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Recognition of Prior Learning: How Its Impact on Village Official Competencies?

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Abstract

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) represents an educational innovation necessitating adaptability and flexibility from academic institutions. Village officials must bridge the knowledge gap, as many have only completed high school. This study investigates the effectiveness of RPL in enhancing the competencies of village officials in Indonesia. The sample included 1,260 village officials across Indonesia, divided equally into 28 experimental and control groups. Data were gathered using a job competency assessment scale. Findings revealed a significant competency improvement in the experimental group following RPL implementation compared to the control group. This underscores the importance of RPL, inspired by Experiential Learning Theory and Job and Performance Theory, in fostering competency development through work activities. Continuous application of RPL is essential, tailored to the specific competency needs of various job types, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure quality.

Keywords: *Recognition Of Prior Learning, Learning Model, Job Competencies, Experiential Learning, Job and Performance.*

INTRODUCTION

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) education mode is crucial to resolve competency gaps, especially among workers. In Indonesia, one profession that requires this mode of education is village official because most village officials graduated from senior high school and below, while some of them even graduated from elementary school (Dewi & Sudiana, 2022; Puspa & Prasetyo, 2020). The low education level of village officials has caused the competencies of village officials to be less than optimal (Ali & Saputra, 2020). The main tasks and functions of village officials are public services, village budget management, village community empowerment, village development, and administration of village regulations. All of these tasks can only be carried out by village officials who are competent in carrying out their duties. Efforts to improve the competencies of village officials cannot be limited to training or technical guidance. Findings from Aziiz (2019) show that competency improvement modes such as training or technical guidance are less effective. Many participants only participate in these activities for pocket money or recreation because the training is held in hotels outside the city.

As stated by Naudé (2016), in general, RPL programs facilitate the gap between workplace knowledge and academic knowledge, or vice versa. Therefore, the RPL mode is necessary to ensure that candidates can translate the knowledge gained in the workplace in terms of academic requirements. This RPL program can mediate between work experience and academic knowledge, so that the outcomes formed from this learning process become more comprehensive and optimal. Through the RPL program, graduates will become more competent because the knowledge and the work become important assessments in the educational process Naudé (2022). In line with Senge (1990), RPL programs can enrich the curriculum with their insights into field practice and problem solving.

RPL is also considered as a catalyst for individual learning and development (Romaniuk & Snart 2000). People who have completed the RPL process report its impact on their personal learning curve and occupational development as they are able to reflect on their learning experiences, which increases confidence and

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encourages further learning activities (Andersson and Fejes 2012; Miguel, Ornelas, and Maroco 2016). The expressive and reflective elements of communicative assessment settings have been considered to have inherent learning potential (Fejes and Andersson 2009), suggesting that RPL is not only about assessment of past learning (Werquin 2012), but it is also related to learning in the moment and from the assessment process itself (Andersson 2014). When returning to work, lecturers can recognize one's skills, abilities, and personal situation and improve occupational competence (Evans, Kersh, and Kontiainen 2004; Fuller and Unwin 2004).

Contribution Of Study

Unfortunately, the implementation of RPL does not run well, and it is full of challenges. Moreover, there are still many issues such as the number of recognitions is lower than expected, and there is lack of trust from stakeholders in this program (Maurer 2019; Cooper, Ralphs, and Harris 2017). Despite this, RPL has become an important topic in the educational literature. However, there is a lack of research on testing the effectiveness of RPL (Cameron 2014). A few empirical studies and almost no theoretical work exist, leaving a significant research gap. Assinger (2023) suggests that research related to RPL still lacks conceptualization. In addition, there is a gap between RPL learning in the classroom that does not match RPL learning in the workplace. Therefore, this RPL process is still mismatched (Berglund & Andersson 2012).

RPL, as a field of practice for workplace pedagogy, is intended to provide workplace learning (Billett 2016). Workplace learning is understood as intra- and inter-psychological processes that occur in situations of active participation in the workplace (Billett 2004). During participation in goal-directed activities, an individual performs tasks, acquires and applies knowledge, solves problems, and develops skills. Then, through actualizing these skills, this individual progresses to being recognized as a member of the workplace community. In line with this, Sandberg and Kubiak (2013) also convey that participation in practice enables recognition by providing opportunities for the actualization of abstract abilities through work and activity. These opportunities allow individuals to be recognized as competent in their contribution to a common goal. The problems associated with RPL seem to be something that needs further investigation. This study offers important insights in at least two ways by identifying this gap. First, it provides a theoretical investigation of the effect of the RPL education model on village officers in enhancing the competence of village officials. Second, it offers practical recommendations for improving the competence of village officers through the RPL education model, which can be applied to the district government and the Ministry of Villages in developing countries such as Indonesia through various integrated policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

RPL is a process that enables individuals of different ages, backgrounds and attitudes to gain formal recognition for their skills and knowledge (equivalent value of learning and skills) as a result of formal training, work experience and/or life experience (Moore & Rooyen, 2002). Pokorny's (2023) view also conveys that RPL is a process that seeks to give value to all learning: what a person knows and can do regardless of how it was achieved, for example through study, community work, on-the-job training, or other life experiences that have not been formally recognized through credit transfer mechanisms. Furthermore, the perspectives of Garnett et al. (2004) and Garnett & Cavaye (2015) also suggest that RPL is a process in which informal experiential learning and non-formal learning (non-certified and planned learning) are given academic recognition. Through this learning, experiences that include knowledge and skills are acquired naturally through life, often resulting from learning demands from work. The RPL program allows individuals to gain recognition for their skills and knowledge and evaluate prior learning with established academic standards through an open and transparent evaluation approach. RPL is not separate from assessment but a specialist part of assessment. RPL has long been the domain of educational institutions and the job market (Harris and Wihak 2014, 14). According to Berglund and Andersson (2012), recognition of learning and skills becomes relevant for workplace management when new people enter the workplace (recruitment, onboarding), in relation to skills developed through work (human resource development, career development, licensing), and when people leave the organization (succession planning, knowledge management).

The theoretical explanation of this RPL is further elaborated in the Exp Grouperential learning theory. Kolb (1984:1) defines learning as a process in which knowledge is created through experience transformation. Knowledge results from a combination of understanding and transforming experience. Experience should be considered an input, while learning should be viewed as an outcome. Learning, then, occurs through reflection on experience. According to Working Group 9 of the National Training Board (1994) "Experiential Learning" (EL) can be defined as learning acquired through deliberate and systematic reflection on experience. Learning may occur in formal or informal settings, or may be incidental. In line with this, the RPL process is carried out by crediting the experience gained during fieldwork with knowledge normally taught in higher education, and, where appropriate, giving credit for that knowledge (McCormick, 1994). RPL, therefore, is an approach that appears to encompass a number of key elements relevant to current economic, organizational and labour market realities. RPL recognizes the importance of continuous learning (lifelong learning) and skill enhancement. RPL values learning and skills acquired through life and work experiences, as well as through formal education and training. As stated by Natheem & Kaylianne (2021), RPL focuses on each individual and builds confidence and self-esteem based on systematic self-assessment of performance and concrete achievements.

Experiential and constructivist learning ideas are central to the practice and outcomes of the RPL process. Dewey (1929) states that the ideas of problem solving are crucial to understanding the importance of experience and experiment. Kolb (1984) makes many references to Dewey in his writings on the learning cycle. In addition, Schön (1983) focuses on experiments, and Brookfield (1987) highlights the contribution of critical reflection on one's experiences in developing an understanding of various phenomena. These perspectives see knowledge production as a construction by the individual. The context in which knowledge is acquired is not the primary focus. In this way, experiential learning has the benefit of recognizing experience as an important part of the learning process. Identifying workplace learning as a social and contextual activity is common in research on workplace learning (e.g., Blåka & Filstad, 2007; Collin & Valleala, 2005; Wenger, 1999). People learn by interacting with each other and with various objects. The focus is often on the context in which learning occurs, the subject matter, and the learning methods.

This research defines the context of RPL in work (workplace) called RPL Desa or Village RPL for undergraduate degree. The context of Village RPL is an assessment of individual learning achievements at the village level, such as village heads, village officials, members of village council or BPD (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa), the managers of BUM Desa, professional assistants, and people who are active in empowering village communities through formal, non-formal, informal education and work experience (Jaenudin et al., 2023). The main objective of the Village RPL is to provide opportunities for those involved in community empowerment and village development to continue their higher education, from the D4/S1 to S3 (undergraduate to doctoral) levels. The Village RPL program in higher education is based on field/work experience, non-formal and informal education, and contributions to community empowerment that are considered equivalent to lecture material, then they are converted into semester credit units.

Through RPL program, efforts to increase the competencies of village officials in managing village funds are expected to be optimal, through village officials who are competent in intelligence, knowledge, skills, and behavior to optimize village development (Perdana, 2018). Education system is a collaboration among components that play a role in creating an effective education system. Existing subsystems operate in accordance with their roles and functions to achieve the expected goals (Wibawa, 2017). Competency is interaction result of inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes in the education system, which influence each other, forming a unity of elements that integrates to achieve goals (Wibawa, 2017). RPL process in higher education is the interaction of students, lecturers, and learning resources in a learning environment (Sanjaya, 2006). Through the recognition and RPL learning, the competencies of village officials including functional, managerial, and core competencies in the context of services to village communities can be significantly improved (Palan, 2003; Kurniawati, 2017). Based on the flow of the framework presented earlier, the effect of Recognition of Prior Learning treatment on village official competencies can be illustrated as follows.

Figure 1. The research model.

METHODOLOGY

This study analyzes the intervention effect of RPL program and investigates its impact on improving village official competencies in Indonesia. To achieve these objectives, a quasi-experimental research design involving experimental and control groups was chosen. This design allows for the addition of a specific intervention to the experimental group, while the control group receives no specific treatment. Both groups are believed to have similar characteristics, allowing for comparison of outcomes at the end of the program intervention process [Rehmat & Bailey, 2014; White & Sabarwal, 2014]. In this study, the research design divided the village officials into two groups: an experimental group and a control group without random assignment. The experimental group received the RPL program intervention, while the other group did not. A survey questionnaire analyzed the competencies of village officials before and after participating in the RPL program. The design of this study is described as follows.

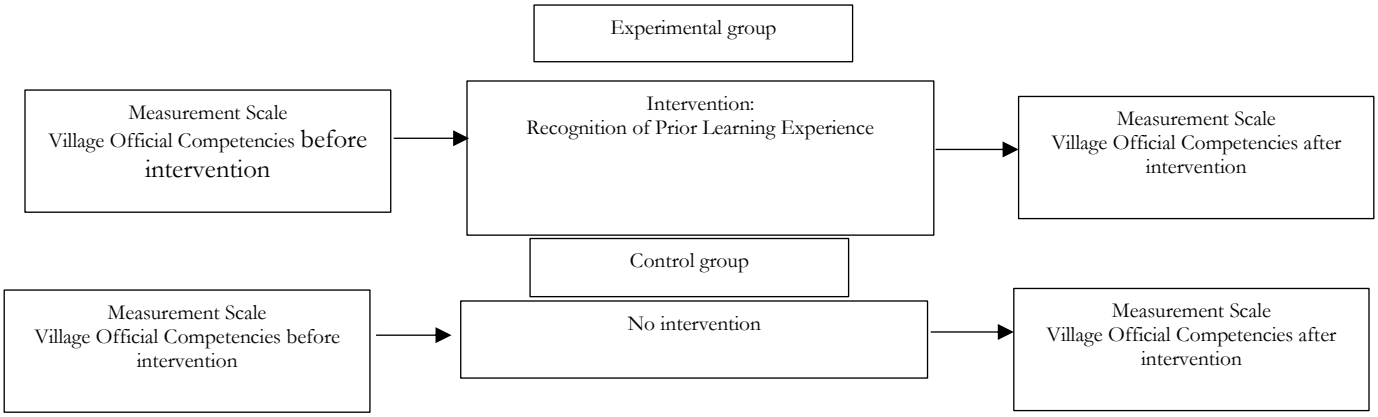

Figure 2. Illustration of the research design

When it comes to ethical concerns, this study was approved by the institutional review board of Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia. Participation was completely voluntary and had no impact on participants' grades or academic performance. Participants' personal information was kept confidential, and the study identified each student with an identification number that was only accessible to the researchers of this program. This study was conducted in 30 villages selected by purposive sampling across Indonesia. Participants were village officials who were actively working in the village office with a high school education and below, and they had never attended university. A total of 1260 participants were involved, consisting of 647 women and 613 men. We made every effort to avoid any research bias that may have occurred during the research period. The experimental group was the focus of this study, while the control group was used to compare the program results. This study's experimental and control classes were widely tested involving 28 groups (experimental and control) of village officials. The 28 groups came from 28 districts across Indonesia. The village groups were selected because the 28 districts implemented the RPL Program in Indonesia. The study was conducted over two years starting in 2018 and ending in 2023. The experimental and control groups completed a measurement scale questionnaire before and after the intervention.

The research instrument is the "Public Manager Competencies Questionnaire -PUMACQ-" adapted from Castaño et al. research (2023). The items of this instrument were generated from the literature on competency measurement for public managers, and were designed to collect information from respondents. The questionnaire originally consisted of 50 items, but it was reduced to 30 items by experts to measure the

constructs that the items were supposed to measure. The initial draft of the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts (two Professors in Test Education, Measurement, and Evaluation). Two experts in Test Education, Measurement, and Evaluation ensured that all items in the questionnaire did not deviate from the measured constructs while considering face and content validity.

After being reviewed by experts, the PUMACQ was streamlined to 30 items that were used to collect information from participants, and it was tested to determine the instrument's reliability. To test the 30 items of the PUMACQ, 45 respondents (28 male village officials and 24 female village officials) were selected outside the research area using convinient sampling method. According to Perneger et al. (2015), the sample size for the pre-test stage of scale validation is 30-50 respondents. The village officials came from different villages with various positions and duties. On the other hand, the reliability coefficient of the pilot test questionnaire was 0.78, indicating that the instrument was adequate to obtain information on competencies from participants. Several experts (Madan & Kensinger, 2017; Sim & Wright, 2005) agree that a reliability coefficient greater than 0.7 is a suitable and appropriate instrument to collect respondent information.

The PUMACQ is divided into two parts: part A contains the demographic characteristics of the participants such as gender, age, rank, school type, academic qualifications, years of experience, and discipline, while part B contains 30 items. The questionnaire items use a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), which is then classified into positive and negative groups. Positive items were scored from four to one, while negative items were scored in reverse.

The statistical technique used in this study is descriptive statistics, using mean value. Then, to see whether there is a change before and after treatment, this study used paired sample t-test technique. The last one, this study also used independent sample t-test technique to find out whether the village RPL program is effective, by comparing the assessment scores in the control and experimental classes. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used for statistical techniques. Before conducting this test, prerequisite data analysis was run first, followed by t-test. Normality test and homogeneity test were used as prerequisite analysis. Liliefors test was used to check normality, while Bartlett test was used to check homogeneity.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive results of the comparison of the village official competencies were used to see the pre-assessment scores of the village official competencies in each group. The descriptive statistical results are described as follows.

Table 1. Experimental and Control Class Pre-Assessment Scores

Description	**Exp 1**	**Ctrl 1**	**Exp 2**	**Ctrl 2**	**Exp 3**	**Ctrl 3**	**Exp 4**	**Ctrl 4**
Mean	77	67	63	80	68	73	66	65
Criteria	High	Middle	Middle	High	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle
Description	**Exp 5**	**Ctrl 5**	**Exp 6**	**Ctrl 6**	**Exp 7**	**Ctrl 7**	**Exp 8**	**Ctrl 8**
Mean	66	62	62	68	74	65	69	75
Criteria	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle
Description	**Exp 9**	**Ctrl 9**	**Exp 10**	**Ctrl 10**	**Exp 11**	**Ctrl 11**	**Exp 12**	**Ctrl 12**
Mean	65	69	71	72	69	72	71	63
Criteria	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	High	Middle
Description	**Exp 13**	**Ctrl 13**	**Exp 14**	**Ctrl 14**	**Exp 15**	**Ctrl 15**	**Exp 16**	**Ctrl 16**
Mean	67	65	65	71	77	63	69	80
Criteria	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	High	Middle	Middle	High
Description	**Exp 17**	**Ctrl 17**	**Exp 18**	**Ctrl 18**	**Exp 19**	**Ctrl 19**	**Exp 20**	**Ctrl 20**
Mean	69	70	66	69	70	64	69	64

Criteria	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle
Description	**Exp 28**	**Ctrl 28**	**Exp 22**	**Ctrl 22**	**Exp 23**	**Ctrl 23**	**Exp 24**	**Ctrl 24**
Mean	66	67	65	64	65	66	68	67
Criteria	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle
Description	**Exp 25**	**Ctrl 25**	**Exp 26**	**Ctrl 26**	**Exp 27**	**Ctrl 27**	**Exp 28**	**Ctrl 28**
Mean	67	67	69	65	66	69	64	68
Criteria	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle

Note : Exp = Experiment Group, Cntrl = Control Group

The descriptive statistical results in Table 1 show that the initial assessment score of the village official competencies in the control and experimental classes has a difference in score. However, if we look further, the experimental and control groups show equal criteria, which is in the middle. This indicates that descriptively both the control and experimental classes tend to be the same in the initial condition or before treatment. The results of total description analysis of the 28 groups are explained as follows. The description of comparison results of the village official competencies is used to see the post assessment scores (final assessment) of the village official competencies in each group, in all 28 groups. The results of descriptive statistics are described as follows.

Table 2. Experimental and Control Class Post-Assessment Scores

Description	**Exp 1**	**Cntrl 1**	**Exp 2**	**Cntrl 2**	**Exp 3**	**Cntrl 3**	**Exp 4**	**Cntrl 4**
Mean	85	70	86	73	89	73	82	72
Criteria	High	Middle	High	High	High	Middle	High	Middle
Description	**Exp 5**	**Cntrl 5**	**Exp 6**	**Cntrl 6**	**Exp 7**	**Cntrl 7**	**Exp 8**	**Cntrl 8**
Mean	83	81	88	72	80	77	86	78
Criteria	High	High	High	Middle	High	High	High	Middle
Description	**Exp 9**	**Cntrl 9**	**Exp 10**	**Cntrl 10**	**Exp 11**	**Cntrl 11**	**Exp 12**	**Cntrl 12**
Mean	90	72	79	74	74	73	81	73
Criteria	High	Middle	High	Middle	Middle	Middle	High	Middle
Description	**Exp 13**	**Cntrl 13**	**Exp 14**	**Cntrl 14**	**Exp 15**	**Cntrl 5**	**Exp 16**	**Cntrl 16**
Mean	79	79	79	79	89	72	82	84
Criteria	High	High	High	High	High	Middle	High	High
Description	**Exp 17**	**Cntrl 17**	**Exp 18**	**Cntrl 18**	**Exp 19**	**Cntrl 19**	**Exp 20**	**Cntrl 20**
Mean	89	73	90	71	85	71	88	65
Criteria	High	Middle	High	High	High	Middle	High	Middle
Description	**Exp 21**	**Cntrl 21**	**Exp 22**	**Cntrl 22**	**Exp 23**	**Cntrl 23**	**Exp 24**	**Cntrl 24**
Mean	78	72	81	73	87	74	81	70
Criteria	High	Middle	High	Middle	High	Middle	High	Middle
Description	**Exp 25**	**Cntrl 25**	**Exp 26**	**Cntrl 26**	**Exp 27**	**Cntrl 27**	**Exp 28**	**Cntrl 28**
Mean	79	69	80	71	76	70	79	71
Criteria	High	Middle	High	Middle	High	Middle	High	Middle

Note : Exp = Experiment Group, Cntrl = Control Group

The descriptive statistics shown in table 2 indicate that the final assessment score of the village official competencies in the control class and in the experimental class has a difference in score. It can be seen that most scores of the experimental group are higher than the scores in the control group. From the comparison of criteria, the control class is dominated by the middle criteria, while the experimental group is in high criteria.

This indicates that descriptively both the control class and the experimental class tend to be different in conditions after treatment in the experimental group. Furthermore, to compare changes in pre-assessment and post-assessment, see table 3 below.

Table 3. Comparison of The Pretest and Posttest Scores of The Experimental Group and The Control Group

No	Group	Average value		Enhancement
		Pre-Assesment	Post -Assesment	
1	Experiment	67,96	83,04	15,08
2	Control	68,21	73,29	5,08

Table 3 shows that the pre-assessment and post assessment comparison scores for both the experimental and control groups have increased. However, if we look further, the increase in the experimental group tends to be greater than in the control group. Furthermore, the comparison between the entire experimental groups and the control groups from pre-assessment, post assessment and enhancement scores as listed in figure 3 is described as follows

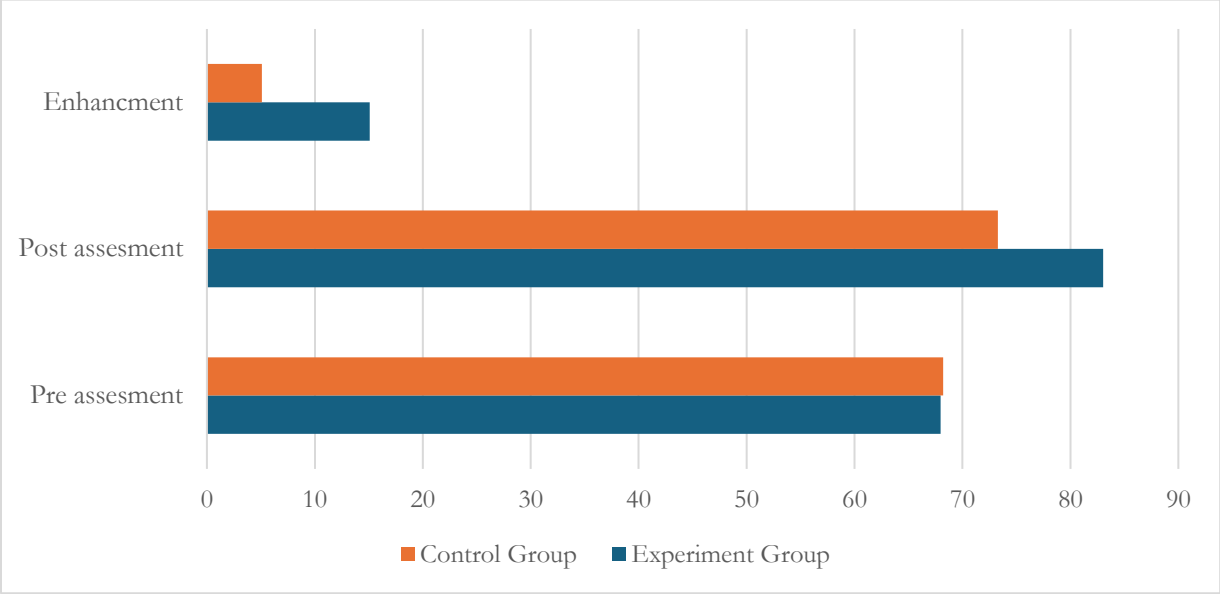

Figure 3. Comparison of Bar Chart of Pretest and Posttest Scores for Experimental Class and Control Class

The figure above shows that the control group's pre-assessment score is higher than the experimental group's pre-assessment score at the initial stage. However, after the experimental group was treated with village RPL, the competency scores increases by 10 points.

Assumption Parametrics Analysis

Before hypothesis testing was carried out, normality and homogeneity tests were first carried out on the pretest and posttest data. The results of the pretest data normality test for the experimental class and control class can be seen in the following table.

Table 4. Comparison of The Pretest and Posttest Scores of The Experimental Group and The Control Group

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Experiment	.131	28	.298	.960	28	.348
Control	.135	28	.285	.939	28	.101

The table shows the normality test of pre-assessment data for both the experimental class and control class. From Kolmogorov-Smirnov technique, the Sig. value for the experimental group is 0.298, and the Sig. value for the control group is 0.285. From Shapiro-Wilk test, the Sig. value for both groups is greater than 0.05. Therefore, based on the basis for decision making in the normality test, it can be concluded that the data on the village official competencies for the experimental and control groups are normally distributed.

Table 5. Sample Class Normality Test Results Based on Post-Assesment

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Experiment	.136	28	.198	.939	28	.102
Control	.143	28	.186	.903	28	.113

Table 5 shows the normality test of post-assessment data for both the experimental and control classes. From Kolmogorov-Smirnov technique, the Sig. value for the experimental group is 0.198, and the Sig. value for the control group is 0.186. From Shapiro-Wilk test, the Sig. value for both groups is greater than 0.05. Therefore, based on the basis for decision making in the normality test, it can be concluded that the data on the village official competencies for the experimental group and control group are normally distributed. Furthermore, data homogeneity testing can be seen in table 6 below.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Table 6. Sample Class Homogenity Test Results Based on Pre-Assesment

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3.702	1	54	.112

From the table 6 on the "Test of Homogeneity of Variances", the significance value (Sig.) of the village official competencies variable in the pre-assessment of experimental and control groups is 0.112. Because the value of Sig. 0.112 > 0.05, it can be concluded that the data variance on the village official competencies in the pre-assessment is the same or homogeneous.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Table 7. Homogenity Test Results Based on Post-Assesment

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.992	1	54	.089

From the table 7 on the "Test of Homogeneity of Variances", the significance value (Sig.) of the village official competencies variable in the pre-assessment of experimental and control groups is 0.089. Because the value of Sig. 0.089 > 0.05, it can be concluded that the data variance on the village official competencies in the pre-assessment is the same or homogeneous.

Table 8. Correlation Test Results for Paired Sample Test

Paired Samples Correlations		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre-Assessment & Post Assessment (Experiment Group)	28	.183	.352
Pair 2	Pre-Assessment & Post Assessment (Control Group)	28	.337	.180

Table 8 shows the results of the correlation test or the relationship between the two data or the relationship between the Pre Test variable and the Post Test variable in both groups. Based on the output above, the correlation coefficient (Correlation) of the experimental group is 0.183 with a significance value (Sig.) of 0.352, while the correlation coefficient (Correlation) of the control group is 0.337 with a significance value (Sig.) of 0.180. Because both the experimental group and the control group have a probability value > 0.05, it can be said that there is no relationship between the Pre Test variable and the Post Test variable in the two groups. Because there is no correlation, we can proceed to a paired sample test on the two groups.

Comparison Test

After conducting parametric assumption testing with results meeting the initial requirements, namely normally distributed data and avoidance of heteroscedasticity issues, the next step is to perform a T-Test on the experimental and control groups. The T-Test, whether a Paired Sample Test or an Independent Sample Test, can be explained as follows.

Table 9. Paired Sample Test Results Based on Experiment and Control Group

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Preexp - Postexp	-15.929	5.643	1.066	-18.117	-13.740	-14.936	27	.000
Pair 2	Precntrl - Postcntrl	-4.786	4.924	.931	-6.695	-2.876	-5.143	27	.070

Based on table 9, the Sig. (2-tailed) for the experimental group is 0.000 < 0.05, then H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an average difference between the Pre Test and Post Test learning outcomes, which means that there is an effect of implementing the RPL program to improve the village official competencies. While the Sig. (2-tailed) For the control class, if it is 0.070 > 0.05, then H0 is accepted, and Ha is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the average between pre and post assessment in the control class. Furthermore, it is used to prove whether the difference is significant (real) or not.

Table 10. Independent Sample Test Results Based on Experiment And Control Group

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Postexp	Equal variances assumed	2.992	.189	8.517	54	.000	9.750	1.145	7.455	12.045
	Equal variances not assumed			8.517	52.954	.000	9.750	1.145	7.454	12.046

Based on the output above, the significance value of Levene's Variance Equality Test is 0.189 > 0.05. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the data variance between group A and group B is homogeneous or the same (Sujarweni, 2014). Furthermore, based on the "Independent Samples Test" output table in the "Equal variances Equal variances assumed" section, it is known that the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.000 < 0.05. As a basis for decision making in the Independent Sample t test, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted. This means that there is a significant (real) difference between the average competencies of village officials in the control and experimental groups. This finding means that the village RPL program is effective in improving the village official competencies

DISCUSSION

This research explicitly explores village officials' competencies in providing public services to village communities. It also investigates how the village RPL program can improve the competencies of village officials. It is important to note that most studies have shown that RPL programs are effective in driving competency improvement [Garnett & Cavaye, 2015; Wibawa, 2017]. The first finding of this study, as seen in Table 1 and Table 2, shows the initial competency assessment results indicating no significant difference in the village's official competencies from either the experimental or control group. The criterion between the two groups is in the middle category, which is still not optimal in this case. In line with several researchers' opinions, the low level of education of village officials significantly impacts their competencies (Ali & Saputra, 2020; Dewi & Sudiana, 2022; Puspa & Prasetyo, 2020). It can be logically understood that an undergraduate level of education is needed to improve the village's official competencies.

Further findings shown in the paired sample T-test results show that the pre- and post-assessment of village official competencies in the experimental class indicated significant differences, while the control class did not. This finding is in accordance with the statement of Romaniuk and Snart (2000) that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program is proven to be an important catalyst for individual learning and development. The RPL program does not only significantly impact individual development in the context of learning and career advancement. Employees who successfully complete the RPL program have also positively impacted their career development. This program really provides an opportunity for employees to increase their job

confidence. In line with research by Andersson and Fejes (2012), and Miguel, Ornelas, and Maroco (2016), many RPL program participants are actively helped to complete their work well, so that their services can be optimal. Therefore, there is a need for an RPL program that is not only limited to recognition assessment but also a memorable practical learning process.

Research conducted by Fejes and Andersson (2009) and Werquin (2012) explains that RPL should not only focus on the assessment of prior recognition, but it is also related to the learning process during and after the assessment takes place. Therefore, RPL programs need to create an environment where individuals can continue learning and developing (Andersson (2014). Village officials who carry out the RPL program are well forged by applying the knowledge or courses they take to the work environment. In addition, RPL lecturers are expected to understand the personality of each student of village RPL program so that it can be a significant encouragement to improve work competence. Appreciation of RPL outcomes, therefore, can be a vital motivational factor for individuals to contribute more in the workplace. As a result, the RPL process not only creates efficient recruitment opportunities but also serves as a continuous learning instrument and supports individual career development (Evans, Kersh, & Kontiainen, 2004; Fuller & Unwin, 2004).

For the final finding, the results of the independent sample T-Test statistical test show that the post-assessment results of the village official competencies in the control class and in the experimental class are significantly different. It means that the village RPL program treatment applied is effective in improving the village's official competencies in assessing the knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics required for the success of their work. This finding reinforces that this RPL program approach needs to be a major focus in identifying key factors that support individual success in the workplace Lambert, Plank, Reid, & Fleming (2014), and Montier, Alai, & Kramer (2006). As stated by Curnow (2005), through an RPL perspective, we can see that certain aspects, such as knowledge, skills, and abilities, can be critical determinants in achieving success in the work environment. In line with this, Spencer & Spencer (1993) also validate that the context of performance in the workplace is not only limited to positive aspects but it is also related to practical applications in daily work situations. Through the Village RPL program, student graduates, who in this case are village officials, not only have theoretical concepts but are also able to precisely synergize theoretical concepts with practical implementation in the village government service properly.

The results of this study confirm that not all public organizations really pay attention to personal competencies, such as individual motives and traits. With the village RPL program, competencies can be measured concretely, leaving out subjective elements that also play an important role in the success of the work of village officials. The village RPL program emphasizes experience as a factor that significantly impacts competency development. Thus, the program can reduce the gap between theory and practice in the efforts to develop the competencies of village officials. As explained by Lambert, Plank, Reid, & Fleming (2014), the implementation of RPL program must involve more than just mastering the necessary knowledge and skills. The learning process in the RPL program should encourage and motivate village officials to improve their knowledge and skills. Therefore, learning in the RPL Program emphasizes a holistic approach to developing knowledge, skills, and abilities that cover intrinsic aspects of village officials' main tasks and functions.

The village RPL program is an implementation of Experiential Learning Theory (Dewey, 1938) that emphasizes direct interaction with real situations. As presented by Wibawa (2017), he explains that experiential learning can significantly impact individual knowledge, attitudes and skills, so that it builds mature work or professional competencies as an outcome of this learning. Not only in the context of learning, based on Boyatzis' (1982) theory of action and job performance, experiential learning can integrate learning in a framework that combines the theory of action with job performance to form a comprehensive model. By including an element of recognition of past experience, competency development can more appropriately assess and utilize the prior learning. Thus, this village RPL education is a holistic implementation of a more effective and relevant competency development effort to prepare individuals for the changing demands of the world of work.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of Village RPL proves that the program is not only effective in recognizing the credit standards of the college program, but it also confirms the recognition of their work-based knowledge as relevant, valuable and equivalent to learning acquired in higher education classrooms. The work-based learning in the RPL program proves effective in enhancing reflective practice activities that are highly functional for the development of village officials. Experiential learning in RPL Education has a positive impact, especially in improving the student's competencies. However, it should be noted that the RPL learning process, which emphasizes the experience of field work practice, must be set up in a specific way. In the implementation process, the program should always strengthen self-efficacy and motivation, reducing stress in learning.

This RPL approach is academically justified and in line with the theory of action and job performance (Boyatzis, 1982) and the experiential learning theory (Dewey, 1938). With this RPL program, the learning process is always required to pay attention to students' work context to get recognition in the higher education environment. Therefore, in its implementation, there needs to be academic assistance to ensure what they do in their work can be in line with the knowledge learned in the academic world.

These findings have implications for education practice, human resources and research. First, as previous researchers have indicated (Aziiz, 2019; Dewi & Sudiana, 2022; Puspa & Prasetyo, 2020), the experiential learning process embodied in the village RPL program can effectively and significantly improve the competencies of village officials. It must be understood, however, that this impact is limited to competency, not performance. The term is often interchangeable between competence and performance. Therefore, to improve performance, it requires more complex factors. Second, the findings suggest that both the curriculum and learning methods should be adapted to the context of the RPL students' work, which in this context is the work of village officials. Nonetheless, this study recognizes some limitations. The study did not qualitatively investigate the impact of the RPL program, which may have prevented it from gaining individual insights. We intended to include interview data during this study; however, this was canceled due to research permission restrictions from the selected bureaucracy.

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