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Title: Recognition of Prior Learning as Humanising Pedagogy: Advancing Access, Equity, and Student Success in South African Higher Education

Sub-theme: Equity, Access, and Inclusion

Format: Paper Presentation

Abstract (Approx. 230 words):

The increasing demand for equitable and inclusive higher education in South Africa has positioned Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a crucial transformative mechanism for broadening access and acknowledging diverse forms of knowledge. Within the wider discourse on humanising and student-centered education, RPL provides opportunities to recognize experiential learning, challenge deficit views of non-traditional students, and promote epistemic access in higher education institutions.

This paper explores RPL as a humanising pedagogical practice within the South African higher education context, drawing on experiences from institutional support and implementation processes at the University of Fort Hare. It argues that RPL should not be seen merely as an administrative access route, but rather as an ethically grounded and socially responsive educational practice that values students lived experiences, indigenous knowledge, and workplace learning. Using a reflective scholarly approach informed by humanising pedagogy and social justice perspectives, the paper examines how RPL contributes to student agency, belonging, and transformation while also revealing systemic tensions related to institutional readiness, assessment practices, and curriculum responsiveness.

Additionally, it highlights the importance of staff development, collaborative assessment practices, and policy alignment in enhancing effective RPL implementation. This paper contributes to ongoing discussions about transformative higher education by positioning RPL as a vital pathway toward inclusive knowledge recognition, student success, and

socially just educational practices within contemporary higher education institutions. This aligns particularly well with the conference's emphasis on humanising education, transformation, epistemological access, and socially responsive pedagogies.