PLAIO
Prior Learning Assessment Inside Out

SUNY EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

The Power of PLA Today
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On May 19, 2020, PLAIO *Co-editors Nan Travers and Alan Mandell and SUNY Empire State College facilitated a* webinar *with three important thinkers and practitioners of PLA (prior learning assessment) to discuss their work in this rich and diverse field. Heidi Bolton, senior manager of research at the South African Qualifications Authority (South Africa); Amber Garrison Duncan, then-strategy director of the Lumina Foundation (U.S.); and Anni Karttunen, senior education policy specialist at Globedu (Finland), were our guests. Thanks to Heidi, Amber, and Anni for their participation in this event. The following webinar transcript has been edited for clarity.*

Nan Travers (N.T.): This webinar is titled "The Power of PLA Today" in recognition of prior learning as a tool for access, equity, learning, and more. The reason we are addressing this topic is that the *why* of prior learning assessment is even more critical today in a world of the COVID-19 pandemic, and one in which questions of workplace and academic learning are part of our future. In responding to the question of *why* sits the philosophy from which we approach how to assess learning that has been acquired outside of the traditional academic environment. That philosophy drives our policies and practices. What we found is that, more recently, a lot of the work around assessing and recognizing learning has been very focused on practice — how we do this and that and how institutions, in very practical ways, can incorporate experiential learning into academic programs. Our worry is that people aren't stopping and taking a moment to think about the why behind these multiple practices. That's the reason we've asked three important colleagues in the field to help us think about how the why question makes a difference around issues of access, equity, and learning.

Alan Mandell (A.M.): Thanks so much, Nan. We are very happy that everybody is here today; thanks a million for joining us. We are delighted to welcome three wonderful guests who will each provide a sense of their experience and understanding of "Why PLA?"

Heidi Bolton is the senior manager of research of the South African Qualifications Authority, overseeing the research for national policy development and implementation for the national qualifications framework in South Africa, the system for education, training development and work in South Africa.

Our second guest is Amber Garrison Duncan, who is a strategy director at the Lumina Foundation in the United States where she leads the portfolio work focusing on the validation of learning regardless of where it happens. She has been working for many years in this area prior to being at Lumina. Amber was previously at the University of Oregon, Florida State University, the University of Michigan, and Hope College.

And finally, we're happy that Anni Karttunen is joining us from Finland. Anni has worked for the Finnish National Agency for Education as head of adult learning and was the unit head of EU.edu, the Centre for European Educational Policy and regional educational consortium. Anni has worked in Egypt, Russia, Ukraine, Kosovo, and North Macedonia as an expert for the validation of prior learning and lifelong guidance. Thanks to all. Let's begin with Heidi.

Heidi Bolton (H.B.): Thank you. When South Africa became a democracy in 1994, it was a very unequal and uneven society where opportunities for education and work were different for different racial groups. There were many dead ends in terms of qualification and work pathways. There was no parity, and there was definitely no overarching quality assurance system, so we chose the national qualifications framework, the NQF,[1] to integrate this system. Now 25 years later, we have open access, we have a national quality assurance system that is thriving, and we have transparency. We've had, for example, a National Learners' Records Database[2] that has all the registered qualifications and past qualifications of everyone in the system, together with information on accredited providers to offer a record of all the learners' achievements.

Just to give you a little bit of context, in South Africa, we have a population of 58 million, 55% of whom live below the poverty line, which means living on less than $75.00 a month. We also have a high Gini coefficient [measuring income inequality]; I believe it might be the highest in the world. And we have what we call the "scourge": the triple scourge of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. But we have made huge efforts to develop and strengthen our education system and looking at the data, this has had quite an impact — a remarkable impact. It's not fast enough but it's had a serious impact.

So, to talk a little bit more about the NQF, the entire system for education and training in development is included in the NQF. There are three sub-frameworks: one for schooling and adult education; the second one for higher education; and another one for occupational qualifications and my organization, SAQA, the South African Qualifications Authority. Its role is to oversee the implementation and development of the NQF. You also have the coordination of these three sub-frameworks. The sub-frameworks also are overseen by three "quality councils." These quality councils are responsible for quality standards, so they have all kinds of policies for accrediting providers of education and training. "Quality" is determined through the accreditation of providers and the registration of qualifications on the NQF.

The goals of the NQF are access, redress, progression (which is mobility in the system), quality, and transparency. The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is really an important part of those goals. You can't offer a qualification or be accredited unless you provide for RPL. There's a whole ethos of lifelong learning and equity. It's basically compulsory to offer RPL options.

Professional bodies are also part of the NQF. They need to be recognized in the NQF context, and they need to follow SAQA's policy and offer an RPL root in their professional business. So, at the moment there's a huge focus on learning pathways and progression. We call it "articulation," and it can be systemic, connecting different bits of the system, which can be through interinstitutional agreements that support the connected efforts, as well as learner supports. In this way, career advice at the national level and institutional level is very important.

We did some research recently interviewing RPL candidates who've been successful. I quickly want to read three excerpts from these transcripts. The first is from a person who started in prison.

> *I did everything in 2012 when I was in prison for armed robbery using [the drugs] rocks and Mandrax. I did my RPL process in 2015. I'm now in my third year of a social work bachelor's degree program. I went to FET College [Further Education and Training],[3] I did community development, and the lecturer suggested I go to the university. Going through the RPL process gave me very good preparation for university because university is very different from everything else around me. I knew what I was getting into. There wouldn't have been another way for me to get into university. I had a wonderful RPL mentor and a very good experience with the center's program. Some of the other students at the university who were with me in the same RPL program are now doing honors, some are doing master's degrees. A lot had to leave school because of crime in the area. The RPL program was an opportunity to get a professional qualification.*

The second excerpt is from someone who lives where the university is — in an area with high poverty, crime, and unemployment.

> *Every day I just came to the university. I got dropped here by public transport and walked around and around because I wanted to be here. I could only do the RPL program on a Saturday. I'm a single mother with children so I have to work. The RPL unit assessed me; they send you an acceptance letter. The RPL administrators assisted me. I just walked through the doors: it was incredible. My son got a very bad lung infection and he almost died. I came to the RPL administrator, and she helped. ... That last week I got a certificate with a golden key for high achievement. ... I had to survive as a single parent. You are degraded, but the RPL showed us the value of it. It shows how it feeds into learning when you come here to the RPL unit. They teach you how to draw on your life experience and to build on that.*

I must add to this description that she took her friends to the RPL stations and then one of them stood up in the church the next Sunday and announced to the people in the church that they could do RPL, and the people came and flooded the next information session at the university and filled the whole hall, and the university had to get a bigger hall and do another information session. These are beautiful stories to hear.

The last testimony is different:

> *In 2003, I walked out of the doors of a large supermarket chain store. I decided I no longer wanted to work as a shelf packer. I volunteered with an ambulance service. I became an ambulance worker. I did basic firefighting, lifesaving, and sea rescue. At heart, I didn't want to do it. I grew up in an area known for poverty and crime. I completed school, burned the yellow of stuff, which is drugs, and burst tires. Then I went overseas to Miami, Florida, through the ambulance work. I worked for eight months in a country club. I worked with the rich and famous of Florida. I stayed for two years and six months. I worked in Boston and Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and the Florida West Country Club. I had a fabulous time and didn't want to come home until someone offered me a permanent job and I didn't have the qualifications. That's why I decided I want the qualifications. I need them so that if a job like that ever came up again, I could accept it. I decided to start in high school again because my grades weren't high enough. [She then attended RPL classes.] So, I submitted a portfolio of evidence and was accepted. ... It's interesting — you're not alone in the RPL process and beyond; you're not handheld either, but there's always a door you can knock on. I've been at the university for four years now, I finished three degrees in honors. I registered with the Department of Geography. I did the full-time course. ... I passed so many modules and I contributed to a peer-reviewed book. My honors work is in Chapter 5 of the book. ...*

And she's now been offered a scholarship to a university in the UK.

A.M.: Thank you so much, Heidi. We really appreciate the extraordinarily moving personal stories of RPL/PLA. Their relationship to access and social justice is just very poignant. We now turn to Amber Garrison Duncan from the Lumina Foundation. Welcome, Amber.

Amber Garrison Duncan (A.G.D.): I am so glad to be able to join you. Heidi, thank you for that wonderful introduction to what's happening in South Africa. And thank you, Nan and Alan, for having me here with you all today. I thought I would back up just a little bit and share what the Lumina Foundation is. We have certainly a unique structure in the U.S. The Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation based in Indianapolis, Indiana, so the middle of the country. Our goal is that we're committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. We envision a system that's easy to navigate, delivers results, and meets our nation's need for talent through a broad range of credentials.

In 2008, Lumina was doing some research to try to understand what the workforce of tomorrow would look like and what it would need. The research showed that by 2020, it's anticipated

that there will be 55 million job openings, and of those job openings, 65% will require some type of postsecondary education. When we examined our current capacity in terms of completion rates, we were going to be falling short by five million people. So, five million people would be locked out of opportunities for good jobs. We wanted to make a statement about that. And so, in 2008, we issued what we called "Goal 2025" — that by 2025, we want at least 60% of Americans to have a high-quality postsecondary credential. As that goal looms large — it's just a few short years away; we are tracking our progress. You can gain access to that data through a report called "Stronger Nation."[4] Outside of Stronger Nation, it's very difficult to tell if we are on track to meet that goal because of the way governance in the U.S. is structured and the way our data reporting is done as a nation. That's just a reoccurring theme and why I wanted to bring it up now. As we think about creating a national system — you know we have some unique structures here in the U.S. — part of what I lead is a portfolio of work at the Lumina Foundation called "Learning Infrastructure," which is really focused on creating a national-level infrastructure where all learning can be evaluated and valued regardless of where it happens.

I want to share a *why* with you, and surprisingly, it somewhat mirrors what Heidi described. We believe we need a system that recognizes prior learning because we need to create greater access and equity. We have been working with many people and our partners across the country who have been working very hard over the last decade to meet Goal 2025. But most of those efforts really focused on how we drive access and completion within traditional colleges and universities and focusing on the students that were already there. But we believe that it's time for a new era of expansion and one that recognizes the value of learning happening outside of the academy. We know that there's a significant amount of high-quality postsecondary-level learning that's happening in the military, that's happening in the workforce through industry certification programs and apprenticeships, and we have individuals who are currently incarcerated in our criminal justice system and are learning there, but oftentimes that learning is not validated and valued in the way that it should.

We also know that a disproportionate number of racially-marginalized people and people from low-income backgrounds start their learning journeys outside of higher education. And so, in order to expand to include these folks, we have to do the work of dismantling the racism and the classism that look down on these forms of learning and have prevented these individuals from bringing that learning forward. Indeed, the entire education system has created a barrier in access for far too many people. In the U.S., that's what we mean when we talk about dismantling racism and classism. It's a history here that we have to acknowledge. Since their beginnings, higher education institutions did not include Black, Native American, or Latino individuals. It was legal to segregate educational spaces under "separate but equal"[5] rulings, and just this past weekend on the 17th of May [2020], we were reminded that on that day in 1954, that separate but equal ruling was struck down in the Brown v. Board of Education[6] Supreme Court decision. However, there are policies, practices, and beliefs that are rooted in our history and are still affecting people today — people who are seeking a better life and a better education. Racial disparities are holding them back. Actually, in the U.S., the gaps are widening, and so we believe that we need to make a concerted effort to recognize all learning and to focus those efforts on Black, Native American, and Latino individuals. It's in doing that that we can start to hopefully lessen that gap and move toward Goal 2025.

So, here are a couple of other pieces of data that we do have: We know that one in five Americans have some college credit and no degree. And we do have some research about the impact of recognizing students' prior learning. We know that adult students with credit from prior learning assessment at two-year institutions were four times more likely to complete their degrees, while individuals who went to a four-year institution were twice as likely to earn their degrees (Klein-Collins et al., 2020).[7] We also know through qualitative research about the impact on individuals to hear someone say they already have college-level learning in contrast to people being told that they're not college material. The difference is very powerful. We also had a

student who shared with us that she previously felt uncounted, so when her learning *was* counted, it really changed her perception of herself and what she thought she was capable of knowing and doing in the world. Again, there are very powerful things that we can do if we engage in the recognition of learning.

But again, we've had some unique challenges in the U.S. in implementing a system that would get us there. Really, we've been having this conversation in the U.S. since post-World War I, when we were trying to help many of the returning veterans get back to work, and that was a small, concerted effort that wasn't really touched again until the 1970s. At about that moment in time, we started to see a lot of people be concerned about access — and again I'm trying to embrace recognition of learning as a way to provide that access — but that was very much focused on individual institutions picking this up as their "why" and trying to make access a reality. There was absolutely nothing in our higher education system that said, "you *should* do this or you *could* do this." And so, these institutions were really front-runners. Nan and Alan happen to work at one institution [SUNY Empire State College] that has this call to access and PLA as its core mission. Outside of these wonderful institutions that were innovating, there wasn't really a lot of activity being done at the state or national (federal) level and the conversations were pretty quiet for a while in those intermediate years.

We started to see interest and activity pick back up in the 1990s. But sadly, even in a 2012 survey, only 27% of institutions reported that they actually engaged in recognizing prior learning (Lakin et al., 2015, p. 1). So again, we have a lot of work to do to get this goal accomplished. There have been more recent efforts for states to step into this area. Thus, for example, states have set policies communicating to institutions that they *must* have a policy. That doesn't mean that they make that demand transparent to the institution. There's no guarantee that students know that's an option for them, and there's no guarantee that these institutions are actually providing that to every student or are trying to scale that in any way. So, we have seen these state efforts as steps forward but again, these are not sufficient to get to where we would need to be. And again, part of our problem is a lack of national-level evidence around the recognition of learning and prior learning assessment since activities to recognize learning are often very specific to the institution that's doing that work and there are no state or federal reporting structures. That is, even though states may ask institutions to have a policy, there's no accountability mechanism for what happens because of that policy. These are just some of the big challenges we must take on to get this work going. It really reflects the need for a true social movement focused on institutions and people who are committed to equity who have picked this up. Without a doubt, scale is really a hard aspect of the work for us.

I don't want this to sound like I'm doing this work myself or that Lumina is doing all this! We have lots of great partners, but our strategy to try to get over some of these barriers is to help national- and state-level actors create the system we need. And so, a lot of our grant-making activities have gone directly to institutions to try to increase that 27%, so we've supported institutions to improve their curriculum's transparency and assessment so that institutions are prepared to engage in the recognition of learning. Up until the last 10 years, many institutions didn't always have clear learning outcomes, didn't always know what courses were responsible for teaching what types of curricula. We also found that assessment was lacking. If we're talking about assessing learning that comes in from somewhere else, if I can't even assess the learning, I'm proving there's a barrier for engagement with faculty. It's in this spirit that we spend a lot of time doing and supporting that kind of work. We also launched the Competency-Based Education Network [C-BEN],[9] which is a group of institutions that are committed to working in competencies regardless of seat time. That group, which started in 2017, has grown to about 150 institutions. We also have been leading work to create a new type of transcript. As you all probably know, part of the barriers to getting access to transcripts is being able to "translate" what someone is bringing in with them, and then tracking that into the curriculum. We've been working with a lot of our technology friends to figure out how to make this much easier for institutions

and to be able to scale this for every learner. So, we've been working with partners to create new competency-based transcripts that also utilize machine learning tools to scale the ability for audits to happen and to automatically award credit; so no more hand-matching of pieces and Excel spreadsheets! We want to be able to automate that.

We're also supporting states to take their next step in providing different types of policies and accountability that would support more institutions getting engaged in the recognition of learning. We're also supporting states to create statewide articulation agreements. That would mean that a learner would know that no matter which institution they went to in a state, they are going to get credit for what they already know and can do, especially if that's something that's already been validated like an industry certification, a military occupation, a CLEP [College-Level Examination Program] test, and/or the various standardized tests that we have. It's very clear that all the institutions are abiding by the same type of credit awarding process. It's a very new idea that we're pursuing.

As I mentioned, the research is just difficult and we're continuing to support that research by serving institutions that are examining student transcripts to determine what has happened in the past. I am hopeful that once we get more engaged at this state level, we'll have some better data and be able to understand how these practices are being implemented and their impact on the equity populations we talked about serving. We want to know that what we're putting in place gets implemented, and hopefully, the right people find it. We're really trying to focus on eliminating those gaps that I described earlier. That's our goal. So that's a little bit in a very short piece of time about what's happening in the U.S.

A.M.: Thank you so much, Amber, for helping us understand more about Goal 2025 and its efforts to respond to the kind of marginalization that has negatively affected generations of Americans. This is so relevant to our efforts to understand "the power of PLA." We are now very glad to invite our third guest, Anni Karttunen, to speak. Welcome, Anni.

Anni Karttunen (A.K.): Thank you so much and thank you for inviting me. It is a nice opportunity to be talking about my experience training trainers and educational authorities around the world. I was very pleased when, in anticipation of this time together, we were discussing the goals of this particular webinar and the question of "why" rather than "how" because the why question is why we all should be doing this work.

I'm going to give you two quite short examples, one from Finland and one from Ukraine. Firstly, in Finland, which is my country. We already started developing a validation system in the 1970s. Finland was a relatively poor, rural country back then. We had been impoverished by World War II; the country was still quite rural. But then, when the '80s came and the IT [information technology] boom hit the country, there was zero unemployment. I mean the economy just went up and up and up. Given this context, it was thus decided that we did not need any "recognition systems" because, in some way, everybody had a job. But then, surprise, surprise, the IT bubble just burst. That was in the early nineties — 1991. And then there was mass unemployment, and the country was really on the verge of bankruptcy. I'm saying this seriously; it was really like you remember the case of Iceland just a few years ago.[9] It was as bad as in Greece or other horrible examples you've heard of countries going nearly bankrupt, and in those days, there was no European Union to save us or bail us out; there were very few international loans available for countries because all these mechanisms were developed later.

However, the Finnish educational authorities along with our ministry of labor started thinking about what we could do, because there was massive unemployment. We needed to do something about these people because many people don't necessarily have qualifications of any sort. So, in effect, they dug out the paperwork that they started developing in the 1970s and they continued from there, and by 1994, we already had a competency-based qualification

system in Finland. It was very fast work. We developed about 350 VET (vocational education and training) qualifications, all described in terms of learning outcomes. In effect, with these qualifications in place, it was possible to move from job experience to formal qualifications. I'm talking about the validation of both informal and nonformal learning.

Since then, the qualification system has acted like the great equalizer and stabilizer. Whenever there is some sort of immediate economic uncertainty, any immediate crisis in the country, more and more resources are put toward education and training, and people's qualifications are being validated so they can find new career opportunities. In this way, the whole economic scene is relatively flexible. People have adopted this idea of continuous learning; people are not afraid to go to school and learn whatever more they need to on top of the result of our validation practices. For us in Finland, it's now a normal thing to do. We've had it for 25 years!

I now want to turn to my second example, which comes from Ukraine. I started working there in 2014 when Russia invaded and annexed Crimea. That was an eye-opener for me. Prior to that, I had always thought that validation was a great tool and an important pathway toward learning. But when I was there working at the time, the area was still covered with guerrillas. They were living in tents, and it was a very messy situation: There was a war going on and people were seeing this on the media. There was fighting everywhere, so, first, it was quite difficult emotionally to be working there but, over time, I started seeing thousands and thousands of people from the Crimea area migrating to Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. What I came to understand was that most post-Soviet countries had very good educational systems, both in the vocational education sector as well as in higher education. And I would say that more than 90% of working adults had some sort of qualification. But often, too, in the Soviet days, the role of the central government was huge. That is, the central government could, for example, dictate how many people should be studying to become welders. Further, some people studied what they were advised to, but didn't necessarily work in that particular field for their entire lives. Maybe a person had a family business; or maybe a welder, or a person with a welder's qualification, had been working as a baker all his life. And then suddenly when they had to migrate to Kyiv, to the other side of the country, they were ripped from their networks, from their families, from whatever they knew from that business. All of a sudden, they had to start finding new work and a new life path, and they had a formal qualification as a welder, but they might not have the expertise. They didn't have the competency to be a welder after 20 or 30 years of having worked as bakers. And then they were stuck: They wanted to work in bakeries or whatever their occupation had been, but they had the wrong qualifications. And in some countries, qualifications really matter, so even in more hands-on jobs, you must have a formal qualification in that area to be able to work. And I saw these long lines of people queuing for food, queuing for clothes, and looking for work.

And then one morning at breakfast, I was sitting with a person from the Ukrainian Ministry of Education with whom I was working. And behind my back, there was a screen showing live pictures of this raging war in Crimea. I was looking at her and she had tears running down her cheeks and I thought, OK, yet another day, but we have to try to do something to help these people; we've got to be willing to try anything and work our darnedest to help these people who have been forced to migrate from where they lived. That was really the moment when I realized: This is an important job that we're doing. And that's why we need to have a passion inside of us growing every day because we are really working for the individual person. Maybe we are technically working for governments or universities or foundations or whatever, but, most importantly, we are here for the person in the street to make their lives better, to give them second chances.

A.M.: Thank you so much, Anni, for both the Finnish and the Ukraine examples. They surely add to our understanding of the power of PLA and to the relevance of our common work in responding to concrete realities that people face.

N.T.: I wonder if any of our speakers would like to offer any comments/responses to what others have said. Heidi?

H.B.: Thank you. I think that in different ways, we all mentioned valuing learning outside the formal schooling systems — learning in life, learning in workplaces, learning in other contexts. I can't emphasize that enough. Employers and professional bodies and all kinds of different groups have a huge role to play in thinking about and pointing to legitimate learning. We also mentioned the difficulties in implementing PLA and other systems of learning recognition. It helps to have government or high-level commitment. We mentioned the importance of learning outcomes; they absolutely help our progression and the pathways we are trying to open. And we mentioned the different kinds of assessments that are needed. As I mentioned, the South African Qualifications Authority develops policy for "level descriptors" that also touch on registering qualifications, which also touch on outcomes, as well as RPL and assessment. Lastly, I want to mention the ease of transcripts. Yes, in different ways, I think we're also talking about making that process easier and competency-based. Anni mentioned economic hardship and the role of RPL in responding to the political and work situations in which people find themselves. I think RPL is about hope and about doing things differently, and system flexibility. And of course, with COVID, all these things apply all over again.

N.T.: Amber?

A.G.D.: I just feel very honored to be in the presence of Anni and Heidi. I feel like even during our first call about the "why" and about the power of what prior learning can do for people, there were so many commonalities. As you said, Anni, we're not standing up for anyone else but the student. Often for people, especially the populations of learners we're talking about, there's not someone standing up in the system to dismantle the barriers they face. That's just so critical. I think that everything that's happening — what Heidi's doing and what Anni's doing and what our colleagues in the U.S. are doing — is seeing and trying out ways to stand up for students.

And Heidi, I wanted to mention that some of the work that we've supported here in the U.S. is certainly about how we can create these qualification frameworks. Nan actually worked on creating one of them.[10] As I said earlier, the problem we've had here in the U.S. is that because we don't have a national- or federal-level approach, we now have this proliferation of something like 1,000 frameworks! We need infrastructure at the national level that allows people to understand how to translate this learning and value it.

Finally, I wanted to share some reflections about COVID and its connection to our discussion. We're really anticipating that more students will be stopping out than ever. On average, in so-called "normal times," we anticipate that about 35% of students will actually stop out from their curriculum at some point in their studies, and these are certainly not normal times, so we enter what we in the U.S. sometimes call a "student swirl." We're really anticipating that swirl is going to increase, and that, for example, people may be stopping out from a four-year higher education program to get a two-year, short-term credential to get back in the labor market and then, at some later point, try to get back in to finish their four-year degree. Or there may be adults who need to come back to school to get some kind of postsecondary credential because they didn't have one before, but they do have all this amazing life and work experience that, if it could be counted toward a degree, they would be twice, or even four times as likely to complete their degrees. We're hearing from everyone that there couldn't be a more important time for PLA; please, we hear, "Keep investing, keep moving forward." We know why the student stories that Heidi and Anni shared are so important. We know that each time a student sits with us. We know that this is just so critical.

N.T.: Thank you so much, Amber. Anni?

A.K.: I'm usually very impatient and I keep on changing jobs and job programs, but why I've stuck with validation is exactly for the reason Amber and Heidi were explaining: it is so empowering! Think about these stories! Understand what we're trying to do to help people. And we need to continue to think about evidence. Heidi, for example, mentioned statistics, and of course, statistics are really important when you're building up a validation system because that's the way we can see, even when we start off, if we're doing this right. Those statistics are lacking in many countries that are doing validation and it's then very hard, for example, for educational authorities who are trying to convince other stakeholders to adopt a validation system. They don't have the tools to show them why this is important; they're often lacking the statistics. We must remember how important this kind of research is for us all.

[A short discussion followed.]

A.M.: We want to thank all of you who attended this session. And thanks so much to Heidi, Amber, and Anni for your insights, for your experience, for your understanding. We hope that in many ways, our session today will spur people on to see the value of PLA/RPL in terms of workforce development, in terms of access, in terms of responding to the marginalized, in terms of responding to those people who just have been bypassed in a million ways in our workplaces and our academic institutions. Good day to all.

References

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Lakin, M. B., Seymour, D., Nellum, C. J., & Crandall, J. R. (2015). *Credit for prior learning: Charting institutional practice for sustainability*. https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Credit-for-Prior-Learning-Charting-Institutional-Practice-for-Sustainability.pdf

Notes

[1]   NQF History and Objectives: https://www.saqa.org.za/nqf-history-and-objectives-full?language_content_entity=en.

[2]   National Learners' Records Database: https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/inline-files/NLRDintro2019022_0.pdf.

[3]   FET College: https://www.fet-college.co.za/.

[4]   Lumina Foundation's Stronger Nation: https://www.luminafoundation.org/our-work/stronger-nation/.

[5]   "Separate but equal" is a legal doctrine that confirmed unequal treatment of white and African American students and legitimated the post-Civil War "Jim Crow" racial segregation laws. The segregationist doctrine was solidified in the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision.

[6]   In Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954), the United States Supreme Court overturned the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision and ruled in a 9-0 decision that separate facilities for white and African American students were inherently unequal.

[7]   See "The PLA Boost" from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) at https://www.wiche.edu/key-initiatives/recognition-of-learning/#_PLABoost and the full report by Klein-Collins et al. (2020), an update to the 2010 *Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success* study, which can be found at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED524753.pdf.

[8]   C-BEN: https://www.cbenetwork.org/.

[9]   In 2008, major banks in Iceland defaulted, which resulted in an economic collapse that, given its size, was the largest in economic history.

[10]   The Global Learning Qualifications Framework: https://www.esc.edu/glqf.