social policy instrument that fosters educational equity, labor mobility, and workforce development. By recognizing the diverse ways in which people learn and acquire expertise—particularly adults, informal workers, and displaced populations—RPL reduces structural inequalities embedded in traditional education systems (Andersson & Harris, 2006). It also serves economic imperatives by supporting human capital development, improving employability, and reducing skills mismatches in dynamic labor markets (Singh, 2015). In countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, RPL has been effectively institutionalized as a bridge between informal and formal learning, with strong links to national qualifications frameworks and sectoral training strategies.

For middle-income countries such as Thailand, where a substantial proportion of the workforce lacks formal qualifications despite possessing occupational skills, RPL offers a strategic opportunity to promote educational inclusion and support national development. Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plan emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning and upskilling in the context of aging demographics, technological disruption, and the need for a resilient, knowledge-based economy (NESDC, 2021). In line with this vision, the country has introduced several RPL-related policies and frameworks, including the development of a Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF), expansion of non-formal and informal education (NFIE) under the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), and collaboration with vocational institutions to create assessment-based certifications for workers (Office of the Education Council, 2019).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of RPL in Thailand remains limited due to several structural and operational challenges. First, although legal and policy provisions acknowledge RPL, their implementation is fragmented and lacks integration across institutions and ministries. There is no unified national strategy to guide or monitor RPL practices across sectors. Second, there is low public awareness of RPL pathways, especially among informal workers, who represent a large share of the Thai labor force. Third, standardized procedures for assessment and credit transfer are underdeveloped, making it difficult to ensure consistent and credible recognition across institutions and regions (Werquin, 2010; Choi & Kim, 2018). Fourth, limited professional development for RPL assessors, combined with inadequate funding and institutional support, undermines the quality and scalability of RPL initiatives. These systemic issues are compounded by cultural and social factors, such as the stigmatization of non-formal education and the privilege of traditional degrees, which reduce the perceived value of RPL certifications (Saengpassa, 2020).

Importantly, these challenges disproportionately affect marginalized populations—including rural learners, ethnic minorities, women in informal employment, and older adults—who

stand to benefit most from accessible, flexible education pathways. Without deliberate efforts to design inclusive policies and support systems, RPL in Thailand risks reinforcing existing educational and social inequalities rather than addressing them. This underscores the need for a learner-centered and equity-driven RPL framework that not only recognizes diverse learning experiences but also provides real pathways to formal qualifications, career advancement, and lifelong learning.

To address these gaps, this study seeks to examine the current state of RPL in Thailand and to identify pathways for developing a more coherent and inclusive system. Drawing on a documentary research approach, the study analyzes Thai national policy documents, institutional reports, and related literature on RPL practice. It also undertakes a comparative analysis of RPL systems in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada countries recognized for their mature, standardized, and inclusive RPL mechanisms. These international cases are selected not only for their institutional maturity but also for their relevance to Thailand in terms of economic structure, educational reform priorities, and commitments to lifelong learning.

The comparative component serves two purposes: first, to identify transferable best practices in areas such as policy design, institutional alignment, assessment methodologies, and stakeholder engagement; and second, to highlight contextual adaptations necessary for Thailand, given its unique socio-cultural and institutional environment. By critically analyzing both local and international dimensions, this study contributes to the growing discourse on how developing countries can build sustainable and inclusive learning ecosystems in the 21st century.

The ultimate objective is to provide evidence-based recommendations for Thai policymakers, educators, and practitioners aimed at strengthening RPL implementation as part of a broader strategy for lifelong learning and skills development. The paper advocates for the establishment of a national RPL framework that includes standardized assessment protocols, professional training for assessors, digital infrastructure for learner engagement, and targeted outreach for marginalized groups. Such a framework would not only elevate the status of non-formal learning but also ensure that Thailand's education system becomes more flexible, inclusive, and responsive to the realities of its population.

In doing so, the study aligns with global commitments such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. It also echoes the principles outlined in the UNESCO Education 2030 Agenda, which emphasizes recognition of diverse learning pathways as essential for achieving sustainable development and social cohesion.

Literature Review

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has increasingly been recognized as a vital component of lifelong learning systems globally. It represents a mechanism that allows individuals to gain formal recognition for competencies acquired outside the traditional education system—whether through work experience, community service, informal training, or self-directed learning (UNESCO, 2012; Werquin, 2010). As such, RPL serves not only to widen participation in formal education and credentialing but also to improve labor market efficiency, foster personal and professional mobility, and reduce educational inequality (Singh, 2015; Andersson & Harris, 2006).

RPL is particularly relevant in contexts where a significant proportion of the population engages in informal economic activity or has limited access to formal education. In these settings, traditional credentials often fail to reflect the real-world competencies held by individuals, which can inhibit their access to higher education and skilled employment

opportunities (OECD, 2019). RPL thus functions as a bridge—connecting lifelong learning, employability, and social inclusion.

Global Perspectives on RPL

Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have emerged as international leaders in the institutionalization of RPL. These nations have successfully embedded RPL within their national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and established comprehensive policies that ensure their alignment with education, training, and employment systems.

In Australia, RPL is a mandated component of the vocational education and training (VET) sector and is firmly integrated into the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). This system permits learners to obtain nationally recognized qualifications based on demonstrated workplace competencies, with clear guidelines issued by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and other regulatory bodies (Australian Government, 2015). RPL processes in Australia often involve detailed portfolio submissions, practical demonstrations, and structured interviews, assessed by certified practitioners who follow national competency standards. This has enhanced the credibility of RPL as a viable alternative to traditional education pathways, particularly for adult learners, migrants, and workers seeking upskilling or reskilling (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011).

In New Zealand, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) governs RPL practices under the Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) model. This model emphasizes learner agency, transparency, and the centrality of industry collaboration in the assessment process (NZQA, 2020). Learners may apply for credit recognition toward formal qualifications by demonstrating their current competencies, often accumulated through employment or community engagement. The NZQA provides tools and guidance for educational institutions and industry partners to ensure consistency and validity in RPL assessment. Additionally, the integration of RPL into the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) allows seamless credit transfer across institutions and enhances the lifelong learning trajectory for citizens (Haworth, 2017).

Canada offers a slightly more decentralized approach, with RPL policies and practices varying across provinces. Nonetheless, provinces like British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec have advanced RPL implementation, particularly within immigration policy, adult education, and workforce development (Andersson, Fejes, & Sandberg, 2013). In Quebec, for instance, the Recognition of Acquired Competencies (RAC) framework has been embedded in public vocational institutions, enabling adult learners and skilled immigrants to receive recognition for prior learning in their native language or through culturally sensitive assessment processes (CICan, 2017). Moreover, the Canadian Council on Learning has identified RPL as a key component in ensuring inclusive access to lifelong learning and addressing skill shortages in key sectors.

These international systems share several core features that contribute to their effectiveness:

- The presence of a clear and unified policy framework, often linked to national qualifications structures.
- The use of standardized assessment methodologies, including evidence-based portfolio assessments and third-party validation.
- Strong institutional and governmental support, including funding mechanisms and professional training for assessors.
- Active engagement with employers and industry, ensuring the relevance of recognized competencies to labor market demands (Harris, 2014; UNESCO UIL, 2015).

RPL as a Tool for Social Inclusion and Equity
RPL is also closely linked to goals of social justice and equity in education. According to Singh (2015), RPL recognizes the often "invisible" learning that takes place in informal environments, which is especially important for populations who have been historically excluded from formal education—such as women, migrants, Indigenous communities, and people with disabilities. By acknowledging learning regardless of where or how it was acquired, RPL disrupts traditional hierarchies of knowledge and supports the democratization of education.

In Australia and Canada, RPL has been employed specifically to support the educational inclusion of immigrant populations and Indigenous learners. For example, Indigenous Australians and First Nations communities in Canada have benefited from culturally responsive RPL programs that respect community knowledge systems and validate traditional skills (Zubrick et al., 2006; CICan, 2017). Such initiatives demonstrate the transformative potential of RPL when grounded in principles of cultural respect and learner empowerment. Moreover, RPL contributes to labor market flexibility by enabling mid-career workers to access upskilling pathways without repeating content they have already mastered. This supports not only individual career advancement but also addresses broader national goals for workforce development and productivity (OECD, 2019; UNESCO UIL, 2022).

Gaps in Literature and Implications for Thailand
Despite the growing body of literature on RPL, gaps remain in understanding how to adapt international models to national contexts, particularly in developing or middle-income countries like Thailand. Much of the existing research focuses on high-income countries with well-developed educational infrastructure and digital systems. There is limited empirical research on how RPL can be designed to accommodate informal labor sectors, rural populations, and multilingual or multicultural learners in Southeast Asian contexts (Chansri & Saejong, 2018; Niamhom, 2021).

Thailand's legal recognition of RPL within its National Education Act (1999) and its support through the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) mark significant steps toward building a national RPL system. However, as later sections of this paper will argue, Thailand's RPL policies remain largely under-implemented and require more comprehensive integration into qualifications frameworks, quality assurance systems, and labor market strategies.

Recognition of Prior Learning in the Context of Thailand
Thailand has taken several significant policy-level steps to institutionalize Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a part of its broader national strategy for promoting lifelong learning. The conceptual foundation for RPL in Thailand is embedded in the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and its subsequent amendments, which formally recognize non-formal and informal education as equivalent in value to formal learning. These legal provisions were designed to ensure that Thai citizens, regardless of age, social class, or prior educational attainment, can access educational and vocational opportunities throughout their lives (Office of the Education Council, 2019).

In alignment with these legislative commitments, various government agencies, most notably the Ministry of Education, the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), and the Office of the Education Council (OEC) have worked to develop mechanisms for the assessment, validation, and certification of prior learning. These efforts include the integration of RPL into adult education programs, vocational training systems, and selected higher education institutions. The goal is to bridge informal skills and knowledge, often accumulated

through work experience, community engagement, or self-directed learning, with formal education and labor market recognition.

From a policy perspective, Thailand's support for RPL aligns with global frameworks such as UNESCO's Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasize inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015). Additionally, Thailand's 20-Year National Strategy (2018–2037) and the National Economic and Social Development Plan underscore the role of human capital development and skill recognition as critical components of national competitiveness and social cohesion.

Implementation of Gaps and Structural Barriers

Despite the progressive legal and policy framework, empirical evidence indicates that Thailand's RPL ecosystem faces substantial challenges in implementation and operationalization. A growing body of research identifies several systemic limitations that have hindered the effectiveness and scalability of RPL programs across the country.

One of the most pressing challenges is the lack of awareness among the target population, particularly among adult learners, informal workers, and those in rural or disadvantaged areas. Many potential beneficiaries of RPL remain unaware of their eligibility or of the opportunities available for formal recognition of their skills (Chansri & Saejong, 2018). This lack of awareness is often compounded by limited dissemination of information by educational institutions and government bodies, as well as by the absence of targeted outreach strategies that account for linguistic, cultural, and technological barriers.

Another significant barrier is the inconsistent implementation of RPL policies across regions and institutions. While some education centers and vocational institutes offer RPL services, their approaches often vary widely in terms of quality, assessment tools, and certification procedures. There is currently no national standard for RPL assessment, which leads to disparities in how prior learning is evaluated and recognized. This inconsistency undermines the credibility of RPL certificates and can result in limited portability across institutions and employment sectors.

Moreover, Thailand faces a shortage of trained RPL assessors and facilitators. In many cases, teachers and vocational trainers are assigned to conduct RPL assessments without adequate training in competency-based evaluation or adult learning principles. This leads to a lack of trust in the system and diminishes the reliability of assessment outcomes. Unlike countries such as Australia and New Zealand, which have institutionalized the training and accreditation of RPL assessors (Australian Government, 2015; NZQA, 2020), Thailand has yet to develop a nationwide certification program for professionals involved in the RPL process.

Disconnection from the Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF)

Another critical issue is the weak linkage between RPL outcomes and the Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF). Although the TQF was developed to facilitate the alignment of learning outcomes with educational and professional standards, RPL has not been fully integrated into its structure. As a result, learners who obtain recognition through non-formal or informal learning channels often find that their credentials are not fully accepted by employers or educational institutions.

This lack of formal articulation between RPL and TQF not only limits the perceived value of RPL certificates but also discourages learners from pursuing these pathways. In contrast, international models such as the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) explicitly include RPL as a recognized pathway to formal qualifications, enabling learners to access higher education and employment opportunities based on validated prior experience.

Equity and Inclusion Challenges

Perhaps most concerning is the finding that RPL in Thailand has yet to achieve its intended role as an instrument for educational equity and social inclusion. Although RPL is theoretically designed to benefit those who have been excluded from formal education systems—such as low-skilled workers, women in informal labor, older adults, and ethnic minorities—many of these groups face structural disadvantages in accessing RPL services.

For instance, language barriers significantly impact ethnic minority populations in northern and northeastern Thailand, who may not speak Thai as their first language. These learners often struggle with RPL documentation processes, assessment interviews, and portfolio development, which are typically conducted in Thai and assume a high level of literacy (Saengpassa, 2020). Moreover, bureaucratic complexity such as extensive paperwork, unclear application processes, and lack of online access can discourage participation among those with limited education or digital literacy.

Cultural perceptions also play a role. In some communities, non-formal learning is still viewed as inferior to traditional academic education, and RPL is not yet widely regarded as a legitimate or prestigious route to certification. This stigma can discourage learners from seeking recognition for their informal knowledge, particularly when there is no guaranteed outcome such as a job offer or academic progression.

Finally, the absence of financial incentives or subsidies further restricts access to RPL, especially for those in low-income brackets. Unlike countries like Canada, where provincial governments often provide funding or support for RPL services targeted at immigrants and displaced workers (Andersson, Fejes, & Sandberg, 2013), Thailand lacks a comprehensive financing mechanism for learners or institutions engaged in RPL.

In conclusion, while Thailand has laid the policy groundwork for RPL as part of its lifelong learning strategy, substantial efforts are still required to ensure effective, equitable, and sustainable implementation. The gap between policy and practice remains wide, and without coordinated reform, RPL risks becoming a symbolic gesture rather than a functional tool for learning recognition and social mobility.

Drawing on international models and grounded in the principles of accessibility, quality, and equity, Thailand must prioritize the development of a national RPL framework that is systematically integrated with the TQF, adequately resourced, and widely accessible. This includes not only technical reforms—such as standardizing assessments and training assessors—but also broader cultural shifts to promote the value of informal learning, empower learners, and democratize access to educational opportunities.

Key Theoretical and Policy Insights

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is fundamentally rooted in educational philosophies that emphasize the social, experiential, and individualized nature of learning. Two primary theoretical foundations—constructivism and experiential learning theory—shape both the pedagogical rationale and the policy orientation of RPL globally.

Constructivist and Experiential Learning Foundations

Constructivist learning theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with the world, rather than passively absorbing information (Piaget, 1954; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of RPL, this theoretical lens underscores the recognition that meaningful learning occurs outside formal educational institutions—through work, community engagement, self-directed inquiry, and life events. John Dewey (1938), one of the earliest proponents of experiential education, argued that education should be grounded in the realities of learners' lived experiences and that reflection on experience is a powerful source of learning.

Building on Dewey's ideas, Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984) provides a cyclical model of learning based on four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This model aligns closely with the logic of RPL, where learners demonstrate competencies through reflection on real-life experiences and translate them into recognized knowledge and skills within formal systems. For example, a worker who has led a community development project may not have formal management training but may still possess the competencies expected of someone with such credentials. RPL offers the opportunity to validate these competencies.

These theoretical perspectives advocate for learner-centered and context-responsive approaches to assessment, which value individual learning trajectories and de-emphasize one-size-fits-all models. Consequently, assessment tools in RPL practices often include narrative statements, portfolios, interviews, and practical demonstrations, rather than relying solely on standardized testing (Andersson & Harris, 2006).

Holistic and Competency-Based Assessment Approaches

The constructivist and experiential foundations of RPL directly inform competency-based education (CBE) frameworks, which are prevalent in vocational and adult education sectors globally. In CBE, the emphasis is placed on what the learner can do measured through observable performance criteria regardless of how or where the learning occurred. This opens pathways for adult learners and non-traditional students to attain formal qualifications without redundant retraining.

Holistic assessment models in RPL involve not just the evaluation of technical skills, but also the recognition of soft skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical reasoning. These dimensions are particularly relevant in the context of lifelong learning, where the aim is not merely to certify discrete competencies but to empower individuals to participate meaningfully in changing social, civic, and economic environments (Singh, 2015).

For instance, in New Zealand, RPL assessments emphasize learner reflection and evidence of real-world performance, evaluated by trained assessors familiar with workplace standards (NZQA, 2020). Similarly, in South Africa, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) promotes RPL as a tool for redress, enabling previously excluded populations to gain recognition and advance within formal education or employment systems (South African Qualifications Authority, 2013).

Equity and Social Inclusion in RPL Policy

While pedagogical theories inform RPL practice, its effectiveness in promoting lifelong learning also depends on the extent to which policies are equity oriented. According to UNESCO (2012), RPL should be seen as a mechanism for social justice—enabling those who have been historically marginalized from education to receive formal acknowledgment of their learning. In this sense, RPL aligns closely with the goals of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2016).

The OECD (2019) stresses that for RPL to support equity, policies must be designed to:

- Recognize informal and non-formal learning from diverse cultural and occupational contexts
- Lower administrative and financial barriers to participation
- Ensure transparency in assessment and certification
- Support access through learner guidance, mentorship, and outreach

Many national systems have embedded these principles. Canada, for example, has developed targeted RPL initiatives for immigrants and refugees, recognizing foreign credentials and prior work experience to support faster integration into the workforce (Haworth, 2017). In

contrast, Thailand's current RPL system, while policy-anchored, has yet to fully institutionalize such equity-based measures, particularly for rural populations, informal workers, and ethnic minorities who face linguistic and cultural barriers to formal education.

Institutional Capacity and System Integration
A final theoretical and policy insight relates to the role of institutional capacity and systemic coherence. Effective RPL systems are not stand-alone initiatives; they are embedded within broader qualifications frameworks, education reform agendas, and workforce development strategies. Institutions require clear guidelines, trained personnel, digital infrastructure, and quality assurance mechanisms to assess prior learning credibly and consistently.

For example, Australia's Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) oversees the registration and regulation of RPL providers, ensuring that assessment practices meet national standards and industry expectations (Australian Government, 2015). Digital tools such as MySkills and Learner Profiles support learner navigation and evidence collection.

Thailand can benefit from this systemic orientation by developing a national RPL coordination unit, integrating RPL into the Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF), and aligning practices across non-formal education, vocational training, and higher education. Institutional readiness, coupled with equity-focused outreach, will be essential to transforming RPL from a policy aspiration into a functioning and inclusive lifelong learning pathway.

Methodology
This study employed a **documentary research design** combined with **comparative policy analysis** to investigate the current status of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Thailand and to propose an inclusive framework aligned with international practices. The approach is qualitative and interpretive, focusing on the analysis of official documents, policy texts, institutional frameworks, and relevant academic literature from both national and international sources.

1. Documentary Research
Documentary research involves systematic examination and interpretation of existing documents to gain understanding and generate insights (Bowen, 2009). In this study, documents were selected based on their relevance to RPL policy, implementation, and practice in Thailand and the selected comparator countries—Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.
Sources included:
- National policy frameworks and education acts (e.g., Thailand's National Education Act, Ministry of Education guidelines)
- Institutional reports (e.g., Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education [ONIE], Office of the Education Council)
- Reports and toolkits from UNESCO, OECD, and national qualifications authorities (e.g., AQF, NZQA, and Canadian Council on Learning)
- Peer-reviewed academic publications and case studies from indexed journals

All documents were analyzed using content analysis to extract themes related to RPL objectives, implementation mechanisms, challenges, and outcomes. These were then categorized into policy dimensions (access, equity, quality assurance, institutional alignment, etc.).
2. Comparative Analysis
To benchmark Thailand's RPL system, a comparative policy analysis was conducted using the framework developed by Phillips and Schweisfurth (2014), which emphasizes:
- Contextual variables (e.g., socio-economic, cultural, labor market factors)
- Policy drivers (e.g., economic competitiveness, equity goals)

- Institutional structures (e.g., national qualifications frameworks, assessment bodies)
- Pedagogical models (e.g., competency-based, portfolio-based)

Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were selected as comparator countries based on their mature RPL systems, commitment to inclusive lifelong learning, and relevance for policy transfer.

The comparative analysis allowed the identification of both best practices and context-specific constraints, providing a basis for formulating recommendations tailored to the Thai context.

Findings

The analysis of documentary and comparative data reveals several key themes regarding the status of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Thailand, as well as insights derived from international practices. These findings are organized into five thematic areas: (1) policy and legal framework, (2) institutional implementation, (3) accessibility and equity, (4) assessment and quality assurance, and (5) lessons from international models. The themes reflect both structural and operational dimensions of RPL in Thailand and offer comparative insights from countries where RPL is more mature and systematized.

1. Policy and Legal Framework: Foundations with Gaps in Integration

Thailand has made noteworthy efforts to institutionalize RPL through its legislative instruments, most notably the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and its subsequent amendments. These legal provisions officially recognize non-formal and informal education as valid components of the national lifelong learning system. Government agencies such as the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) and the Office of the Education Council (OEC) have been at the forefront of promoting adult education, workforce upskilling, and lifelong learning initiatives that include RPL mechanisms.

However, while the legislative environment is broadly supportive, policy implementation remains fragmented and poorly integrated with other key national frameworks. For instance, the Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF), which should provide vertical integration of RPL outcomes into mainstream educational and professional qualifications, lacks a coherent interface with RPL processes. This has led to inconsistencies in recognition practices across sectors and regions.

In contrast, Australia's AQF and New Zealand's NZQF offer models where RPL is structurally embedded within national qualification systems. These frameworks provide not only hierarchical qualification levels but also standardized mechanisms for credit transfer, workplace validation, and cross-sector recognition (Australian Government, 2015; NZQA, 2020). The absence of such integration in Thailand limits the policy's effectiveness and contributes to institutional confusion over roles and responsibilities.

Additionally, the lack of a dedicated national policy or strategic framework for RPL has impeded momentum. While several ministerial initiatives exist, they often function in silos, lacking inter-ministerial coordination or a unified monitoring mechanism. Without a clear national roadmap, RPL remains underutilized and misaligned with Thailand's economic and social development priorities.

2. Institutional Implementation: Fragmented and Under-resourced

At the institutional level, Thailand's RPL initiatives are primarily driven by the non-formal education sector, including community learning centers and vocational institutions. While some universities and polytechnic colleges offer RPL pathways, participation is inconsistent and often contingent on project-based funding or the personal motivation of academic staff. There is currently no nationally mandated framework guiding how institutions should implement RPL, resulting in significant variability in quality, scale, and sustainability.

Many institutions lack trained personnel capable of conducting RPL assessments, advising learners, and developing portfolios. There is also a shortage of context-sensitive tools that align with different occupational sectors or academic disciplines. As a result, RPL activities are frequently perceived as informal or supplementary rather than as credible alternatives to conventional learning pathways.

By contrast, New Zealand's approach under the NZQA provides institutions with comprehensive RPL guidelines, funding models, and training for assessors. Institutions are expected to maintain transparent processes and submit reports to a centralized database for auditing and quality control. Moreover, in Canada, provinces like British Columbia and Quebec have integrated RPL within institutional planning and curriculum design, supported by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) and immigrant support organizations (Andersson et al., 2013).

In Thailand, the lack of institutional incentives—such as credit recognition, budgetary support, or regulatory mandates—discourages systematic implementation. Furthermore, institutions often see RPL as administratively burdensome without adequate return on investment, especially when assessment requires specialized resources or recognition by professional bodies.

3. Accessibility and Equity: Structural Barriers for Marginalized Groups

Despite its potential to democratize education, RPL in Thailand remains largely inaccessible to marginalized groups, including informal workers, women in low-income jobs, ethnic minorities, and those in rural or remote areas. Several intersecting barriers limit participation: low awareness, limited guidance and support, language and cultural constraints, and financial costs associated with assessment.

For instance, many informal workers possess rich experiential knowledge but are unaware of the possibility of transforming their skills into recognized qualifications. Even when RPL is available, the process may require literacy, portfolio development, or digital submission—obstacles for those with limited educational backgrounds.

Studies show that gender norms and geographic disparities further entrench exclusion. Saengpassa (2020) highlights that women in the informal sector often lack the time, resources, or mobility to engage in RPL. Similarly, ethnic minorities face language-related challenges and cultural mismatches between institutional expectations and community knowledge.

In contrast, Australia and Canada have developed targeted outreach and support models, including government-funded RPL advisors, community-based assessors, and multilingual materials. These systems emphasize not just access, but equity of participation and outcome. For example, Australia's *Skills Recognition* program offers support to migrants, while Canada's Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) provides tailored services for immigrant professionals seeking credential recognition.

Thailand's current efforts do not yet reflect this level of systemic inclusion, leaving many potential learners unserved and reinforcing existing educational inequalities.

4. Assessment and Quality Assurance: Inconsistent Practices and Standards

A major challenge in Thailand's RPL landscape is the lack of standardized assessment procedures. Institutions employ varied methods such as written tests, interviews, practical demonstrations, and portfolio reviews—but without national rubrics, benchmarks, or moderation processes. This creates variability in assessment rigor and fairness, which in turn undermines the credibility and transferability of RPL outcomes.

In some cases, RPL is used merely as a formality for admissions or program placement, rather than a robust assessment of prior competencies. Furthermore, there is no national database to

record, track, or verify RPL decisions across institutions or sectors. This lack of documentation prevents mobility and recognition beyond the originating institution.

By comparison, Australia's RPL system is governed by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), which sets standards for competency-based assessments. Assessors must be certified and are held accountable through auditing and reporting requirements. Similarly, NZQA requires institutions to demonstrate evidence-based assessment practices, including student consultation and external validation.

Without a national quality assurance framework, Thailand's RPL processes risk becoming institutionally arbitrary and socially untrusted. This could deter employers, professional bodies, and even learners themselves from fully engaging with the system.

5. Lessons from International Models: Toward a Systemic and Inclusive Approach

The comparative analysis underscores several actionable lessons for Thailand. First, policy coherence and central coordination are essential. In both Australia and New Zealand, dedicated agencies oversee RPL policy, funding, training, and quality assurance. This allows for system-wide standardization, while still permitting institutional flexibility.

Second, learner support systems—including RPL advisors, digital platforms, and accessible information—are crucial for participation. For example, New Zealand's "MyPathway" platform guides learners through each stage of the RPL process, while Canada's provincial RPL services provide career counseling and recognition pathways for immigrants and low-skilled adults.

Third, equity must be embedded in RPL design. This includes differentiated assessment for learners with low literacy, recognition of community-based learning, and fee subsidies. Without this support, RPL can unintentionally reinforce the very inequalities it seeks to address.

Lastly, digital transformation offers a major opportunity. Thailand can explore AI-based portfolio assessment tools, blockchain certification, and mobile-first platforms to scale access while maintaining standards.

Summary Table of Key Findings

Theme	Thailand	International Benchmark
Legal framework	Exists but fragmented	Integrated with qualifications frameworks (e.g., AQF, NZQF)
Institutional support	Uneven, under-resourced	Centralized support and assessor training
Accessibility	Limited for marginalized groups	Inclusive access with outreach and funding support
Assessment practices	Inconsistent and non-standardized	Competency-based, nationally regulated
Digital integration	Minimal	High (e.g., online portfolios, centralized portals)

Proposed Inclusive RPL Framework for Thailand

1. Policy and Governance
Objective: Create a unified, transparent, and enforceable national RPL system.
Key Actions:
- Develop a National RPL Policy under the Ministry of Education, linked with the Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF).
- Establish a National RPL Coordinating Body responsible for strategy, policy oversight, data collection, and inter-ministerial coordination (e.g., education, labor, higher education).
- Integrate RPL into Thailand's Education Reform and Lifelong Learning strategies (e.g., Education 4.0, SDG 4).

2. Institutional Implementation and Capacity
Objective: Ensure all learning institutions are equipped to deliver credible, consistent RPL.
Key Actions:
- Require universities, TVET institutions, and community learning centers to implement RPL pathways with clear guidelines.
- Provide training and certification for RPL assessors and academic advisors.
- Establish institutional RPL units responsible for learner counseling, portfolio review, and employer collaboration.

3. Learner-Centered Support System
Objective: Enable access and successful navigation of RPL by diverse learners.
Key Actions:
- Create a national RPL online platform that includes:
  - Step-by-step guidance
  - Digital portfolio submission
  - Feedback tools
- Offer RPL orientation programs and mentorship for first-time applicants.
- Provide career guidance and transition support after recognition (e.g., upskilling or job placement).

4. Assessment and Quality Assurance
Objective: Ensure assessments are fair, valid, transparent, and portable across sectors.
Key Actions:
- Standardize **competency-based assessment tools** and rubrics aligned with the TQF.
- Use **multiple forms of evidence**: portfolios, interviews, practical demonstrations, testimonials.
- Establish a **national moderation board** to oversee cross-institutional consistency and appeals.
- Develop a **national RPL record system** for certification and data tracking (integrated with national education databases).

5. Equity, Inclusion, and Funding
Objective: Prioritize outreach, affordability, and accessibility for underserved populations.
Key Actions:
- Target informal workers, rural populations, and ethnic minorities with community-based programs and local partnerships.
- Provide RPL assessment grants or subsidies for low-income learners.

- Translate materials into ethnic and regional languages and offer support for low-literacy learners.
- Collaborate with employers and unions to recognize community and workplace learning.

Summary Table: Inclusive RPL Framework for Thailand

Component	Key Features
Policy & Governance	National policy, RPL coordinating body, integration with TQF
Institutional Capacity	Institutional mandates, assessor training, dedicated RPL units
Learner Support	Digital platforms, mentorship, career guidance
Assessment & QA	Standardized tools, national rubrics, moderation board, cross-institution record
Equity & Access	Outreach to underserved groups, funding mechanisms, multilingual materials

Inclusive RPL Framework Diagram
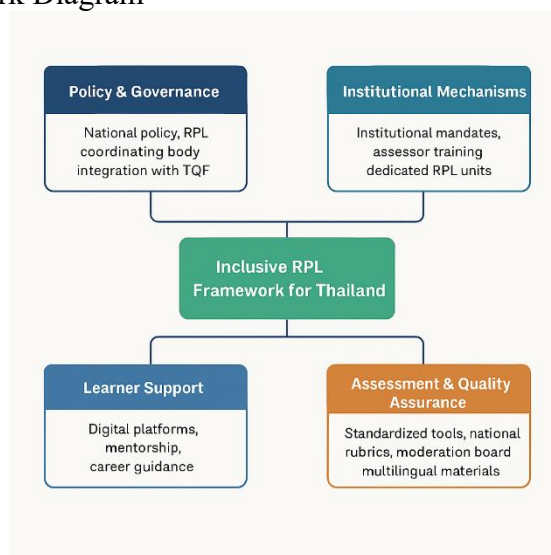
Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that while Thailand has articulated a strong policy-level commitment to integrate Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within its lifelong learning agenda, significant implementation challenges remain. These challenges hinder the country's ability to realize the inclusive, flexible, and responsive education system envisioned in national strategies and global frameworks such as SDG 4. Compared to countries with well-established RPL systems—such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada—Thailand's RPL infrastructure continues to face limitations in coherence, institutional capacity, accessibility, and quality assurance.

Fragmented Governance and Policy Disconnects

A primary concern lies in the fragmented architecture of RPL governance. Multiple government agencies—including the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Education—operate RPL initiatives independently, often with overlapping mandates and differing priorities. This fragmented approach results in policy misalignment and a lack of clarity for learners and institutions. The absence of a national coordinating mechanism or unified policy framework weakens

Thailand's ability to implement RPL as a coherent system. Such fragmentation contributes to duplication of efforts, inconsistent implementation across regions, and confusion among potential learners and providers (Chansri & Saejong, 2018).

In contrast, countries with advanced RPL systems operate under centralized or nationally coordinated models. For instance, in New Zealand, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) plays a central role in setting standards, training assessors, and ensuring consistency across providers (NZQA, 2020). Similarly, Australia's RPL system is governed by a national framework—the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)—which integrates RPL into the broader education and training system with clear regulatory oversight (Australian Government, 2015).

Absence of Standardized Assessment and Assessor Training

Another key issue in Thailand is the lack of standardized assessment procedures and qualified assessors. While RPL should provide a reliable pathway for recognizing non-formal and informal learning, current practices are highly variable across institutions. Some use portfolio assessments, others rely on interviews or written tests, and many lack clear rubrics or moderation protocols. Without national guidelines, the assessment of prior learning becomes subjective, leading to inconsistency and questions about legitimacy. This undermines public trust in RPL as a credible and portable credentialing mechanism.

International best practices emphasize the importance of competency-based assessment and professional development for RPL practitioners. In Canada, for example, several provinces maintain guidelines for RPL assessors and require professional training to ensure fair and valid assessment procedures (Andersson, Fejes, & Sandberg, 2013). By contrast, Thai institutions rarely provide dedicated training or certification for assessors, leading to wide disparities in assessment outcomes.

Furthermore, the lack of a shared database or digital infrastructure for tracking assessments, credits awarded, and learner outcomes further weakens system accountability. Learners often face difficulties in transferring RPL achievements between institutions due to the absence of centralized records or recognition protocols, especially in higher education.

Inaccessibility and Social Exclusion

While RPL is conceptually designed to empower non-traditional learners—such as adult learners, informal workers, and marginalized communities—the Thai system currently falls short in reaching these populations. Despite constitutional recognition of lifelong learning as a right, access to RPL remains constrained by structural, socio-cultural, and financial barriers. A key finding of this study is that public awareness of RPL opportunities is extremely low, especially in rural areas. Many potential beneficiaries are unaware that their work experience or community-based learning can be formally recognized.

Socio-cultural attitudes also play a significant role in shaping access. In Thai society, formal education is still perceived as the primary route to qualifications, and non-formal or informal learning often lacks social recognition. This stigma leads to self-exclusion, where capable individuals do not pursue RPL because they believe their learning is not "valid" in academic or professional contexts (Saengpassa, 2020).

Language barriers, bureaucratic complexity, and insufficient support services further exclude vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, women in informal employment, and migrant workers. These findings reflect similar concerns raised by Werquin (2010), who argued that without targeted support and inclusive strategies, RPL may inadvertently reproduce social inequalities rather than redress them.

Comparative Insights and Systemic Coherence

The cross-country comparison underscores that effective RPL systems require not only policy support but system-wide coherence. In Australia, for instance, RPL is embedded in vocational education and training (VET) policies and linked with labor market demands through skills recognition mechanisms. Employers, industry bodies, and training providers collaborate to ensure that RPL outcomes are meaningful and valued in both academic and employment contexts (Haworth, 2017).

New Zealand has institutionalized RPL within higher education and workplace training pathways, supported by clear credit transfer systems, online application platforms, and funding support for disadvantaged learners. Canada's emphasis on immigrant credential recognition illustrates how RPL can be used strategically to enhance social inclusion and workforce integration. These countries exemplify how RPL, when properly supported, can drive both human capital development and social equity (Singh, 2015; OECD, 2019).

In contrast, Thailand's current RPL mechanisms appear underutilized and disconnected from broader systems of education and labor. This weak alignment contributes to the perception of RPL as a "second tier" pathway, rather than a legitimate and valuable route to qualifications and career advancement.

The Need for a Paradigm Shift

To fulfill the potential of RPL in Thailand, a paradigm shift is required—from fragmented, supply-driven implementation to coherent, inclusive, and learner-centered practice. This shift involves:

- Reframing RPL as a right and opportunity for all learners, not just a remedial option for the underqualified.
- Recognizing diverse forms of knowledge and experience, including indigenous knowledge, caregiving, and community-based work.
- Embedding RPL in institutional culture and strategic planning, with support from leadership and policymakers.

RPL should not only validate past learning but enable future learning pathways, connecting individuals with formal education, skills upgrading, and employment opportunities. For this vision to be realized, it must be accompanied by systemic reforms, public investment, and active engagement of all stakeholders.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and international benchmarks, this section outlines six key recommendations for developing an inclusive, coherent, and effective Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) framework in Thailand. These recommendations are grounded in principles of equity, quality assurance, system integration, and digital transformation—reflecting both Thailand's policy context and global good practices.

1. Develop a National RPL Policy and Strategic Framework

A first and fundamental step is to formalize a dedicated national RPL policy under the Ministry of Education, embedded within Thailand's existing Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF). While Thailand has policies referencing RPL within broader lifelong learning strategies, the lack of a standalone, actionable framework hinders institutional uptake and cross-sector alignment.

- Recommendation: Develop a National RPL Policy that defines scope, eligibility, principles, and implementation mechanisms across formal, non-formal, and informal learning sectors.

- Implementation Strategy: Establish a central coordinating body or national RPL authority—modeled after agencies such as NZQA (New Zealand) or ASQA (Australia)—to oversee policy roll-out, capacity-building, and inter-agency coordination.

Rationale: Central governance ensures standardization, accountability, and institutional alignment, reducing fragmentation and improving scalability (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014; UNESCO UIL, 2015).

2. Standardize Assessment and Certification Mechanisms

Effective RPL systems require transparent and reliable assessment tools that validate learner competencies in diverse settings. In Thailand, assessment practices vary widely and are often improvised, leading to questions of validity and acceptance.

- Recommendation: Design national RPL assessment guidelines with clear criteria, tools (e.g., portfolios, practical tasks, interviews), scoring rubrics, and moderation procedures.
- Implementation Strategy: Establish national certification processes for RPL assessors and advisors, drawing on models from the Australian VET sector, where assessor training is mandatory under the Standards for RTOs (Registered Training Organisations).

Rationale: Standardized assessments improve reliability and learner confidence while enabling quality assurance across institutions (OECD, 2010; Werquin, 2012).

3. Enhance Institutional Readiness and Integration

While RPL is recognized in Thai policy documents, institutional capacity and motivation remain low. Universities and TVET providers often lack the tools, guidelines, or incentives to implement RPL effectively.

- Recommendation: Encourage integration of RPL in curriculum design, admissions criteria, and internal credit transfer systems.
- Implementation Strategy: Offer financial and regulatory incentives (e.g., grants, performance-based funding) for institutions that establish or expand RPL pathways. Promote micro-credentials and stackable certification models to accommodate part-time and non-traditional learners.

Rationale: Institutional embedding of RPL makes it a sustainable component of the education system rather than an isolated initiative (Andersson, Fejes & Sandberg, 2013; Cedefop, 2017).

4. Promote Access and Equity

To fulfill its purpose as a tool for social inclusion, RPL must be accessible to underserved and marginalized groups, including rural populations, ethnic minorities, older adults, and workers in the informal economy. Research shows that awareness, affordability, and procedural complexity are major barriers in Thailand (Chansri & Saejong, 2018; Niamhom, 2021).

- Recommendation: Implement targeted outreach campaigns and develop culturally responsive guidance materials in local languages and formats.
- Implementation Strategy: Establish RPL support centers in provincial and rural areas through community learning centers or NGOs. Introduce financial support mechanisms, such as RPL assessment vouchers, subsidies, or recognition grants.

Rationale: Ensuring access for all citizens fulfills the inclusive vision of lifelong learning outlined in SDG 4 and the UNESCO Education 2030 Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2016).

5. Leverage Digital Technologies

Digital transformation can dramatically expand the efficiency, accessibility, and scalability of RPL systems. Countries such as Australia and New Zealand have invested in online RPL platforms to support learner registration, portfolio development, and feedback.

- Recommendation: Develop a national RPL digital platform—similar to MySkills (Australia) or MyPathway (New Zealand)—to centralize learner interaction with the RPL process.
- Implementation Strategy: Integrate AI-assisted tools for document validation, skill-matching, and personalized recommendations. Build features for e-portfolios, assessor dashboards, and real-time feedback.

Rationale: Digital infrastructure reduces processing time, enhances transparency, and enables rural learners to participate more equitably (OECD, 2019; Cedefop, 2021).

6. Establish Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is essential for ensuring the effectiveness, accountability, and continuous improvement of RPL initiatives.

- Recommendation: Define key performance indicators (KPIs) to track participation rates, certification outcomes, learner satisfaction, and employment mobility.
- Implementation Strategy: Partner with universities and research institutes to conduct longitudinal studies and policy impact assessments on RPL effectiveness.

Rationale: Data-driven decision-making helps refine program design and align RPL with national human capital development goals (UNESCO UIL, 2015; Haworth, 2017).

Final Reflection

Recognition of Prior Learning is not merely an administrative mechanism but a powerful social justice tool that validates the diverse knowledge systems and life experiences of all learners. It affirms the principle that learning can occur anywhere—through work, family, community, and lived experience—and deserves formal recognition.

Thailand stands at a pivotal moment to reposition RPL from a policy ideal to a functioning, inclusive, and empowering system. By adopting a learner-centered, equity-driven, and internationally informed strategy, Thailand can transform RPL into a cornerstone of its lifelong learning ecosystem, supporting not only the Sustainable Development Goals but also the country's broader economic, social, and educational reforms.

This study examined the current landscape of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Thailand through a documentary and comparative lens, aiming to identify both the enabling conditions and structural limitations that shape its effectiveness. The analysis revealed that while there is clear policy intent to recognize and promote diverse learning pathways as part of Thailand's lifelong learning agenda, actual implementation remains fragmented, inconsistent, and insufficiently inclusive.

Thailand's policy landscape reflects important milestones, such as the incorporation of RPL into national education reform documents and the engagement of agencies like the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) and the Office of the Education Council (OEC). However, these policy directives are not yet matched by a fully integrated or operational system. Assessment standards lack coherence, institutional capacity is weak, and public awareness remains low, particularly among those who stand to benefit the most—informal workers, rural learners, women, and ethnic minorities.

The comparative analysis of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada provides valuable insights into how RPL can be effectively institutionalized when supported by national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), clear regulatory mechanisms, and learner-centered practices. For example, Australia's Recognition of Prior Learning system is embedded in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which ensures that competencies acquired through

experience are evaluated rigorously yet flexibly, with a focus on outcomes rather than inputs. Similarly, New Zealand's NZQA framework supports holistic recognition practices that are transparent, equitable, and embedded in formal education pathways. Canada's decentralized model, especially in provinces like British Columbia and Quebec, demonstrates how RPL can address the needs of immigrants, indigenous learners, and adult upskilling, reinforcing its role in social integration and workforce development.

Drawing on these examples, the study underscores the importance of adopting an inclusive, strategic, and systemic approach to RPL in Thailand. The success of RPL in other countries is not merely the result of policy presence, but of a deep commitment to inclusive education, inter-sectoral collaboration, and sustained investment in institutional and human capacity. These international practices offer important models, but they must be contextualized to Thai socio-cultural realities, including linguistic diversity, decentralized education management, and social attitudes toward non-formal education.

A national RPL framework for Thailand should be more than a set of technical procedures. It must embody a learner-centered philosophy that acknowledges the legitimacy of multiple learning trajectories. The framework should establish:

- Standardized and transparent assessment protocols
- Credentialing systems integrated with the Thai Qualifications Framework (TQF)
- Qualified assessors and trained RPL advisors
- Outreach mechanisms to reach underrepresented populations
- Digital platforms for portfolio development and application tracking
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure accountability and continuous improvement

Moreover, RPL should be embedded in workforce development, higher education admissions, and vocational training schemes, ensuring its utility across diverse learning and professional environments. A concerted effort is also needed to de-stigmatize non-formal and informal learning in Thai society, fostering cultural acceptance and institutional recognition of alternative learning pathways.

Ultimately, Recognition of Prior Learning is not just an administrative mechanism—it is a transformative educational strategy that challenges the hegemony of formal schooling and affirms the value of experiential knowledge. When thoughtfully implemented, RPL contributes to reducing inequality, enhancing labor market mobility, and realizing the vision of education as a lifelong, inclusive, and empowering process (UNESCO UIL, 2015; Singh, 2015).

In the context of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)—which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all—RPL stands as a critical enabler. For Thailand to realize this goal, it must treat RPL as both a policy priority and a social imperative. Investing in a robust, accessible, and learner-responsive RPL system will not only accelerate Thailand's transition to a learning society but also ensure that education serves as a bridge, not a barrier, to opportunity.

References

Andersson, P., & Harris, J. (2006). Re-theorising the recognition of prior learning. Leicester: NIACE.

Andersson, P., Fejes, A., & Sandberg, F. (2013). Introducing research on recognition of prior learning. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 32(4), 405–411. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2013.778069

Australian Government. (2015). Recognition of Prior Learning: An Assessment Resource for VET Practitioners. Department of Education and Training.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

CICan. (2017). Recognition of Acquired Competencies in Canada: Practices and Potential. Colleges and Institutes Canada.

Cedefop. (2017). Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: A European handbook. Publications Office of the European Union.

Cedefop. (2021). Digital transition and lifelong learning. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu

Chansri, S., & Saejong, K. (2018). The development of a recognition of prior learning system in Thailand. Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 12(2), 34–45.

Choi, J., & Kim, H. (2018). Recognition of prior learning: International practices and applications in lifelong learning. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 37(3), 329–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2018.1464059

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and Education. Macmillan.

European Commission. (2020). European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. Brussels.

Harris, J. (2014). RPL: Power, pedagogy and possibility: Conceptual and implementation guides. HSRC Press.

Haworth, J. (2017). The effectiveness of RPL in tertiary education. Tertiary Education Commission, New Zealand.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development. Prentice Hall.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Sage Publications.

NESDC. (2021). The Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017–2021). Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, Thailand.

NZQA. (2020). Recognition of Current Competency (RCC). New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

Niamhom, W. (2021). Challenges in implementing RPL for workforce development in Thailand. Journal of Lifelong Learning and Education, 9(1), 19–30.

OECD. (2010). Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning: Outcomes, Policies and Practices. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264063853-en

OECD. (2019). Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264309722-en

OECD. (2019). Getting Skills Right: Future-Ready Adult Learning Systems. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311756-en

Office of the Education Council. (2019). Education in Thailand 2019. Ministry of Education, Thailand.

Phillips, D., & Schweisfurth, M. (2014). Comparative and international education: An introduction to theory, method, and practice (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury.

Piaget, J. (1954). The Construction of Reality in the Child. Basic Books.

Saengpassa, C. (2020). RPL and social mobility among Thai informal workers. Thai Journal of Adult Education, 7(3), 42–57.

Singh, M. (2015). Global perspectives on recognizing non-formal and informal learning: Why recognition matters. Springer.

South African Qualifications Authority. (2013). National Policy for the Implementation of RPL. Pretoria: SAQA.

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2015). Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks: Volume II. UIL.

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2015). Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks 2015: Volume II. UNESCO and Cedefop.

UNESCO UIL. (2022). Promoting inclusive lifelong learning through recognition, validation and accreditation. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

UNESCO. (2012). Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

UNESCO. (2015). Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4. UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2016). Education 2030: Framework for Action. UNESCO Publishing.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Harvard University Press.

Werquin, P. (2010). Recognising Non-formal and Informal Learning: Outcomes, Policies and Practices. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264063853-en

Werquin, P. (2012). The missing link to connect education and employment: Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Journal of Education and Work, 25(3), 259–278.

Wheelahan, L., & Moodie, G. (2011). RPL and social justice: The future of recognition of prior learning in Australia. AVETRA.