

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The topic of research chosen for this thesis is: **Recognition of Prior Learning: Strategy for Skill Development of Workforce in the Unorganised Sector in India.** As per Edwards, et al (2006:1), “it is a truism that much learning takes place outside of educational institutions”. In fact, scholars like Tough (1971; 1978) and Livingstone (2002) interestingly compare such informal learning to an ‘iceberg’; immense but mostly invisible on the surface. In order to acknowledge, recognise, validate, accredit and take advantage of such informal learning, several practices have been developed within the field of education and training. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)<sup>1</sup> is one such practice that recognises previous learning of all ages, backgrounds and attitudes. The broad principle of RPL 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.

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. This empirical social research seeks to contribute towards informing the Indian government’s policy related to skill

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<sup>1</sup> This definition and understanding follows and is adapted from that laid out by Judy Harris (2000:1).

development of its workforce in the unorganised sector through the application of techniques of RPL. The concepts, policies and practices that proved inspirational for taking up this research include the concepts of: lifelong learning (LLL) and life-wide learning (LWL); RPL acquired through varied learning pathways - formal, non-formal or informal; and learning outcomes and competence-based approach together with concepts of National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) and credit transfer systems in the Indian context where Government of India (GOI) has been taking steps.

**1.0.1 Lifelong and Life-Wide Learning:** This research draws its inspiration from the discourse and increasing interest in the concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL) i.e. learning throughout one's life and its concomitant notion of Life-Wide Learning (LWL) which includes formal, non-formal and informal dimensions of learning. Field (2001:3) has even argued that LLL is one of the factors transforming governance of nations as 'the state sheds directive powers (to individuals and associations)'. In line with it, this study analyses the incorporation of RPL strategy in the Indian setting given its own socio-economic and political particularities to meet the national demand for skill development and for fulfilling social commitments while simultaneously increasing the role of non-governmental sectors in the process.

**1.0.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** The big question facing the world today is how to make learning that takes place outside the formal education and training institutions more visible, an issue instrumental in creating interest in the present research as well. The demand for the recognition,

validation and accreditation (RVA) of all forms of learning with a focus on non-formal and informal learning outcomes was expressed through the Belém Framework for Action adopted by 144 Delegations of UNESCO Member States at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA – VI) held in Brazil in 2009 (NIOS, 2013: 3). This aspect has been recognised in the Framework for RPL (2013) laid out by the National Institute of Open Learning (NIOS) in India. RPL has been defined as the process of recognising previous learning, often experiential, towards gaining a qualification in the National Skills Qualifications Framework by the GOI (NSQF, 2013: 17).

There has also been growing discussion about how the validation systems should include parameters derived from non-formal and informal learning (Mara, 2002:5). Stronger links need to be developed between various forms of learning at different stages of individual career paths and life, allowing the know-how acquired to be recognised and validated, and to help in recognising the competences of the workforce who have unfortunately missed the bus, so to say, of acquiring formal training and skills. The challenge, however, is the identification, assessment of RPL acquired in non-formal and informal settings being based on simple inexpensive methodologies and having a clear notion of how institutional and political responsibilities are to be shared (Mara, 2002: 9-10). This helps in creating favourable conditions for LLL and enables shift towards RPL which is becoming an important policy concept even in India given the requirements of skilling to match the industry requirement, as also to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend of a young and growing India.

**1.0.3 Learning Outcomes and Competence Based Learning:** Evolved under LLL's umbrella, these concepts have also informed the current research. They address lower, upper-secondary level education as also higher education and continuing education. National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) of GOI (notified on December 27, 2013)<sup>2</sup> is a competency-based framework that organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. The NSQF consists of ten levels; graded from one to ten. These levels are defined in terms of learning outcomes which the learner must possess regardless of where, when and how they were acquired. Whether obtained through formal, non-formal or informal learning, the learner can acquire certification for the competency needed at any level. All other frameworks, including the National Vocational Educational Qualification Framework (NVEQF) released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, stand superseded by the NSQF. NSQF is a quality assurance framework and RPL is a very important associated function of it (NSQF, 2013: 25).

## **1.1 PROBLEM FORMULATION**

Denscombe in his book *Ground Rules for Good Research* suggests that there must be – (i) a *reason* for doing the research as otherwise there would be no point of spending time, money and effort undertaking the investigation, and (ii) “research will be perceived as more worthwhile to the extent that *it relates to matters that are high on the agenda of current concerns*” (italics added for

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<sup>2</sup> As per the official website of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. Downloaded on 30 November 2017, from, <http://www.skilldevelopment.gov.in/nsqf.html>

emphasis) (2002:25, 47). Both these considerations also define the *raison d'être* for selecting the subject of this study.

The concept of RPL for the skill development of the workforce has gained relevance off-late and has become high on the agenda of the Indian government, as in the world at large, in view of the demands of global knowledge economy. The Indian Prime Minister has, in fact, given a call for a Mission for a 'Skilled India' for the development of the nation (MSDE, 2015a:1) as well as for making India the "Skill Capital of the world" (PMKVY Guidelines, 2015).

The context of this study, viz. India, becomes especially relevant at this point in time since it is one of the fastest growing economies which can compete internationally in manufacturing, services and emerge as a significant player in the knowledge economy given its huge and growing young working age population in an otherwise ageing world. Average population of India by 2020 is estimated to be 29 years as against 40 in USA, 46 in Europe, and 47 in Japan (MSDE, 2015a:2). A comprehensive strategy is, thus, required to substantially enhance employable skills to take advantage of global opportunities.

However, before laying out the research questions for this study, it would be worthwhile to comprehend the particularities of the Indian setting which necessitated the formulation of the academic research problem under investigation. This entails looking at the socio-economic realities of the Indian context, with reference to the conditions of workforce in the unorganised sector.

Foremost among issues of central concern for this study, is its large reservoir of human resource, particularly a huge young population,

acknowledged as India's unique core strength. Not only is more than 62% of India's population in the working age-group (15-59 years), more than 54% is below 25 years of age. The population pyramid is, in fact, expected to "bulge" across the 15-59 age-bracket over the next decade (MSDE, 2015a: 2). As per the National Knowledge Commission (2008: iii), about 550 million population (below 25 years) will form one-fourth of the global workforce by 2020. Further, as per the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (NPSDE), by 2035 labour force in the industrialised world is expected to decline by 4%, while that of India is projected to increase by 32% (MSDE, 2015a: 2). This poses both, a formidable challenge and provides a huge opportunity. To reap the benefit of this demographic dividend, expected to last for 25 years only, India needs to equip its workforce with employable skills and enhance its quality on priority.

Indian workforce constitutes 40-42% of the total population (NCEUS<sup>3</sup>, 2007:14). A vast majority (93%) of the Indian workforce is involved in the unorganised sector and has low levels of skills, acquired primarily non-formally or informally (MSDE, 2015a:9). From the point of view of the present study, total workforce of India is about 487 million, of which 57% is in the non-farm sector (MSDE, 2015a:6). Removing workforce with higher education without formal skill training, remaining is 450.4 million. Of these, 256.72 million are non-farm workers, a maximum of 5.4% of whom would be formally trained and skilled and 241.86 million would either be unskilled or skilled through non formal channels. 170 million of these would be in the age group 15-45 years; the group of

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<sup>3</sup> The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) was constituted by the GOI in 2004 to act as an advisory body and a watchdog for the informal sector.

workforce needed to be mapped through recognition of existing skills so as to be provided required necessary skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling to “increase productivity and then provide a livelihood pathway” (MSDE, 2015a:7). In addition, estimates show 26.14 million people enter this age group yearly. Thus, besides the 298.25 million existing farm and non-farm sector workforce that needs to be skilled, re-skilled and up-skilled, another 104.62 million fresh entrants would need to be skilled by 2022, taking the overall requirement of skilling this segment itself to approximately 400 million by 2022 (MSDE, 2015a:7).

Several studies have highlighted the acute mismatch between workforce needs and availability of skilled manpower to sustain India’s economic growth rate. The large majority of the Indian workforce in the unorganised sector also has poor skills that have had predominantly informal and non-formal learning for entering the workforce as self-employed, wage-earners or casual labours<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, analysing issues related to formal, informal and non-formal learning in skill development become especially crucial for India since presently only about 4.69% of the total Indian workforce is said to have undergone formal training. The extreme skill deficit in India becomes glaring when contrasted against the figures of 52% in USA, 68% in UK, 75% in Germany, 80% in Japan and 96% in South Korea (MSDE, 2015a: 6). This Indian workforce also has low levels of productivity, is largely illiterate and is extremely poor (NCEUS, 2009).

An urgent need is thus felt to considerably enhance the relevant skill levels of the Indian workforce so as to be ready to seize the opportunities arising

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<sup>4</sup> These are the main categories into which the Indian workforce in the unorganized sector is divided, namely - the self-employed category being the largest (64%); casual/contract laborers; and wage workers including regular workers (Source: NCEUS, 2007:5; NCEUS, 2009:7).

domestically as well as from the ageing developed countries (NCEUS, 2009:i; MSDE, 2015a:2). However, owing to the high demands already placed on the formal educational routes in India, due mainly to the huge population base and high illiteracy levels, recognising learning acquired through alternative pathways is a way out. It is, thus, considered relevant to adopt RPL practices which help in assessing the learning already available with the workforce, and to further develop skills only beyond those levels. As such, it was worth examining this subject, together with the experience of other countries that could also help inform the Indian story.

Given the above scenario, Indian government has recently taken significant steps in the field of education, training and skill development. A full-fledged Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was created in November 2014 to focus on this important issue. The National Skill Mission was launched on the World Youth Skills Day on July 15, 2015; chaired by the Prime Minister. A new revised National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship - 2015 has been made with its core objective “to empower the individual, by enabling him/her to realise their full potential through a process of lifelong learning where competences are accumulated via instruments such as credible certifications, credit accumulation and transfer, etc.” (MSDE, 2015a: 11). RPL has also been included as a strategy for meeting the skilling goals under the *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana* (PMKVY), India’s largest Skill Certification Scheme launched on July 15, 2015. The National Skill Development Corporation



(NSDC), established in 2009, and the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), created in 2013, are also bodies entrusted with this task.

*In view of the above, this study intends analysing issues related to RPL in India by understanding its theoretical concept, policies and state of implementation of schemes for skilling workforce in the unorganised sector using this strategy as also analysing policies, models and practices elsewhere in the world in order to better comprehend the subject for informing the Indian scenario.*

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

India is one the fastest growing emerging economies of the world. Given the globalising trends, India has the potential to use its demographic dividend to its advantage 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. 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,

concepts of RPL or its other variants<sup>5</sup> could be useful in enhancing the skill levels. So, a study of the experiences of these strategies in other contexts as well as its proper implementation would inform India's skill needs by giving recognition to all forms of learning, irrespective of when, where and how they were acquired in the overall context of Lifelong Learning.

#### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- **To study** the policies and the implementation mechanism of the strategy of Recognition of Prior Learning for skill development under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, a scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship of the Government of India.
- **To conduct** a critical review of implementation of the current strategy of Recognition of Prior Learning of the Government of India being undertaken by the National Skill Development Corporation through Project Implementing Agencies.
- **To explore** how can the experience of Recognition of Prior Learning in other countries inform and promote efforts of the Government of India.
- **To suggest** measures for improving the effectiveness of the Recognition of Prior Learning for skill development of the workforce in the unorganised sector in India.

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<sup>5</sup> Validation of Prior Learning (VPL), Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (AP(C)L), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (AP(E)L), Accreditation of Work-Base Learning (AWBL), Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL).

## **1.5 JUSTIFICATION**

The justification for taking up this research is to build on the previous European Master's thesis done in 2010 on – “*Validation of Prior Learning: A Perspective on India by analysing European policies and practices*”. Being a concept at a very nascent stage in India then, the term - Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) as used by the OECD was adopted. The study's academic contribution was development of three models for policies and practices related to VPL in 11 European contexts; based on matrices formulated by conducting analysis of OECD Country Background Reports (2006 - 2008) related to the status of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The models developed were – (i) ‘predominance of public authorities’ model, (ii) ‘shared responsibility’ model and (iii) ‘predominance of industry’ model. It showed that while VPL was under various stages of discussion, practice, pilot studies, policy formulation and implementation in Europe; there was an increasing acceptance of the concept by all.

A SWOT analysis conducted on the conditions for VPL in India reflected that a case existed for its introduction. For its implementation, a well coordinated approach, rooted closely to the socio-economic politico-cultural context, was required. VPL, with its many variants and different procedures and systems, could enable Indian policy makers to make customised solutions. The study concluded that the ‘predominance of the public authorities’ model was most applicable wherein government, with the help of non-governmental sectors, could provide the policy framework for the creation of a conducive environment for the implementation of VPL for skilling the workforce in the unorganised sector.

Given this background knowledge and with RPL now having been introduced as a strategy to skill Indian workforce under the PMKVY, it was considered an appropriate time to revisit the subject. The research intends to see how is RPL being projected in policy documents, being implemented by agencies practically, how can it be informed, course correction, if any, required in its nascent stages itself for yielding better outcomes. Besides, lessons drawn from other countries related to this field from the Indian contextual point of view could prove useful for giving recommendations.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Given the above, the research questions being analysed in this study are:

***RQ 1 What do policy documents reflect about the current strategy of Recognition of Prior Learning being implemented by the Government of India for skilling workforce in the unorganised sector under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana?***

***RQ 2 How is the strategy of Recognition of Prior Learning being implemented by the National Skill Development Corporation through its Project Implementing Agencies for skill development of the workforce in the unorganised sector in India?***

***RQ 3 What lessons can be drawn from the strategy of Recognition of Prior Learning as practiced in different international contexts to inform and promote the efforts of the Government of India for skill development of its workforce?***

***RQ 4 What recommendations can be proposed for improving the effectiveness of the strategy of Recognition of Prior Learning for skilling workers in the unorganised sector in India?***

## **1.7 KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS: DEFINED AND OPERATIONALISED**

Berg (2007:36) mentions that in order to ensure that everyone related to a research, including the reader, works with the same definitions and mental image, there is a need to *conceptualise* and *operationalise* the key terms in use, a process which he calls “*operationally defining a concept*”. Accordingly, key terms and concepts related to the study have been operationally defined below.

**1.7.1 Terms related to Prior Learning:** Various terms and concepts, related to the recognition, assessment, certification, accreditation and validation of learning acquired from beyond the fold of formal educational settings have been used (many a times even interchangeably) in existing literature. These terms have been applied depending upon the context in which they are used or the purpose to which they are applied. Accordingly, one comes across terms like – Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Validation of Prior Learning (VPL), Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (AP(C)L), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (AP(E)L), Accreditation of Work-Base Learning (AWBL), Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL). Thus, as mentioned by Colardyn & Bjørnåvold (2005:7), a conceptual diversity characterises this field. The principle behind all these concepts, is that people can and do learn throughout their lives and that much of such informal, non-formal or ‘uncertificated’ learning can be equated with skills and knowledge expected of learners completing more traditional and formal learning programmes. Thus, such Prior Learning, acquired informally, non-formally, experientially or formally, should be recognised and

given currency within formal education and training frameworks. As such, this field emphasises the life-wide character of learning. In this study, concepts of RPL, RNFIL and VPL have also been used, sometimes even interchangeably, given their more widespread usage as seen within different contexts. While RPL has been defined above, the other two terms are operationalised as under.

**1.7.1.1 VPL:** Validation of non-formal and informal learning or VPL is a confirmation and validation of competence/skill/knowledge/learning regardless of how, when and where an individual acquired it. Its goal is that the individual achieves recognition for the competence/skill/knowledge/learning possessed at any given point in time (i.e. recognition/assessment/accreditation/evaluation) for the purpose of not having to acquire education/training for what one already knows/possesses (i.e. certification/entitlement). Validation involves an assessment of the equivalence of recognised skills and competencies in relation to a defined standard of achievement.

**1.7.1.2 RNFIL:** The OECD (2005) publication, *The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning*, defines 'recognition of learning' as the process of recording of achievements of individuals arising from any kind of learning in any environment; it aims to make visible an individual's knowledge and skills so that they can combine and build on the learning achieved and be rewarded for it. RNFIL takes the concept from this overarching definition and refers to the acknowledgement and evaluation of non-formal and informal learning and is also associated with entitlement.

**1.7.2 Terms related to various learning paths/pathways:** The definitions used for the three basic categories of purposeful learning activity i.e. formal, informal and non-formal learning have been adopted and adapted from the European Commission's *Memorandum of Lifelong Learning* (2000) as well as the OECD's (2005) understanding of these concepts.

**1.7.2.1 Formal Learning:** This takes place in education and training institutions and leads to recognised certificates and qualifications.

**1.7.2.2 Informal Learning:** A natural accompaniment to everyday life, and unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning. It may well not even be recognised by individuals themselves as contributing to their knowledge and skills.

**1.7.2.3 Non-formal Learning:** This takes place outside the main systems of general and vocational education and does not necessarily lead to award of a formal certificate. This can take place in the workplace and as part of activities by organisations and groupings in civil society. It can also be provided through organisations or services that have been set up to complement formal systems (like arts, music, sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations).

### **1.7.3 Terms related to the Indian economic sector and workforce:**

Definitions used for these concepts have been taken from the documents of the Indian government, especially those of the NCEUS which specifically deal with the issues of the unorganised sector (2007:1-3). It has been acknowledged therein that the terms 'organised sector' of the economy is similar to the

internationally used term 'formal sector' while the 'unorganised sector' is similar to the 'informal sector'. Thus, the terms 'unorganised' or the 'informal' sector are used interchangeably, although the preferred term used in the documents of the Indian government is the unorganised sector.

**1.7.3.1 Unorganised/informal sector of economy:** The unorganised sector consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers.

**1.7.3.2 Unorganised/informal workforce:** Unorganised workers consist of those working in the unorganised enterprises or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits, and the workers in the formal sector without any employment/ social security benefits provided by the employers.

**1.7.4 Terms related to Lifelong learning:** The overarching concepts of LLL and LWL and other related aspects are defined as follows:

**1.7.4.1 Lifelong learning:** All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons. (Cedefop, 2008a:123/57).

**1.7.4.2 Life - wide learning:** Learning, formal, non-formal or informal that takes place across the full range of life activities (personal, social or professional) and at any stage. LWL is a dimension of LLL. (Cedefop, 2008a: 124/58).



**1.7.4.3 Learning outcomes:** It represents what a learner knows, understands and is able to do (demonstrate) on completion of a learning process – (formal, non-formal or informal), and which would be expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. (Cedefop, 2008a:120/55; NSQF, 2013: 17).

**1.7.4.4 Learning path/pathway:** The sum of learning sequences (formal, non-formal or informal) followed by an individual to acquire knowledge, skills or competences. (NSQF, 2013: 17).

**1.7.4.5 Competence:** It means the proven ability to use acquired knowledge, skills and personal and social abilities, in discharge of responsibility roles. It is the ability to do a job well. (NSQF, 2013: 17).

**1.7.4.6 Knowledge:** It means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. (NSQF, 2013: 17).

**1.7.4.7 Qualification:** It means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. (NSQF, 2013: 17).

**1.7.4.8 Sector:** Is a grouping of professional activities on the basis of their main economic function, product, service or technology. (NSQF, 2013: 17).

**1.7.4.9 Skills:** The ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). (NSQF, 2013: 17).

**1.7.4.10 Credit:** Recognition of a learner successfully completing a prior course of learning, corresponding to a qualification at a given level. (NSQF, 2013: 23).

**1.7.4.11 Credit Transfer:** Is the process of recognizing prior learning that has been credit rated by the assessment and certification bodies authorized to do so. The key focus of credit transfer decisions should be on the benefit to the learner and on support for effective learning pathways. (NSQF, 2013: 24).

**1.7.4.12 Trainer:** Someone who trains, instructs, teaches or otherwise enables the learner(s) to acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills. (NSQF, 2013: 17).

**1.7.4.13 Training Provider, Institute and Institution:** Refer to any organisation providing knowledge and skills to learners. (NSQF, 2013: 17).

## **1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS**

Following this introduction, is the chapter discussing the research methodology and the theoretical framework that guides this research. Review of literature conducted for obtaining a comprehensive idea about the concept as well as the policies and practices of RPL is discussed in the third chapter. The first research question of this study has been dealt with in the fourth chapter wherein current policies and practices of RPL for skilling of workforce in the unorganised sector in India are detailed. The fifth chapter answers the second research question while analysing the practical implementation of RPL in the Indian context. The discussion informing the Indian system through a study of the experiences in RPL from different world contexts is detailed in the sixth chapter. The thesis ends by giving a set of suggestions and recommendations for the Indian context.

**1.8.1 Chapterisation Scheme:** The seven chapters in this thesis are as under:

**1.8.1.1 INTRODUCTION:** In this introductory chapter, formulation of the problem, justification for selecting this research topic and the objectives of the study are laid out. Together with detailing the context of the Indian setting against which this study is set, this chapter clarifies the research questions that the study proposes to answer. Key concepts used in this research have also been defined and operationalised herein. The study's limitations and delimitations reflect the constraints against which the study was conducted and the resultant shortcomings about which the researcher was aware.

**1.8.1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:** After a brief background for understanding the overarching genre of research, the succeeding sections of this chapter elaborate the research methodology of this study. The main discussion is divided into two parts, one dealing with the paradigmatic approach and the other with technical methods. Thereafter, the sources used have been described. Issues related to validity and ethics are then briefly touched upon. The second half of the chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework guiding this research.

**1.8.1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW:** A review of the literature is done and the chapter is divided under several themes and sub-themes into which the literature on the subject can be classified. This approach assists in getting a holistic overview about the subject to help in informing the Indian context by building a comprehensive understanding of the various issues as well as by giving crucial indicators and insights for analysing the research questions.

**1.8.1.4 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING - POLICIES:** This chapter deals with the first research question. It delineates the current policies and practices of RPL for skilling of workforce in the unorganised sector as adopted by the Indian Government. This is essentially based on an analysis of policy documents as well as the secondary literature available on the subject.

**1.8.1.5 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING - IMPLEMENTATION:** The second research question has been dealt with in the fifth chapter wherein case studies on the RPL Project Types are analysed to understand the RPL implementation process through its various stakeholders. As such, initially it had been proposed to study one each of the three RPL Project Types for implementation of RPL for skill development, namely - one RPL Camp, one RPL at Employer's Premises and one RPL Centre. However, upon assessing the ground situation it was found that there was no RPL Centre in operation in the Delhi NCR area for which only pilot studies had been conducted. Thus, this Project Type of RPL Centre could not be studied. Thus, one RPL Camp and one RPL at Employer's Premise both of these, each at a Governmental set up as well as in a private setting were studied to see the implementation of the RPL scheme as functioning under the PMKVY. This study has been done on the basis of the results of the focus-group discussions, interviews and questionnaires as well as self-observation conducted with relevant stakeholders at the MSDE, NSDC, Sector Skill Councils and its Project implementing Agencies, Training Partners and facilitators, Assessment Agencies, as well as the candidates undertaking the RPL training and certification.

**1.8.1.6 LEARNING FROM BEYOND BORDERS:** The sixth chapter seeks to answer the third research question. It would analyse issues related to RPL for the Indian context for informing those by deliberating upon the lessons that can be drawn from the policies and practices existing in various other countries.

**1.8.1.7 RPL IN INDIA: SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:** The thesis concludes by giving a brief overview and by answering the final Research Question of this study. It gives a set of suggestions and recommendations for RPL in the Indian context for improving and showing the possible way forward that could be useful for implementing the strategy for skill development of the workforce in the unorganised sector for getting better outcomes.

## **1.9 Limitations and Delimitations**

Limitations constraining the study need to be brought out. The constraints were largely due to the paucity of time, resources and logistics, since this research was pursued as part of an overall 10-month programme, including for a major part, a class-bound study component. As delimitation, thus, Internet search was relied upon for the literature. Besides, previous research done on the subject aided this study as it was relied upon in developing the base for understanding the concept of Prior Learning. Besides, literature on the main subject of this study, i.e. implementation of RPL strategy in the India, is rather patchy since this is a new concept having been only recently introduced. Thus, case studies were undertaken to study the implementation of RPL in the Indian context. However, these could be done on only one type (government and private) each of the two

of the three Project Types identified under the PMKVY where RPL has been introduced since the Project Type – RPL Centre was not in operation currently in the region. These case studies could be conducted only in and around National Capital Region of Delhi due to constraints of time and logistics. Time constraints also acted as a limitation since the study had to be necessarily restricted within defined boundaries, despite the fact that new issues for investigation continued to emerge; those issues had to be deliberately kept aside for a later expanded and in-depth research.

### **1.10 Summary**

This introductory chapter, first and foremost, enumerated the various concepts, policies, practices as well as the context that proved inspirational for taking up this research. These included the concepts of LLL, LWL, recognition of learning (skills, knowledge, competences) acquired through all learning pathways (including formal, non-formal and informal), learning-outcomes and competence-based learning. Thereafter, a section on problem formulation, detailed the Indian context under analysis with all its politico-socio-economic particularities, challenges and opportunities in relation to the subject under study. Then, the problem statement, objectives, justification as also the four research questions of this study were delineated. Some key terms and concepts used in this research were then operationally defined in the context of the study, after which the organisation of the thesis giving out the chapterisation has been explained. The chapter concludes by laying down the limitations and delimitations of this study.