

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The topic of research for this thesis is: **Recognition of Prior Learning: Strategy for Skill Development of Workforce in the Unorganised Sector in India.**

The big question facing the world today is how to make learning that takes place outside formal education and training institutions more visible, an issue instrumental in creating interest in the present research as well. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is one such practice that recognises previous learning of all ages, backgrounds and attitudes. Its broad principle is that previous learning, whether acquired informally, non-formally, experientially or formally, can and should be recognised and given currency within formal education and training frameworks. Accordingly, this study is related to the emerging concept of RPL for skill development of the workforce in the unorganised or informal sector of the economy and is situated within the Indian context. It is an attempt to study RPL as envisaged and implemented under the Indian policy of skill development as part of the *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana* (PMKVY).

India, one the fastest growing emerging economies of the world and given the globalising trends, has the potential to gain from its demographic dividend due to its huge working age population in an otherwise ageing world. Paradoxically, India still faces several challenges, including - poverty, illiteracy, over population, inequality and unemployment. An acute mismatch also exists between the workforce needs and the availability of skilled manpower to sustain India's growth story. 93% of India's total workforce is involved in the unorganised

sector, having low skills obtained non-formally or informally and with low levels of productivity. Thus, an urgent need is felt to enhance the skill levels of the workforce in the unorganised sector. The Indian Prime Minister has, in fact, given a call for a Mission for a 'Skilled India' as well as for making India the "Skill Capital of the world". However, owing to the huge demands already placed on formal educational routes, due to the large population and illiteracy levels, analysing issues related to recognising learning acquired through alternative pathways might prove a crucial game changer for India. As such, concept of RPL could be useful in enhancing the skill levels. Thus, the study has been undertaken to be able to ultimately help inform implementation of RPL in India by both, understanding its practical implementation by conducting case studies on the RPL Project Types (in the government and in private settings) in India, and by studying the policies and practices of RPL in other contexts across the world.

Accordingly, the study begins by laying out the nature of the skilling challenge that India faces as also the rationale, objectives, and the four research questions of this study. Thereafter, the methodology adopted and the theoretical framework of this study has been delineated in Chapter 2, followed by the literature review in Chapter 3. Consequent to laying out these broad factors guiding the present research, Indian government's policy documents related to skill development in general and RPL in particular, have been analysed in the fourth chapter in order to comprehend the vision, policy and implementation strategy of RPL in India. The succeeding Chapter 5 relates to the study of the actual implementation of RPL in India under the PMKVY which was sought to be

analysed by conducting case studies on two each of the three RPL Project Types, namely - RPL Camps as well as RPL at Employer's Premises (no RPL Centres Project Type was in operation in the Delhi NCR region that could be studied). Overall, the four case studies undertaken involved observing the RPL process under the PMKVY in operation at three RPL venues (RPL Camps at the Gandhi Smriti Gandhi Darshan for auto-rickshaw drivers and at New Ashok Nagar for domestic workers as well as RPL at Employer's Premises at Noida for sewing machine operators) and analyzing the Special RPL at the Employer's Premise conducted in 2016 at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. Besides self observation and analysis, the techniques of interactions, discussions, interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires were used with the relevant stakeholders in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, National Skill Development Council, Sector Skill Councils, Project Implementing Agencies, Facilitators and Mobilisers, Training Partners, NGOs, Assessment Agencies and the candidates themselves. The penultimate chapter then discusses some of the main studies done related to implementation of RPL in different countries which could help improve the Indian strategy of RPL; albeit not by 'policy and practice' borrowing but rather, by 'policy and practice' learning for applying as relevant to the Indian context. The thesis concludes by answering the final Research Question by giving a set of ten suggestions and recommendations related to the conceptualisation and the practical aspects of the RPL process for improving the overall effectiveness of RPL implementation for skill development of the workforce in the unorganised sector in India to achieve better outcomes.