ECRPL 2025 proceedings: Editorial

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In this volume, we present the contributions accepted for the Third European Conference on Reflective Practice-based Learning (ECRPL25), November 2025.

This edition of the proceedings for ECRPL contains a collection of contributions to the third European Conference on Reflective Practice-based Learning (ECRPL) 2025 hosted by University College of Northern Denmark (UCN) in Aalborg. For ECRPL 2025, the theme is "Reflective Practice-based Learning (RPL) and the Future of Practice-oriented Education". The proceedings present the peer-reviewed contributions from educators, researchers, and practitioners. The contributions delve into the evolving landscape of reflective practice in higher education and professional settings.

Reflective Practice-based Learning (RPL) emphasizes the integration of experience, thinking, and action as foundational elements of the learning process. This approach is particularly relevant in bridging gaps between theory and practice and gaps between education and professions and businesses. The RPL framework should create good conditions for fostering a deeper theoretical understanding and better competencies for applying theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. As we navigate the complexities of modern education, RPL offers a robust framework for developing critical thinking, adaptability, and lifelong learning skills.

The contemporary landscape of RPL and the future of practice-oriented education

ECRPL targets the exploration of current research practices of RPL in higher education and professional practices. The educational landscape of higher education is continuously challenged. Innovative technologies, especially artificial intelligence, and large language models (LLM, Chatbots) are challenging education, learning, exam, and assessment

procedures. The affordances and possibilities nested in new and emerging technologies are challenging and changing the need for skills and competencies at the workplace and in our private lives. Thus, our pedagogical approach to teaching, the programmes and the curricula are up for debate, adjustment, and maybe even a dramatic revamping in some instances.

Moreover, the RPL research addresses problems of recruitment and retention of students in education. Contrary to societal challenges and a decline in youth population numbers, the labour market, increasingly, needs highly qualified professionals. So, fewer students in relation to a higher demand for professionals call for a focus on retention and student support. More than ever, these challenges call for contemporary research studies addressing the role of reflective practice, collaborative teaching and learning activities, and scaffolding of students' learning pathways in and across theory and practice.

These tendencies call for developing more reflective and resilient professionals with agency, who can make in situ professional judgements and take educated actions.

Reflective practice-based learning is a recent contribution to the educational field, drawing on the theoretical legacy of (among others) Dewey, Kolb and Schön, thus emphasising experience, thinking and action as key concepts underpinning reflective practice-based learning. RPL presents itself as an approach to teaching and learning that promotes a strong, omniscient, and immanent focus on promoting reflection as part of the learning experience.

The themes at ECRPL 2025

RPL is particularly suited for professional practice and education, thus suggesting an approach to the ever-relevant relationship between theory and practice. ECRPL 2025 hope to facilitate the sharing of ideas, research results and experiences with similar initiatives at other institutions, as well as theory, practice, development of and designs for reflective-based teaching and learning in higher education.

This conference proceeding consists of research contributions to ECRPL 2025 within the overall themes of:

1. **Research on Organisational Perspectives on RPL and Lifelong Learning:** In line with lifelong learning and the demand of continuous learning and competence development among professionals, it becomes relevant to investigate the role of RPL in organisations, how, what and why RPL affect organisational learning cultures or explore the relation between RPL and lifelong learning in organisational learning cultures.

2. **Placement and/or Practice-Oriented RPL:** Research that examines the role of placements and/or practice-oriented learning in RPL and discussions on how placements facilitate RPL seems to be limited. There is a need for research addressing the benefits and challenges of practice-oriented RPL, as practice-oriented learning is highlighted in several policy documents, including the need for innovative approaches to scaffold practice-oriented educational practices.

3. **Disruptive Technologies, Technological Literacy, and RPL**: In this rapidly evolving digital age, we are keen to understand how disruptive technologies like VR and AI are influencing RPL and how technological literacy plays a role in this context. Research seems to be limited in relation to the potential of AI in enhancing RPL, the role of technological literacy in navigating and leveraging these technologies, the ethical considerations, and the future of RPL in the context of AI and other disruptive technologies.

The proceedings include research, which addresses aspects such as collaborative learning, lifelong learning, professional judgement, and pedagogy, including cases and examples highlighting, e.g., digital technologies, collaboration, design patterns and signature pedagogy. The pedagogical aspects of reflective practice-based teaching and learning, such as feedback, collaboration, project- and casework, have also been included in the programme.

ECRPL2025

The response to this year's call for contributions has confirmed that there is a growing interest in the topic of reflective-based teaching and learning in higher education.

ECRPL 2025 presents two keynote speakers, a panel discussion and a series of parallel paper and poster sessions.

The first keynote presenter at ECRPL 2025 is Etienne Wenger-Trayner.

Etienne Wenger-Trayner is a globally recognized thought leader in the field of social learning. His early books include the seminal work "Situated Learning," where the term "community of practice" was coined. Etienne is a sought-after consultant and one of the most cited authors in the social sciences. His more recent books, coauthored with Beverly Wenger-Trayner, further the theory and practice of social learning: "Learning in Landscapes of Practice," "Learning to make a difference, Systems Convening, and the Communities of Practice guidebook.

The theme of the keynote is 'A social learning perspective on reflective practice-based learning.'

> *The notion of reflective practice was introduced by Schon as a conversation with the situation. While we subscribe to his view, we believe that it needs to be expanded to include the social dimension of learning. For this, we propose the notion of a social learning space, with its three dimensions of caring to make a difference, engaging uncertainty, and paying attention. What does reflective practice-based learning look like in a social learning space? We introduce the concept of learning flows and loops by which social learning and practice are closely linked. Our framework can be used both to foster the social dimension of reflective practice-based learning and to assess the value it creates.*

The second keynote presenter at ECRPL2025 is Anders Buch

Anders Buch is a Senior Associate Professor, PhD. Head of Research Programme at the Research Centre for the Study of Professions, at VIA

University College; furthermore, Anders is affiliated with Jönköping University. His research centres on professions, professionalism, and technological expert cultures, with a theoretical approach grounded in Science & Technology Studies, Practice Theory, and classical American Pragmatism. Anders has published extensively on topics including knowledge, learning, education, professionalism, and the professional development of engineers.

The theme of Anders' keynote is 'Placement and the Politics of the 'Practical' in Education. The critical dimension of RPL'

Traditionally, schools have been viewed as the primary setting for learning, while workplaces have been designated as spaces for applying acquired knowledge and skills. Recently, however, this model has come into question, with educational placements now being recognized as valuable sites for fostering meaningful learning experiences. Placement is increasingly seen not only as a bridge between education and employment but also as a powerful catalyst for developing critical skills and insights.

While this shift challenges the traditional division of authority between school-based and work-based learning, it often tends to reproduce the longstanding theory-practice dichotomy in education. In this keynote, I will examine key trends in educational policy and discuss how a reflective, problem-based approach to placement can help reimagine the relationship between school and workplace learning, offering a fresh perspective on facilitating problem-based learning and bridging the theory-practice gap.

Shared, collaborative discussion panel.

At ECRPL 2025, we are proud to present a collaborative panel discussion. A discussion based on the delegates' and research experts' questions and comments, compiled during the conference. The panel will be discussing the themes of educating for practice, the theme of reflecting to connect education and professions/businesses, and the theme of educating for a targeted purpose while maintaining a deeper, theoretical reflection.

The panel discussion is an expert discussion between Lecturer & PhD Roland Hachmann from UCSYD, Lecturer & PhD Camilla Gyldendahl

Jensen from UCN, Lecturer & PhD Stine Bylin Bundgaard from UCN and Senior Research Associate & PhD Susanne Dau from UCN. Lecturer and PhD Thomas Kjærgaard will facilitate the panel discussion. The discussion will be based on questions raised by the delegates addressing the themes of the conference and on the dialogues that emerge in the sessions and in the hallways when the delegates share ideas while enjoying a cup of coffee.

This year, the academic committee has accepted many highly relevant contributions. We are delighted to present a programme with papers and posters from researchers from around the world, with a majority of contributions from Denmark. Several authors are revisiting delegates, who have contributed to the conference more than once, for which we are grateful, and we are happy to acknowledge the contributing authors, both new and familiar.

Furthermore, we would like to thank the many dedicated reviewers who have helped secure the high quality of the papers and posters in the conference programme. Your contribution to this growing research community is much appreciated.

For readers, we hope you will enjoy the contributions published in the proceedings and contribute to the next edition in 2027.