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# What Can University Teachers Learn from Recognition of Prior Learning

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Elinkeino-, liikenne- ja  
ympäristökeskus



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**Vipuvoimaa**  
**EU:lta**  
2007–2013



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# Who benefits from RPL?

- Individuals
- Higher education institutions
- Employers
- Society
- **and**
- Teachers



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## On what conditions?

- Responsibility for the quality of degrees lies in the HEIs  
→ processes of RPL should form a part of the HEI's QA system
- Need for **both** recognised quality of learning outcomes **and** equal and reliable administrative processes
  - Analysing achieved learning outcomes requires knowledge of content → a teacher or instructor the right person to assist the student to identify his/her knowledge, skills & competences
  - The process itself and the decision-making should be based on reliable criteria, be equal and transparent





# Challenges for HEIs in Finland

- In order to enhance mobility HEIs should have common practices of RPL
- Recognition of studies in another university (from the same HE sector, universities/UASs) functions quite well
- Recognition of studies from the other HE sector still a challenge  
→ an obstacle to domestic mobility
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning new in HE  
→ fears about the growing work load of the teachers
- Lack of expertise in outcome-based curriculum planning and assessment methods
- Networking with the world of work not systematic





# What has helped in learning?

- Revision of curricula connected with the Bologna process gave tools for recognition
  - Core content analysis, a move towards outcome based approach
  - Emphasised the responsibility of HEIs for the labour market relevance of degrees, for students' working-life skills (cf. also *Tuning* projects)
  - In some HEIs, also pedagogical development projects
- Introduction of the personal study plan system
- Development of student feedback mechanisms as a part of QA systems in HEIs





# Developments in Finnish HEIs

- Most HEIs have a teaching/educational/pedagogical strategy
- PDCA cycle seems to work quite well in QA of education
- RPL mechanisms form a part of the QA system
- Personal study plans
  - support the students in planning their own learning and professional development
  - use PSPs has become more versatile
- Curricula more outcome oriented than before
- More defined policies concerning stakeholder participation in curriculum design, increased information exchange with external stakeholders





## But...

- Definitions of learning outcomes of **whole** degrees still in development process
- Development of assessment criteria still a challenge
- Student feedback mechanisms: **analyse** and **use** of feedback
- Stakeholder co-operation should be made a more systematic part of the planning and implementation of education
- Implementation of good practices in and between the HEIs





# So, what have the teachers had to learn?

- Expertise in outcome based approach and labour market relevance of curricula has increased
  - benefits from the point of view of curriculum design
- Personal study planning has become a part of everyday practices in HE (although still big differences in implementation)
  - a move towards more interactive working culture
  - more trust and responsibility to students
  - study planning & career planning
- A better dialogue with employers
  - cf. Bologna goals
  - networking with labour-market also a part of the "third task" (societal or regional impact) of the HEIs





# Still some questions

- How to find common language with external stakeholders?
  - Meaning of labour-market relevance and outcome-based approach (both Bachelor's and Master's degrees)
  - Definition of key working-life skills and ways to support their development
- Practices and models at institutional level vs. field-specific practices?
  - Fields represented in both HE sectors (more cooperation needed)?
  - Support and training for teachers?
- Looking at the RPL process from student perspective
  - Possible role of student organisations in cooperation?
  - Development of study skills

