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Validation of Non-Formal and In-Formal Learning within the Food and Beverage Department of The Institute of Tourism Studies Malta

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Report/Thesis Title

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The area that I have explored in my thesis is about validation of non-formal and in formal learning within the food and beverage area of the hospitality sector. In this thesis I have explored other validation processes ,while suggesting a process based upon my personal experience as well from other literature review. I will include my suggestions to develop a tool which can assess,recognise and validate informal and non formal learning in the hospitality sector,mainly for the needs of of the Institute of Tourism Studies focusing on the food and beverage area.

Validation is defined as a prove that something is based on truth or facts where skills and competence an individual might have is accepted and therefore can be recognised by technical experts within a specific area and profession.
The purpose of my study is to recognise and validate a repertiore of skills and competence of workers that have years of experience working in the hospitaility sector. These may include workers who started working from an early age or have had a difficult social background including poor academic background and did not have the opportunity to attend formal training.

Validation also applies to students with no major background or career problems or issues.The relevance of validation of non formal and informal learning is very high and has a triangular benefit for all including the candidate , the employer as well formal institutions as this process can be used for an array of purposes.

The main target groups will be from the food and beverage department as this is my area of expertise.

Keywords

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1 Introduction

The purpose of my product oriented thesis is to suggest and develop an assessment process tool by using a process based on established guidelines and criteria, listing skills and occupational standards to demonstrate that one has already achieved skills and competence of a given field or specific task/s. This will enable quality assurance throughout the process thus making quality visible.

I currently work as a food preparation and production lecturer at The Institute of Tourism Studies in Malta and this would be my background and context for such a tool.
This is the main purpose of my thesis and the aim of the tool is to assess individuals who already works within the hospitality industry in the food and beverage area within the hospitality industry and sector.

It is for people who have years of experience but do not have any formal qualifications or have only basic qualifications and the individual may want to have a recognised formal qualification or upgrade the individual's qualification from one level to another.The need for such an assessment tool is that, it can be used to validate different skills and competences while identifying any skills gap a candidate might have, while offering to provide necessary training to accommodate that gap.

The assessment tool will be based upon various processes and criteria that shall be established by key stakeholders which are to be kept within the Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) standards.The candidate will need to satisfy these standards before this could lead to a competence. Candidates may then be awarded an award or recognition may occur in within the frame work of the curriculum in question, which is pegged to a level within the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) standards.

This may also allow exemption from modules or on certain parts of it on the basis of prior learning. Recognition of such a process could be done by Institute of Tourism Studies since the Institute is recognised by the National Commision for Further and Higher Education(NCFHE) as a self accreditation Institution based on standards and guidelines set and published by the NCFHE.

The process and the tool may be used at intervals at either the place of work or by a staged agreed assessments at the place of work or at the Institute itself.

1.1 Foreword and Acknowledgements

I have always been somehow critical regarding recognition and validation of skills and competence that a person might have in a specialised area. Validation of informal and non-formal learning has always created constructive debates on why formal education did not fully recognise and validate such skills that a person could have been achieved through in-formal and non-formal learning in a vocational training.

In today's society where lifelong learning and life-wide learning is an on- going process and a necessity with people moving from one job to another and from one country to another, the need to validate such skills and competences has increased dramatically. In this report I shall be looking constructively into literature review of local and other reports regarding validation of informal and non-formal training.

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) is continuously seeking expert's advice to facilitate such validation by establishing a set of standards and guidelines for all the members' states to adhere to. Malta which is also an EU member state is also working hard to reach the established targets set by the EU to recognise and validate such skills. After the publication of the Legal Notice 347 of 2005 the Malta Qualifications Council (MQF) was set up.

This saw the introduction of level descriptors from one to eight within the education system in Malta, establishing parity of esteem between academic and vocational studies on a national basis after a long consultation process with all local main stakeholders. The Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) was then set up two years later in 2007 which saw the implementation and the first step towards building an entire system of quality qualifications and published the first referencing report in June 2009.

The referencing report was and still is an important tool to understand the different qualifications and also the different levels of education and the criteria attached with it. This has set the path for other revised reports after continuous consultations with the latest being the fourth edition which was published in February 2016(Referencing Report, 2016).

This has allowed learning experiences throughout all sectors to grow by removing bureaucratic constraints and also allows the formation of a knowledge based learning. Back in November 2007, Professor Joachim James Calleja was appointed as the first Malta representative on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) advisory group,

thus permitting Malta to be part of the discussion on policy recommendations at European Union (EU) Level.

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) was officially launched on the 14th September, 2012 and is legislated by the revised Education Act (Subsidiary Legislation 327.432, 2012) which came into force in September 2012. The NCFHE as it stands now has the authority to issue, hold or withdraw licenses in educational teaching and accredit courses.

Though validation of non-formal training together with formal training has been long recognised through apprenticeship programmes, these were only recognised up to Level two and three within the MQF and EQF educational system in Malta. Has the introduction of level descriptors really gave vocational subjects parity of esteem? Could this be done without occupational standards at different Levels? Shall vocational skills and competences be recognised through a validation of informal and non-formal training higher levels in MQF?

Can validation has transparency within its process? Can heavy bureaucratic processes be reduced? Should formal, in-formal and non-formal learning be closely related or embedded? Does validation of non-formal and in-formal training encourage students to take further formal training? Does in-formal and non-formal training means incompetent practices? These are all important questions of which I intend to investigate in my research and thesis.

Acknowledgements

1.2 Aims & Objectives

This report and process tool will then be presented and proposed to the management of The Institute of Tourism Studies Malta for which the Institute might consider using such a tool for various reasons. The relevance to develop such a tool has multiple proposed advantages. For the candidate, the tool has multiple reasons even for the simple reason to proceed further within his/her carrier and to extend further studies should he/she decide to continue their studies.

Its relevance is also important to the Institute of Tourism itself as this tool can also be used and supported by practical evidence as an accreditation for recognition for prior learning purposes, work based learning and blended learning.

A simple definition of the word recognition is "acknowledgement of the existence, validity, or legality of something." while the definition of validation is "the action of checking or proving the validity or accuracy of something." (Oxford Online, 2017).

 A simple explanation of what is work based learning is that training is mainly based on a vocational context and that acquisition of knowledge and skills is mostly carried out at the work place. On the other hand blended learning is where learning of knowledge and skills are achieved within a blend of informal, non-formal and formal education.

Even the employer might or can benefit by having his working staff and personnel qualified through recognition and validation of skills and competence thus reducing necessary time and expense to give employees time off to attend a full training program within a specific level in a formal institution.

There is also the benefit to lift the standard of business rating as trained or qualified personnel is one of the criterion set by the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) to achieve such standards in the hotel and restaurant industry.

The scope for the development of such a tool is that this will help and facilitate the validation of informal and non-formal learning assessment process ,of which can also be used for recognition for prior learning. There is already an ongoing process to establish recognition for prior learning in collaboration with Haaga Helia University in the new degree courses which were launched recently. There is a colloborative effort between the two institutions and progression in the regard has already been done.

This tool shall be based on various steps and processes of which are simply explained further down in my thesis, will help to assess ,accredit and certify competent personel like myself, to further their studies , qualifications and progression.

While the process can be used for furthering studies , it can also be used to explore the possibility to be used for different areas of blended learning possibilities such as on-line courses and identifying skill gaps in the framework of a skill gap analysis.

According to the Malta country report from March 2014(Apprenticeship Review ,2015 ,31) tourism is considered as a key sector for the economy representing 30% of the gross domestic product(GDP) with 8.5% of reported Maltese workforce employed within the hospitality sector thus making it the highest amongst all European countries.

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education(NCFHE) indicated this in its data report that the tourism industry in Malta can potentially provide up to 5,467 additional jobs in the sector in 2015. The NCFHE added that the composition of the workforce to fill these vacancies should include 29% employees with high qualifications, 50% with medium qualifications and 21% with low qualifications.

1.3 Area of Development

According to the Draft National Tourism Policy 2015-2020 (Ministry for Tourism, 2014, 44) Malta features no less than 1,381 catering establishments. According to these figures in Malta there are 648 restaurants, 636 snack bars and 103 take away.

According to the National Statistics Office (NSO) of 2013 there was an average of 4,517 full time jobs within the hospitality sector and 6,621 part-time registered jobs. Also in a survey which was conducted by MTA in response to quality and standard of service 78% of tourist visiting Malta has rated the level of service as very good or good, while a worrying 22% percent rated the service provided as being poor or even very poor.

A staggering €245 million in annual expenditure of tourist visiting Malta was also mentioned in the report which brings tourism a high contributor to the country's GDP. The 22% mentioned in the report regarding poor service could be easily linked to training needs within the hospitality sector as well to the basic survey why I have conducted and is illustrated in (appendix 10).

The report also strengthens the issue regarding the need for training and validation. It clearly shows that there is the need for such recognition of certain competences while providing training if needed and take recognition and validation of skills and competences to a higher level within the hospitality sector and even at higher levels within the MQF.

2 Concepts and Practices of Validation

2.1 Concepts which can lead to different learning processes

The main authority chosen in the context of validation is CEDEFOP, as this is also the main authority specialising and focusing mainly in vocational areas in the EU which suggests and put forward it proposals to all EU countries to promote and support validation within vocational training. The main justification for choosing this model is that this would be line with EQF requirements and framework.

Learning may take place in different forms and contexts as well explained in the glossary (CEDEFOP, 2014). "Learning is a process by which an individual assimilates information, ideas and values which will thus acquires knowledge, know-how, skills or competence.
Learning occur through personal reflection, reconstruction and social interaction. It may take place in formal, non-formal, or in-formal settings" (CEDEFOP, 2014).

➢ **Formal learning**

Formal learning can be described as learning which takes place in a structured manner and an organised environment such as universities, institutions or at the workplace. This is normally structured in a way that time, objectives, tasks and resources are clearly notified. Candidates will apply, therefore learning is intentional from the candidate's point of view. Formal learning will then lead if successful to formal certification.

➢ **Non-formal learning**

Learning is defined as learning which taking place within other planned activities and are not explicitly attached and designated as learning which takes place in a formal institution or in a structured manner in terms of specified time frames, listed objectives and provided support. Non- formal learning may still be validated which can then lead to certification or recognition for prior learning as non-formal learning is also sometimes described as semi-structured learning.

➢ **Informal learning**

Again as for non-formal learning, informal learning is not intentionally organised or structured in terms of main objectives, tasks and time constraints. Informal learning is

normally gained from various activities done on a daily basis resulting from the place of work, and other leisure and family activities.

Objectives may though be achieved unintentionally to the candidate's knowledge or perspective. Informal learning is achieved through experience which can be also random incidental learning.

➢ **Work based learning**

Work based learning can be achieved using alternate methods in a vocational context between VET institutions and or on the job. A typical example of alternative work based learning are apprenticeship programmes where knowledge and skills is shared alternate lively.

➢ **Lifelong learning**

Actually there is also a debate on "life-wide learning". According to the report by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), lifelong learning and life-wide learning is based upon four main principles. The first and main objective is to keep the beneficiary at the centre, offering independence giving a holistic approach while giving equal opportunities.

Guidance through impartiality must be offered while respecting the individual's confidentiality. Lifelong learning other principles are active involvement and empowerment while offering access together with transparency of the process having empathy, through availability and responsiveness while assuring quality in offering appropriate guidance methods while enabling citizens, competent staff and the right to re-address.
(Raimo & Watts.G.Anthony, 2012)

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, 2014).

There is an ongoing debate at CEDEFOP on whether a consensus exists in the field of validation in Europe since validation of competences within vocational areas has made a significant advancement.
Various thoughts to validation of non-formal and informal learning and the way that these are conducted is still much debatable within EU member states.

A key objective of the 2012 recommendation states that EU Member States should work together towards national arrangements for validation by the year 2018. This should make possible for all citizens to have their non-formal and or informal learning identified and documented, and if they so wish be assessed and certified.

Ongoing debates and discussions has clearly indicated that everyone will benefit from validation with an emphasis on citizens within EU countries.
Validation arrangements can be of benefit to all citizens thus helping combat unemployment by improving skills matching and social cohesion. (CEDEFOP, 2015a)

Another issue which can be very debatable are key competences stated within the EQF. Though Jan has stated clearly what these key competencies (Fidel, 2007), these might still be a bit vaguely expressed. A clearer explanation to what extent these key competences should be will probably make VNFIL and RPL easier when applying these key competences to validation of in-formal and non-formal learning.

The report clearly and strongly defines validation as a process, confirmation by an authorised body that an individual or candidate have acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard. Validation is carried out by several institutions and stakeholders outside education and training.

2.2 CEDEFOP basic recommendation for validation features.

To clarify the basic features of validation, CEDEFOP recommends and identify four distinct phases in the validation process and these are in presented in the following order.

1. Identification
2. Documentation
3. Assessment
4. Certification

The first process is to identify the individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning.
The second step is to document the individual's learning acquired through non-formal and informal learning.
The third and fourth step is to assess these outcomes and certify these outcomes in which the individual has acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification or credits leading to a qualification.

When working towards a formal qualification the robustness and credibility of the assessment stage are crucial. However, questions remain on whether these four phases are enough to validate and recognise competences without too much bureaucracy. This should ensure quality and transparency within the process.

3 Making Quality in VNFIL Visible

Quality and transparency is again highly recommended in the 4th revised edition of the referencing report issued by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) Malta, in February 2016 (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2016a) through an ESF Project 1.227 'Making Quality Visible'. Through this project the NCFHE implemented its legal obligation to set up a national external quality audit system that compliments the internal quality assurance.

The referencing report also states that validation of informal and non-formal learning in Malta is regulated by the Legislation 327.432 of 2012 and indicates NCFHE as the competent authority responsible for the validation of informal and non-formal learning and for classifying such validation at a level of the MQF and EQF framework. (Subsidiary Legislation 327.432, 2012)

Because of this legal notice established by the government of Malta, all Maltese educational institutions, universities and also foreign institutes or universities operating in Malta has to abide by this legal notice. The NCFHE has the authority to give a license or withdraw a license to every institute, university or even a private company which operates in Malta that offer educational programmes. The decision was to regulate education in Malta and ensure that quality in education is maintained within MQF and EQF standards.

Through this legislation the NCFHE is entrusted to introduce a validation system for informal and non-formal learning with the setting up of (VNFIL) department to convene meetings with stakeholders on sector skills and develop National Occupational Standards in identified areas.

The report also mentions that occupational standards should involve a detailed description of the knowledge, skills and competence in order for a candidate to be able to perform an occupation successfully. NCFHE is still in its early stages to develop such occupational standards in certain areas. (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2016a).

According to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014 country report Malta 2014 (Sanderson, 2014) validation of informal and non-formal learning is already up and running. The Sectoral Skills Unit will have an integral role in widening sector focussed validation, working with stakeholders including NCFHE and the Employment Training Centre (ETC) to develop and establish occupational standards for

their respective sectors, in alignment with the developed validation processes and referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF).

Although training already existed through the Employment Training Corporation (ETC) where a Trade Testing System was being used. This system was used in around fifty seven various disciplines, occupations and sectors through the apprenticeship programmes. Two popular disciplines within hospitality training were for a commis chef and a commis waiter.

These two disciplines were probably the most taken by candidates applying for apprenticeship programmes, since an immediate sponsor could easily be found. The hospitality industry in Malta is always looking for workers to work within this industry and there is always a work force shortage. The report further mentions that emphasis should be given to the role of the individual in accessing and benefitting from validation. People should have access to the validation process on voluntary basis.

Malta has done a considerable progress with having a national framework in place for validation of informal and non-formal learning. Legal notice 296/2012 with a series amount of amendments to the Education Act came into force in 2012. (Sanderson, 2012)

Developments are expected in Malta in some context as Validation of non-formal and informal training (VNFIL) processes are still evolving. While validation processes in child care sector has been established, other sectors in Vocational Education Training (VET) will be included once the sectoral skills unit are established (CEDEFOP, 2016). The report indicates that data will have to be collected for those involved throughout the different stages of validation from the point of application to completion of the validation process.

This probably explains the lack to appropriate monitoring mechanisms for the Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) at National Level.
I could not but notice the similarity between apprenticeship and work-based learning as apprenticeship has long existed in Malta. It seems also that the sectoral skills units have almost the same role as to what trade testing boards did in the past.

3.1 Apprenticeship programmes and VNFIL

In the latest apprenticeship review in Malta of 2015 the definition of apprenticeship is defined as: "someone who is officially sponsored and contractually linked to an employers to which a wage, allowance or remuneration is given. The employer on the other will

provide on the job training which will lead to a qualification within a programme of studies."(CEDEFOP, 2015b)

Trade Testing Boards (TTB) in apprenticeship programmes had in the past, validated evidence collected through various means of applications such as interviews and logbooks. Theory and practical examination were used to reaffirm competences learned from informal and non-formal training.

This was formerly requested by the Institute of Tourism Studies as apprenticeship programmes in food and beverage would lead to a Journeyman's Certificate which would entitle a candidate obtaining such a certificate to progress to the next level of studies.

This was done in collaboration with the Institute of Tourism Studies to teach certain skills and competences while monitoring at the place of work was carried out by the Employment and Training Centre. In my personal opinion, the Institute of Tourism Studies should have been involved in the monitoring process as this would have eased recognition of skills and competences.

The apprenticeship review report clearly explains what the role of the TTB's was at the time. (CEDEFOP, 2015b, 51-53). On the job monitoring was only carried by out by the Employment and Training Corporation(ETC).On the job monitoring is considered to be a vital piece of evidence and based on the report, this should be carried out by technical experts in the area and or ideally by the TTB members. Monitoring is again mentioned in the report as one of the main areas that needs improvement for validation of informal and non-formal learning.

Apprenticeship in hospitality was considered to be a basic level in VET education at The Institute of Tourism Studies Malta and at the time this was not pegged or attached to any level within the Malta Qualification Framework (MQF). This apprenticeship programme though was recognised by the Institute of Tourism Studies as being equivalent to Level 2 at the Institute. Apprenticeship in Malta has been currently reviewed through a thematic country review which was launched in May 2014 with the setting up of a steering committee by the Ministry of Education and Employment ,Hon Evarist Bartolo and Director of CEDEFOP Prof James Calleja to revise and revive apprenticeship in Malta.

The steering committee included main stakeholders. The representatives on the committee were from the Employment Training Corporation(ETC) as the responsible authority for apprenticeship programmes ,Malta College of Arts , Science and Technology

(MCAST) and The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) of which I was the rapresentative on the committee on behalf of ITS as one of the two main VET training providers in Malta.

It also included the Malta Employers Association(MEA) ,Malta Chamber of Commerce , Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI) , Malta Union of Teachers(MUT) and the Gozo Business Chamber Council (GBCC).(CEDEFOP,2015b, 24)

A cooperation between these organisations was established to determine what could have been done better, since numbers of apprentices taking or enroll for such programmes were being deminised. The attractiveness of such a programme needed immediate actions to revive apprenticeship. The objectives of such a committee was quite clear and some guidelines were also provided with the principal objective being to address youth unemployment issues and leading youth towards work based learning programmes. Strong arguments were brought froward such as changes of legal basis within the law that regulates the apprenticeship programmes within today's context.

Other strong topics discussed were the rights and obligations of both the employers as trainers and the apprentices. Mentoring and monitoring were probably the two most strongest issues mentioned on why apprenticeship programmes were failing with smaller numbers of applications reported year after year.

The final findings and strategic planning were then presented to CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki,Greece and the results were then presented to other participating countries and published. (CEDEFOP , 2015b)

3.2 Establishing Quality in VNFIL

According to Anni (Karttunen ,2013), until a decade ago many institutions especially higher education institutions were strongly against and of the opinion that validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) is not an option for them.

VNFIL was considered labour and cost intensive, time consuming and there was an intrinsic fear that VNFIL will undermine the quality and validity of qualifications gained in education. Anni continues that fear might be stemmed from the fact of not being able to control learning taking place from experiential learning.

Learning is not only achieved by simply reading a particular book or be present and attend formal lectures. (Karttunen, 2013).

She also continues to argue that validation and assessing of experiential learning requires rigorous and extensive assessment methods different than those used in traditional formal school based learning. Claims were often made that many a time individuals still lacked the theory relating to the framework. This was considered important when using the ability to apply experiential learning. (Karttunen, 2014)

Jon Van (Kleef, 2010) defines the term quality for VNFIL as an establishment which maximize the individual's opportunity to demonstrate their competence, skills and knowledge which is in line to the establishment policies and processes and assessment.

He also argues that definitions though may look simple may not be simplistic at all. Therefore important principles such as accessibility and validity has to be accounted for by having a transparent, fair and a valid process. Though standards of skills, knowledge and competencies should be made clear, allowance for negotiations for what might be relevant should be applied.

Definitions should focus and keep the individual as the most important stakeholder. Therefore the individual should be at the centre of the process using a student centred approach to validation of informal and non-formal learning. (Kleef, 2010)

Anni Karttunen continues that while looking at descriptions of validation processes within an organisation or institution the candidate as a student is nowhere to be found within the picture of the validation process. (Karttunen, 2014)

She continues to argue that validation procedures in most instances is constructed in a way that the individual has to seek for validation rather than making validation visible. If the procedure in validation is rather concentrated towards the organisation this can easily become bureaucratic and will hinder the student's competence. The validation process should be clear, fair and transparent otherwise validation of informal and non-formal learning will not gain popularity and may not be embraced. (Karttunen, 2014)

I do agree that to some extent to what both authors are declaring that the student or the individual should be kept at the centre, and that certain unnecessary bureaucracy will hinder the process of VNFIL.I do though have my own reservations and opinions about the extent of allowance to negotiations of competencies though they might seem relevant, if these can pose a risk or a serious hazard within a competence.

To give a simple example is that no room for allowance should be left out if the skill or competence in question can lead to serious accidents or even death. Though I also believe and agree that priorities to what should be relevant or not can and should be negotiated.

3.3 The Nordic Quality Assurance Model

In 2013, a Nordic group of experts compiled and published a Nordic Quality Model for Validation. (NVL, 2013) This process tool is comprised of eight quality factors in validation, each step with quality indicators while keeping the individual in the centre of the procedure. Quality factors can be noticed throughout, the eight steps of the model. The model emphasize each quality factor starting from information that a candidate should know and be aware of.

The model continues with pre-conditions which states the legal basis linked to National Quality Standards in collaboration with stakeholders to what the candidate should possess before the validation process. The importance of each step of the validation process is to be documented in relation to validation.

Other quality factors are coordination of the process which should be carried out in professional environment, offering guidance stating the individual's right to information, mapping of methods and documents to reflect a competence, assessment using plurality of methods and follow up using a multiple platform to guidance and training. These factors are well described and explained. (Grunnet & Dahler, 2013). The Nordic model has in its centre the individual candidate with an eight step process that will follow. The Nordic model is presented in (appendix 1).

3.4 CEDEFOP guidelines on VNIFL -2015 Model

Concluding remarks of the European guidelines for validating of non-formal and informal learning clearly states the interconnecting steps of the validation process giving highlights to what that validation of informal and non-formal learning is all about.This should attribute value to the process while making these outcomes visible.(CEDEFOP, 2015a, 53)

The concluding remarks uses a 10 step procedure to illustrate in a simple way, how the steps in this process are inter-related and making learning outcomes visible while attributing value to them and how these depend on one another. The first step is to clarify the purpose of the validation initiative. Second step is to identify whether the initiative

responds to the individuals interest. Third step is that guidance and counselling shall be coordinated and in place.

Fourth step is to coordinate and involve stakeholders as thus avoiding fragmentation and ensure a coherent approach. Fifth step is to that the process is linked to a national framework and that this is clearly visible. Six step is to strengthen the value of validation by referring to the same or equivalent standards in formal education. Seventh Step is to link the process to quality assurance to give strength and credibility to validation.

 Eight step is ensure that validation practitioners possess the right professional competence. Ninth Step is to reflect on the role of validation from different sectors and make arrangements for these. Tenth step is to clarity tools and instruments that will be used for identification and assessment through the validation process. A model of this as shown in (appendix 2)

The reason why I choose to present these two models is that they are also very relevant for the Maltese context as these two have various similarities and both models have relevance to European Guidelines for VNFIL. There is a great resemblance and similarity between the two models (Nordic Model) and (CEDEFOP model).
I have tried to interlink the resemblance of both models in a simple summary as shall be explained using the Nordic model steps while comparing these with the CEDEFOP model. Here underneath I present the most relevant findings to the present research.

> **Information**

I have noticed that the information in the Nordic model is similar to one and four in the CEDEFOP model which highlights clarification and the purpose while identifying the initiative of the validation and how it responds to the interest of the individual.

> **Precondition**

While precondition in the Nordic model refers to the legal basis and concepts which shall include the standards linked to the NQF in collaboration with main stakeholders, the same could be noticed in steps four and five of the CEDEFOP model. This clearly mentions the steps to coordinate with relevant stakeholders to avoid fragmentation ensuring a coherent approach while ensuring linking arrangements to the NQF.

> **Documentation**

The Nordic model clearly states that each step of the validation process is documented while ensuring that validation for prior learning certificates (VPL) should carry the same status as formal certification.

On the other hand the CEDEFOP model in steps six and seven gives strength to the value and currency of validation outcomes should be the same or equivalent to those used in formal education. Credibility and trust should be linked to quality assurance through documentation of the process.

➢ **Coordination**

The coordination step of the Nordic model stresses on the methodology where evaluations and decisions should be done in a professional environment by highly competent individuals. It also emphasise that individuals should treated equally and fair in accordance with rules and regulations.

This could again be easily interlinked to steps eight and nine of the CEDEFOP model where it mentions the importance of the competence of validation practitioners. The CEDEFOP model also stresses about the role of validation in different sectors including the relationship between validation arrangements in these sectors.

➢ **Guidance**

Even here, there is also a strong interlink between the Nordic model and the CEDEFOP model. While the Nordic model clearly emphasise about the individual's right of information, it also mentions listening as a very important tool within the validation process. CEDEFOP in steps two and three emphasise that guidance and counselling is to be coordinated, targeted and in place, while taking the initiative to respond to the interest of the individual.

➢ **Mapping**

According to the Nordic model in relation to mapping, methods and documents should reflects the individual's competence. This can be done using a variety of different methods while having clarity of the process and documentation. In step ten of the CEDEFOP model it states that clarity of tools and instruments is to be used for identification, documentation and assessment of learning. Both models stresses about clarification of the process within learning and validation.

➤ **Assessment**

Regarding assessment the Nordic model mentions the importance of having a plurality of methods of assessment combined with a comprehensive criteria which makes the assessment valid, fair and above all transparent. It also mentions the need for continuous training and development for assessors and validation professionals.

Same similarity of argumentation is again mentioned in the CEDEFOP model in steps seven and eight where linking assessment to quality assurance is mentioned, where quality assurance stresses about the importance of a valid and fair criteria as to have transparency. In step eight the importance of taking steps to strengthen the professional competence of validation practitioners is mentioned.

➤ **Follow up**

The Nordic model remarks that the follow up process identifies guidance and recommendations for training as of upmost importance keeping internal and external collaborators in the process while also using multiple communication platforms. This can be noticed and clearly seen again in the CEDEFOP model in steps three and four where guidance and coordination is mentioned to ensure a coherent approach within the validation process.

➤ **Bureaucracy**

It would be appropriate I guess, to address the issue of eliminating certain bureaucracy within the validation process. We know from experiences that a heavy bureaucratic process in validation will not give the required results.

If the process involves a lot of unnecessary paper work, this will be costly but above all be tiring. My conclusion for such processes is that paper work should be kept to the minimum. Standards should be maintained and achieved to satisfy criteria within quality assurance procedures. One must keep in mind that these standards and procedures needs to be embraced by others for their success.

4   My Personal Experience

Based on my personal experience when I was still working in the hospitality sector, the following thoughts could be strongly noted. There are various talented people working within the hospitality that does not have any type of formal qualifications that are somehow recognised by formal institutions for various reasons. Looking back at my personal experience, I have learned a lot of practical skills and competences within the industry well before I have attended formal learning.

I had to attend formal training within an institution starting from the basics to have formal qualifications as to be able to progress in my career promotions. At times I must admit that I was totally bored during some lessons as classes had mixed ability students with some having managerial positions and others who knew nothing at all and are just beginning to study.

Though I do recognise that as I progressed to higher levels I have consolidated and improved my theoretical knowledge. This has took a three year progression from basic level to advanced level on a part-time basis which was really hard to cope with, having already a family and a full time job.

4.1 My own perspective as a past adult student

Though I must admit that studying in a formal institution has helped me to understand better food preparation and the theoretical aspects of cooking, there were other training areas that I could have been easily accredited for, if validation and recognition of various skills and competence were in place at the time.

In my own experience and that of other colleagues attending the course at that time it was somehow not interesting when mixed with other candidates that had no experience at all. This was not only considered to be a waste of time but also degrading.

This experience has helped me to understand why skilled workers that have already achieved certain competences would probably never consider to attend formal education unless needed. I remember that being a sous-chef myself at the time, would somehow be embarrassing attending the same course within the same classroom as with your commis if not one of your apprentices working for your brigade.

I can clearly recall such an experience when I was working as Sous-Chef in a five star hotel but had to attend formal training to enhance my curriculum vitae, this was not only boring especially at basic levels since most of the practical sessions included only simple task meant for beginners starting a career within the industry. This experience was mentioned and experienced by others within the course.

At times even the food preparation lecturer teaching us felt uneasy ,as even the lecturer himself thought that it was nuisance to teach us how to make a béchamel sauce when we have been making béchamel sauce for the past ten years or so.

Though I can also recall that when we progressed from basic level to advanced level, lessons and lectures became now more relevant and interesting which had more value for us that had previous experience within the industry. We could easily now at this stage relate theoretical to practical solutions then those who had very little experience.

The reason that these sessions has then become more interesting is that these lessons at an advanced level could fill theoretical as well practical gaps that we needed to learn. But this has took three years on a day release program and was somewhat hard to cope with, having a managerial full time job as well as a family to maintain since I was the only bread winner of the family at the time with my wife doing the housework as well looking after our young children.

This is a dilemma that might be experienced by students and candidates .Though this will probably remain a dilemma over various reasons and disagreements, I personally think that if the validation of informal and non-formal learning process was in place, it would have definitely reduced the number of years to take such a progression and definitely would have made my experience at the Institute a more interesting one. I still recognise though that some form of link and interaction between formal, informal and non-formal learning needs to remain in place.

4.2 Technical Expertise

Another concrete reason why I chose validation of informal and non-formal learning as my thesis study is because of my technical expertise and background of which I believe can help me to contribute from all my experiences. I have been in different shoes and hats at different times of my career. This is why I chose to list my technical expertise in the area for those who might be reading this.

I have started to work within the food and beverage department in hospitality when I was only 15 years of age. I have then started to work within hospitality to earn some extra cash and because there were plenty of jobs available not because I really wanted to.

I have started as a dishwasher, slowly developing a passion for cooking by just helping the chef and simply doing simple chores. From then onwards I have never looked back and now I have almost 33 years of experience, having occupied various positions and roles related to food preparation and production. I also currently work as a lecturer in food preparation area of which I have been doing for the last 16 years.

I am also currently the Chairman of a Trade Testing Board for apprentices within the hospitality trade while having also sat on the National Steering Committee to revive apprenticeship in Malta mentioned in the thematic review about apprenticeship offering my contribution to national strategic planning. (CEDEFOP, 2015b)

My technical expertise also includes working within various restaurants occupying various positions and the position of a Head Chef and also the position of Senior Sous Chef in a Five Star Hotel. I then took the role of a lecturer in food preparation and production at the Institute of Tourism Studies.
Other roles of which I was entrusted is also the role of an external quality verifier for O level subjects within secondary vocational subjects.

This experience has definitely given me the experience to look within a different context both as a student, trainer within the industry, a lecturer and also as a verifier.
Having such a background has definitely given me such motivation to develop a tool for validation purpose.

5   Tool Development

After I have analysed various processes through the literature review and stating different concepts, the tool that I wish to develop is to be a simple while keeping standards and quality within the process. I believe that with the use of the technical expertise within the area or specific sector, the validation process can be technically simplified and this can be used at the Institute of Tourism Studies, since it is specific for the organisation and also developed for a specific context and not as a general tool. However it may be developed further for other needs.

5.1 A 5 step tool cycle

In the cycle I have critically selected the most important issues mentioned in other processes like the Nordic model and CEDEFOP guidelines to validation, using also my experience as an assessor in food and beverage in hospitality in also in the Trade Testing Board (TTB).

I have also tried to reduce unnecessary bureaucratic processes while keeping quality in validation of informal and non-formal in mind. I will try to explain briefly the whole process while trying to develop a multipurpose assessment tool which can be used to extract and present evidence during validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL).

First and foremost, standards need to be established to ensure fairness, visibility and transparency throughout the whole validation process. These are better known as occupational standards of which should ideally be determined and recognised by all stakeholders within the specific area and within the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE).

These standards should be established through a consultation process with main stakeholders and should be embedded within the curriculum at The Institute of Tourism Studies. This is to ensure that many of the competences in validation of non-formal and informal can have the same currency as those in the institute which will in return give appropriate value to VNFIL.

The institute of Tourism Studies should also be actively involved in the sectoral skills committee that NCFHE has been entrusted to set up.

5.2 The cycle process simply explained

➤ **Provide information linked to National MQF Level**

The first step is to provide information about the whole validation process, making it clear about the pre-requisites to validation of non-formal and informal learning, including obligations and rights while keeping the individual in the centre of the process.

Determine and establish the Level within Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) recognition and validating of skills and competences for informal and non-formal learning and provide all the relevant information regarding this including the assessment tool of which includes the assessment criteria.

Unless this is identified, difficulties may arise during the validation process and also this process will enable and facilitate the next step to establish occupational standards. (CEDEFOP, 2015a)

➤ **Establish Occupational Standards**

Establishing occupational standards is another important process as listed in most reports for proper and transparent validation to take place.
There might be various ways to establish these.
Consultation with main stakeholders and concrete participation within the sectoral skills committee will definitely help in establishing these standards.

These shall and be revised periodically to meet the required standards in a very dynamic world of hospitality. This will then lead to changes in the institute's curriculum to ensure a fairness process even for validation of informal and non-formal learning in line with formal learning which will in return avoid unnecessary fatigue of paper work and bureaucracy while establishing trust, while ensuring quality assurance for both formal and VNFIL learning. This will lead to the next step to pre-pare and list the criteria.

➤ **Specify Criteria**

A criteria is needed to establish a standard that the candidate needs to reach, what the assessor needs to check for validation and also having clarity and transparency to satisfy quality assurance as established by the National Commission for Further and Higher

Education (NCFHE) which is also mentioned in the Nordic model (Sanderson, 2014) and CEDEFOP recommendation.

As explained earlier we should not go overboard with unnecessary amount of criteria. While establishing the validation criteria only criteria which is considered to be important and relevant for stakeholders should be listed.

While most do agree that criteria is very important for validation of formal ,informal and non-formal learning ,others also argue that sometimes long lists of unnecessary and bureaucratic criteria will make the validation process difficult and less effective. While criteria is an important tool for various purposes such as documentation of skills and competences achieved and maintaining standards, a great amount of paperwork with little or no importance should not be included in the criteria as occupational standards. I have personally seen criteria where the size of the pot is listed as one of the criteria instead of focusing on the quality of the sauce and the competence to prepare such a sauce.

If such criteria and occupational standards are established by qualified experts in the field, the experts should know exactly what standards they should look for and which skills are considered important that a candidate should have while recognising others that may be considered as important.

While programme evaluation has a long history, workplace learning evaluation is yet to establish itself as a distinct field. This a number of consequences including the lack of a single or settled view on how workplace learning should be evaluated or what specific aspects of learning should be investigated. (Griffin, 2011).

Disagreements on the amount of criteria used for assessment and validation remains somehow challenging and there was always disagreements between formal institutions and stakeholders. This would always remain difficult to please anyone involved including training in formal VET institutions. Some skills and knowledge taught within VET institutions are sometimes wasted as these are not applied on the job. (Griffin, 2011).

The hospitality sector in particular suffers from such issues mentioned by Griffin, as hotels and restaurants including other hospitality outlets do vary in their level of service and needs. Even when providing different ethnic food or even how food and beverage is served according to that specific culture should be considered. Criteria should be based on most common practices that can accommodate also ethnic traditions.

VET institutions are sometimes fairly or unfairly criticized about the training provided at the institute and also about the teaching taking place there. While constructive criticism is

important for institutions to be pro-active with their programme of studies, one needs to keep in mind that basics are important as such basics will develop a candidate or a student to work in different environments and context which would have common practices.

This I have experienced it myself at first hand, as employers tend to see only what is mainly important for them. You cannot suite the needs of only a couple of employers but to seek what is considered as common criteria for most employers. That is why a mix of stakeholders should and are to be consulted. While disagreements will always be there a common ground can at least be established.

While recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning is definitely needed, transferable skills should be included which can be also validated in a life-long learning environment. To simply explain myself on what in my personal opinion are transferable skills. Transferable skills are common skills that can be transferred from a vocational profession to another. One simple answer is that life-long learning has nowadays become the norm and also because of the influx of immigration from one country to another and the freedom of movement from one country to another.

Though the end product might vary in a particular country, it is almost certain that common skills in producing such a product are somehow in common and therefore becoming a transferable skill which can be used and validated in many , if not all countries.

I also personally think that weight should be given to a transferable competence. Let's take language as a transferable competence. Though the use of a particular language can be a transferable competence to a particular country this may not be transferable to other countries. Sometimes a lot of weight is given to a particular language over a vocational skill or competence therefore this would be somehow discriminating to certain immigrants and freedom of movement migrants.

➢ **Assess and provide training if necessary**

The link between VET institutions and the Industry is very important and the building up of a good relation will help build trust within themselves and establish these common practices. While as mentioned earlier, establishing occupational standards should involve all main stakeholders. I believe that even during assessment and validation of informal and non-formal learning, which will then lead to formal certification shall be done by a

selected committee made up of VET training providers as well as experts from the industry.

This may lead to a common understanding and mutual respect in bridging the gaps between VET institutions and the hospitality industry. After the assessment of a competence and validation has taken place during an interview with specified questions linked to an MQF Level.

The institute shall then notify the candidate about the result in strict confidentially and shall provide feedback and shall offer to provide the necessary training pegged to the MQF Level which will then have the same currency as formal education, should the individual wish so at their own expense as stipulated by the Institute. It would be meaning less to provide VNFIL unless training is provided for any skill gaps noted during validation of non-formal and informal training. *"Validation tools and methods should strive for clarity, precision and be as unambiguous and non-judgemental as possible"*. (CEDEFOP, 2015a)

➢ **Collection of Evidence**

There are various methods that can be used to extract and present evidence during the validation process and these can be divided into two main categories. These are extraction and presentation of evidence. (CEDEFOP, 2015a)

CEDEFOP have listed clear guidelines on how extraction of evidence using multiple tools and a plurality of methods as indicated underneath using a solitary tool or a combination of tools combined with a plurality of methods.

Extracting Evidence Tools
➢ Tests and Examinations
➢ Interviews
➢ Simulations
➢ Observations
➢ Practical Evidence

Presentation of Evidence Methods
➢ Portfolios
➢ Cirruculum Vitae
➢ Working Experience

5.3 Reflecting on Extraction of evidence

Though the various ways to extract evidence mentioned above are very relevant ,this should not in my opinion be based on one method of extraction ,but by using mixed methods based on using more then one method of extraction depending on the context and the experience of the individual.

Use of test and examinations might still be the best extraction of evidence , but observation at the place of work ,simulations carried out during an interview which is done by technical experts within a specified area might also be relevant enough as evidence and thus can replace unecessary practical examination. It would be wise to have someone representing the Institute in this process as to avoid any conflicts to evidence presented.

On the other hand the opposite might also be true, since unless this is done and filled by reliable and trained personel , this could not show the true colours of the individual's skills or competence.

Work experience might not necessary reflect the individual's knowledge of skills and competence within validation. A candidate might have years of repetitve working experience in a specified tasks thus not making the individual fully competent within an array of skills and competences.
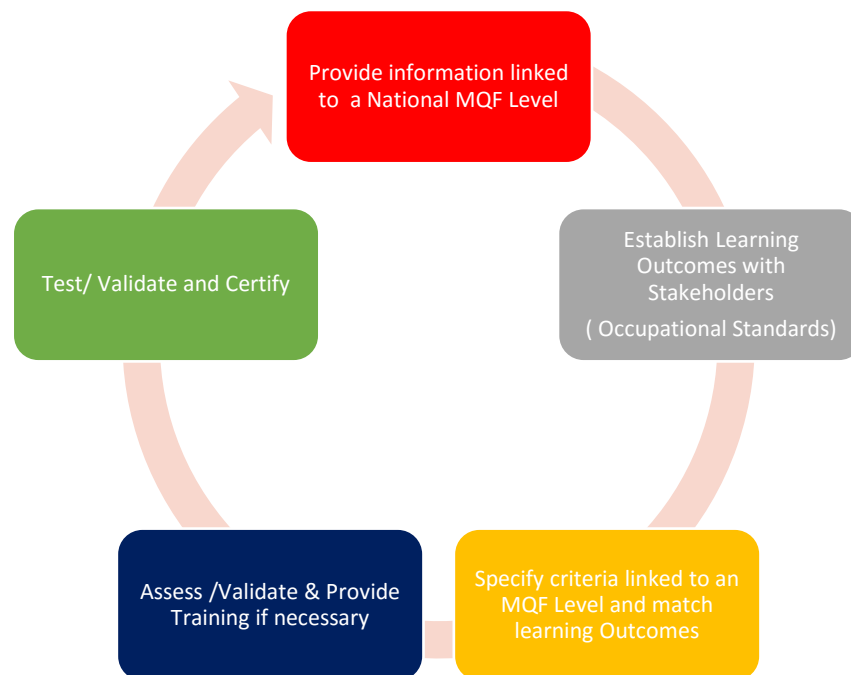

Figure 1. The proposed five step tool cycle

> **Recognition**

Formal certification by the Institute of Tourism Studies should be given once recognition of the validation process is finally recognised by the validation committee or board and data must be kept for future reference thus enabling the individual to further his/her studies in the future.

The VNFIL cycle to validation in Food and Beverage explained.

This idea was first simply tried and tested through a European Social Fund (ESF2.141) project held in Gozo to assess and certify people working within the hospitality sector in Gozo. Through a panel of experts within kitchen and pastry, the panel developed a set of questions to be used in the interview process.

The questions were carefully selected in line with the level the individuals were sitting for. The board could immediately determine the individual's knowledge of certain competence and skills indicated or pegged to formal level. (Appendix 4).

In fact some of the individuals were selected to re-affirm their knowledge and skills with a practical examination involving as many skills as possible within the examination (Appendices 5-7). Candidates were then notified beforehand what the practical examination shall be consisting of.

All candidates that were selected by the panel during the interview as possessing the necessary skills and competences has proved themselves competent after the examination has taken place. Candidates were then formally certified. A similar approach shall take place in the process that I shall be proposing.

The initial phase of the process steps to the validation process that I am proposing is that the student will have to apply to sit for validation of informal and non-formal learning of skills and competencies that the individual might have already identified as having.

The student will then have to proceed and notify the Institute at which level he/she of the MQF Level and occupational standards in food and beverage he or she would validation of VNFIL to take place. This will enable recognition for prior learning team, guidance personal, assessors, validation board, committee, board and individuals to prepare and clearly test competences and skills match against an agreed and transparent criteria.
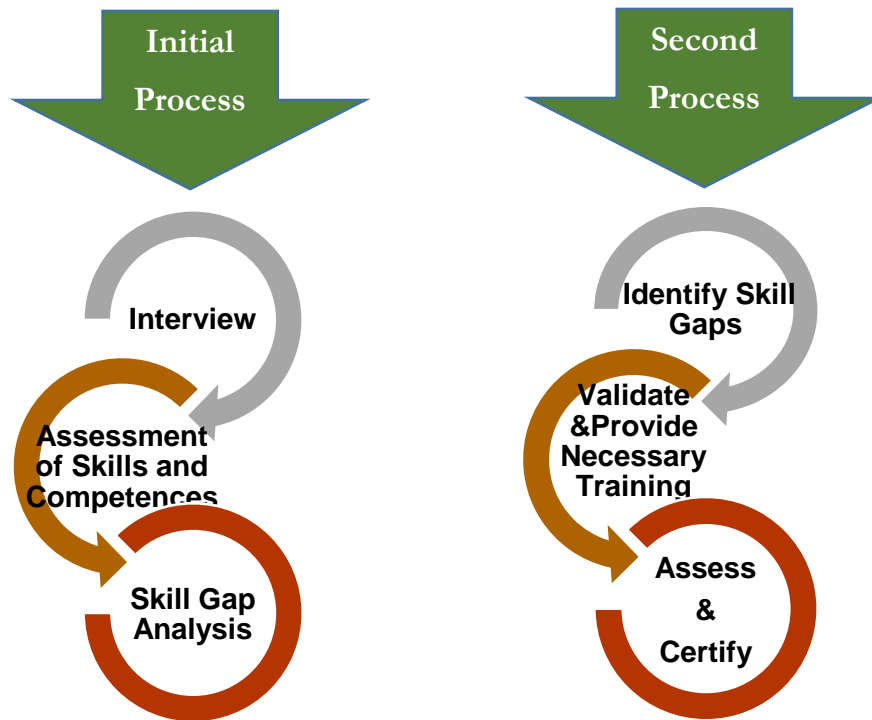
In the second phase step of interview, the tool used will help to assess the individual's skills and competencies that the individual already possesses, while identifying any skills gaps the individual might have thus providing immediate feedback and identify training needs if needed.

While the individual should be notified about any skills or competencies of which the individual is not yet competent, data and evidence about competencies and skills that individual possess should be kept as the individual should be given the right to train for those failed skills and competencies without having to go through the whole procedure as in the individual's first validation of informal and non-formal attempt.

If the individual is the centre of the validation process, the individual should be given the opportunity to attend any training identified as not yet competent and ask again for other validation attempts within a stipulated period of time. The individual's decision whether to attend training or not should be respected and kept confidential for various reasons including employability.

While evidence such as Curriculum Vitae, Portfolios and Working Experience, may be collected prior to an interview or validation, evidence might need to be tested by the validation board, assessors to achieve valid and concrete evidence that the individual is really competent for such competencies.

These may be tested by simulations, questioning, prior on-line theoretical examinations or constant observations at the place of work in line with occupational standards of skills and competences to the referred level in the MQF Level .Further evidence for practical competencies may be tested by an examination which will include as much as possible skills and competencies in one single menu and attempt.

Initial
Process

Second
Process

Interview

Identify Skill
Gaps

Assessment
of Skills and
Competences

Validate
&Provide
Necessary
Training

Skill Gap
Analysis

Assess
&
Certify

Figure 2. The proposed two stages leading to VNFIL

5.4 Employability vis-à-vis Skills and Competencies in VNFIL

In my opinion individuals might still be employable though not fully competent for a whole task when broken down to various skills, as an employer might be interested in a particular skill over another. Sometimes it is also confusing to what is the difference between a skill and a competence. A skill is defined as "the ability to do something well" while competence is defined as "the ability to do something successfully and efficiently". (Oxford On-line Dictionary, 2017)

Though these two definitions might confuse, these can be used separately. A competence might include various skills within a task and these can be recognised separately in the validation process.

An individual might have a skill which falls within a formal competence of which an employer would or can be highly interested. Validated skills within a competence should not go to waste if the individual decides not to sit for another validation process immediately. We must recognise and point out skills within a competence that an individual might have. In certain instances assessors might tend to discourage individuals

as we tend to discuss only what is missing rather then what the individual has and have achieved.

Another example may be that a fully competent pastry chef has a lot of skills to prepare anything within the pastry department from preparation of various items, decorating, managing etc. thus making him/her competent for that position and competent also within a competence. While a helping hand or commis working within the pastry department might have the skill to decorate cakes only, thus not making him/her fully competent as a Pastry Chef.

Skills be made visible and listed within a competence of the level required.
My argument is that the helping hand or commis working within the pastry department is still employable somehow, and therefore the individual is being recognised for the abilities and skills that the individual possess.

For this purpose any transcript resulting from validation of informal and non-formal learning should be made visible on the transcript. This will enable any future employers to decide whether to employ the individual or not, based on the skills and competences found on that transcript. Formal education transcripts should be encouraged to follow for this purpose. An example is shown in (table 1) below. I might employ the individual if the individual can clean a fish properly if I was a busy fishmonger for instance though the individual does not yet have the competence to fillet a fish. The latter skill can be achieved on the job.

Table 1. A basic task transcript as an example for VNFIL

Candidate Name: Mr Jesmond Atkins **Month/ Year of Validation of VNFIL:** September 2016 **Level of Validation within MQF :** 3 **Number of Attempts:** 1		
List of Competencies and Occupational Standards Assessed for	**The candidate was found to be competent for the following skills**	**Identified Skill Gap for Training Provision**
Cleaning & Filleting of a round Fish	Cleaning of Fish from scales, gills and intestines □√ Filleting of Round Fish □	Cleaning of Fish from scales, gills and intestines □ Filleting of Round Fish □ √

Another example which is shown again in (table 2) is to explain and show that the individual has achieved one skill from the two required to be fully competent.

This does not mean that the individual is not employable but the individual has been assessed for different skills within a competence.

Table 2. A basic task example of different skills within a competence in VNFIL.

Candidate Name: Mr Jesmond Atkins		
Month/ Year of Validation of VNFIL: September 2016		
Level of Validation within MQF : 3		
Number of Attempts: 1		
List of Competencies and Occupational Standards Assessed for	**The candidate was found to be competent for the following skills**	**Identified Skill Gap for Training Provision**
Preparing a Sponge	Preparing a sponge using fresh ingredients □ √ Preparing a sponge using a convenience mix □	Preparing a sponge using fresh ingredients □ Preparing a sponge using a convenience mix □ √

In the (tables 1 and 2) which were purposely chosen to show that validation in VNFIL can be different from one to another.

While in the first table the individual has achieved one skill from the two required to be fully competent , in (table 2) an example is used to show how an individual can be assessed for two diffferent results. In (table 2) above is showing that individual is competent for the occupational standard for (preparing a sponge) but only in one of the two skills available. This is to show the difference between a skill and a competence.

More than one task or skill chart for validation of VNFIL will be needed according to the number of skills indicated in the Institute's formal education scheme of work that would be covered in the indicated level. The table shown above is just a sample of one of many tasks that a candidate will be assessed for at a pegged level. The scheme of work normally indicates the tasks that the individual shall be preparing throughout the academic year. A list of identified skills and tasks has to be clearly identified within the scheme of work as though tasks may vary same skills in preparation may be applied. My argument in validation of informal and non-formal learning is that assessors of VNFIL has to bear

also in mind the employability of the individual and having a transparent transcript of skills and competencies during validation visible rather than invisible.

We should not overestimate the impact of a single assessment process. Others may be explored as having a role within employability. The argument also stresses the importance why technical expertise in the sector should be chosen meticulously leaving room for employability and further progress in training. The individual also will become conscious of other skills available preparing the same task.

The persons untrusted with the preparation of the Sectoral Skills or Occupational Standards shall keep in mind that there might be different paths or ways for a competence to be achieved. In my experience as an assessor there are skills to achieve a competence that needs to be adhered to.

Therefore time and effort when preparing occupational standards should not be wasted on how the individual is making the task but rather at the quality of the end product of within that task. In the two examples shown in (table 3 & 4) the assessment criteria is clear and simplified and reduced to the minimum requirement of skills in line with what is required to achieve such a standard.

Table 3. An example of a practical competence assessment criteria chart

Candidate Name: Mr Jesmond Atkins

Month/ Year of Validation of VNFIL: September 2016

Level of Validation within MQF : 3

MQF Level 3 Sectoral Skills	Occupational Standard	Assessment Criteria	Remarks
Fish Filleting	Candidate must show that is able to clean and fillet a round fish on their own according to the established standard.	Candidate has fully removed all scales.	□ Competent □ Identified Skill Gap
		Gills and intestines has been correctly removed	□ Competent □ Identified Skill Gap
		Candidate is able to fillet the fish without having a lot of wastage	□ Competent □ Identified Skill Gap

The candidate has been tested for Fish Filleting and is certified as

□ Competent

□ Not Fully Competent

Table 4. An example of a theoretical assessment criteria chart.

Candidate Name: Mr Jesmond Atkins
Month/ Year of Validation of VNFIL: September 2016
Level of Validation within MQF : 3

MQF Level 3 Underpinning Knowledge	Occupational Standard	Criteria	Assessment
Quality Points for purchasing fresh fish and storing of fresh fish	The candidate should be able to identify or list at least three from five common quality points to ensure that fish is inspected for freshness when purchasing. The candidate must also indicate the appropriate storage temperature for fresh fish.	Quality Points Red gills. Round eyes not sunken. Fresh smell. Plentiful scales. Present sea slime. Storage Temperature 3∘C - 5∘C	□ Competent □ Identified Skill Gap □ Competent □ Identified Skill Gap
The candidate has been tested for the theoretical knowledge of quality points to look for when purchasing fresh fish and also storing temperature of fish and is □ Competent □ Not Fully Competent			

I have intentionally kept the same colour scheme in both (table 3) and (table 4) as the same used in (figure 1**)** as to illustrate how the 5 step cycle tool process in validation of VNFIL can be used. The NCFHE, in the latest revised referencing report and other reports published before clearly indicates in the illustrated figure 15 of the report, the distribution of knowledge, skills and competences for Initial Vocational Education Training (IVET) and continuous vocational educational training (CVET) as shown in (figure 3) in this report. (Referencing Report, 2016a)

The report (Referencing Report, 2016a), clearly states that vocational educational training (VET) are to include education leading to the development of sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. Sectoral skills refer to those skills that are relevant to a particular sector.

These sectoral skills are determined by the demands of the labour market. Underpinning knowledge refers to the theory developed within a particular sector. This knowledge provides the theoretical basis on which individuals use sectoral skills.

In case of IVET and CVET Qualifications training courses need to cater for all the three aspects: key competences, sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. In the case of

awards in CVET (of a few credits), stand-alone awards can be in any of the three aspects mentioned above. However, they cannot be built into a 'Qualification 'simply by collecting credits. There needs to be a coherent development of learning outcomes for awards to be converted into a 'Qualification'. The 'Qualification' would need to be accepted by NCFHE in order to be accredited (in the case of non-self-accrediting institutions).

Level of Qualification	Distribution of Key Competences(KC), Sectoral Skills (SS), and Underpinning Knowledge (UK) for each qualification		
Level 5	KC 10%	SS 45%	UK 45%
Level 4	KC 20%	SS 40%	UK 40%
Level 3	KC 40%	SS 30%	UK 30%
Level 2	KC 60%	SS 30%	UK 30%
Level 1	KC 70%	SS 15%	UK 15%

Figure 3. The distribution of knowledge, skills and competences for IVET and CVET Qualifications (Referencing Report, 2016a).

The number of credits for VET qualifications at Level 1-5 is also specified in the referencing report. The number of credits assigned is 60 for Levels 2 and 3. Level 4 is assigned a minimum of 120 and Level 5 from 60-120 credits.

The equivalent minimum number of hours assigned per credit in European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and European Credits in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is 25hours.This can be very challenging to transfer to validation of informal and non-formal learning due to the distribution of hours.

While the credit transfer system can easily be adhered to in formal education training, this can be difficult to transfer within validation of informal and non-formal learning. If the number working hours is somehow attached, the number of working hours in just one year can easily exceed the number of hours needed for one level compared to an academic year in formal education.

The amount of hours should not interfere in work-based learning of informal and non-formal as long as the skill or competence is achieved. Individuals learn differently and with a different pace, therefore length of time should not deter recognition of prior learning as long the skill or competence remains relevant to a particular level.

While sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge may be linked together in work-based learning of informal and non-formal training these cannot be detached regarding the percentage and the number of hours required.

Key Competences are defined in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 2006 (2006/962/EC) should be given during initial education. In the referencing report of the 4th revised edition (Referencing Report, 2016a, 57-58) these key competences are listed as follows:

The main key competences are eight in total. The ability to communicate in your language and another language, mathematical and digital competence together with interpersonal, cultural and entrepreneurship skills. The last but not least is the ability to learn by learning. A detailed list of these competence may be seen in (Appendix 2)

The competences as recommended by the EU Parliament and should be ideally given during early or initial education. I believe that some of these key competences can be carefully identified and listed or marked within a multi task process of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

My conclusion and remarks for these competences are that these competences are almost commonly existent within the hospitality sector as these competences are widely sought by employers within the hospitality sector.

To be able to work within the hospitality, an individual must be able to work within a team, be able to communicate with one or more languages, have interpersonal skills, and use digital means to take orders or even bookings. Let's take a chef in a fine dining restaurant for instance, the chef has to create, visualise and offer unique experiences therefore even arts can be included within. Let's not forget also about the waiter performing '*flambé'.*

I reckon that this is also performing art within a competence. Besides that even employers can be validated for having these competences. It is also natural that a restaurant owner for instance will have entrepreneurship skills. Therefore I should not see why these competences should not be included and validated and recognised through VNIFL.

5.5 Past and current situation of VNFIL in Food & Beverage at the Institute of Tourism Studies

Through the last 16 years that I have been working at the Institute of Tourism Studies, I remember that up to a couple of years ago some form of validation of informal and non-formal learning was only carried out for apprentices in a programme of studies named (Extended Skill Training Scheme), of which the Institute was the training and service provider in collaboration with the Employment Training Centre (ETC).

Validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning was carried out by the trade testing board against a set of criteria and standards of which included, an interview, portfolio of evidence, practical examination and also a theoretical exam which was set by the institute. This had a mixture of the extracting and provision of evidence as is being suggested in the CEDEFOP guidelines. (CEDEFOP, 2015a)

As for the current situation at the Institute there is no current validation of informal and non-formal training in place in the food and beverage area, but the institute is working on setting and putting the recognition of informal and non-formal in place. Through the past two years there has been a lot of changes within all modules to be in line with quality assurance and NCFHE requirements. I believe that change to accommodate recognition of informal and non-formal cannot be in place unless occupational standards or sectoral skills are recognized by all stakeholders.

I also believe that The Institute is on the right track and is able to achieve and have this in place by the end of the year 2017. My personal opinion and view regarding recognition for prior learning and validation should be further studied, launched and implemented while having a dual purpose for achieving credits for access to formal educational thus complementing skills gap found during the VNFIL process.

➢ **Setting up RPL /VNFIL at The Institute of Tourism Studies**

I also suggest that a Recognition for Prior Learning department to validate VNFIL should be set up and start working immediately if this is going to be set up in the near future. Though this involve a lot of preparatory work the Institute of Tourism Studies is already preparing to be probably the first education entity to have this in place by the next academic year in collaboration with a foreign Nordic university where validation and recognition has been running for years.

This is the right moment to work hand in hand within the quality assurance at ITS as this department is also working on improving quality and standards on a National Level and within ITS. A suggested RPL/VNFIL process flow chart can be seen in (appendix 9). Though there is always room for improvement, but standards and processes should be in place for any eventuality as well as to be relevant and gain respect by all.

6   Discussion

Validation of informal and non-formal training will always somehow remain challenging. There would always be critical analysis and suggestions to improve the validation process as this will and shall remain an ongoing process. This though should not discourage institutions from implementing VNFIL as this will enrich the validation process. The involvement of all stakeholders in the process is considered to have extreme importance, especially where occupational standards are involved.

Stakeholders are the front liners where needs are concerned both coming from the industry and the main stakeholders where practicality is concerned as well institutions which are continuously facing pedagogical needs of individuals. Unless stakeholders and personnel from the hospitality industry are involved validation will always remain somehow very critical and will have difficulties to be embraced by the industry itself.

On the other hand, I strongly believe that the Institute of Tourism Studies should remain the main authority and the leading partner in the recognition and validation process as to work and keep the student and individuals at the centre of the process and strive to enhance the process for the individual's main interest. Trust would probably remain the most important issue if validation of informal and non-formal validation is to grow and respond to today's challenges.

VNFIL cannot be successful working within a paradigm context. It will need to evolve and recognise its importance working within a dynamic hospitality industry. What is sometimes worrying in validation and recognition for prior learning is that processes do not leave space and room for a relationship with the learner and assessors to develop due to fast pace and cost effective approach taken by management. (Hamer, 2012).

The Institute of Tourism Studies together with stakeholders and the Malta Tourism Authority and the National Commission for Further and Higher Education should strive to collect valuable data and statistics. Tourism is one of the main contributor towards the country GDP and will probably remain for future years to come, therefore collection of valuable statistics and data should be encouraged and published for future reference and further studies.

6.1 Reflective Summary of main findings

The reflective summary of my main findings is that there is a common understanding about the importance of such validation of informal and non-formal training. This importance is such that (CEDEFOP) is continuously working side by side with all EU members to have recognition of and validation of informal and non- formal learning as one of its main priorities. Consensus seems to exist based on the principles of validation and recognition though this might vary from one country to another depending on the context and there will always be room for agreements and disagreements.

I have noted that though there are different concepts and models of validation of which two of these were closely studied, there is a great resemblance in both models. Even the cycle model which I am proposing have the same principles taken from both models that have been analysed in my thesis.

Certainly my personal experience have helped a lot through real hands experience in life-wide learning and this has definitely helped me in my thesis. This has helped me to understand better the importance that VNFIL would have to prospective candidates, who in return may want to apply for validation of informal and non-formal learning and get recognition for these.

Recognition would then give value and currency of the validation vis-à-vis employment and carrier progress while enhancing their curriculum vitae. We must not underestimate vocational skills and competencies which are not utilised or not seen when people move or migrate from one country to another. Certainly VNFIL can exploit a candidate's potential and have these skills and competencies exposed to potential employers.

Trust and the use of technical experts will remain the main key issue within the validation process and is almost imperative for the validation process to be embraced and above all be valid and relevant. That is why it is important that the whole process should be clear, fair and transparent which in return help trainers in formal institutions work hand in hand with validation experts and on the job trainers.

While I strongly agree that NCFHE should remain the main authority to oversee all education programmes and can withhold or authorise these programmes, I suggest that the main role of the NCFHE as listed in the legal notice of 2012, can change from being the authority to validate skills and competences to being the authority to recognise these.

Another reflection is that NCFHE should or may consider to suggest a change in the legal legislation regulating educators and lecturers teaching vocational subjects.

As it stands now educators or lecturers in possession of level 4 or 5 within the MQF ,cannot part teach a practical module from a whole programme of studies unless, the lecturer possess a level of education higher than that module which is being taught. There are very few or little amount of lecturers that possess a solid knowledge and background in a vocational scenario with years and years of hands on experience to possess level 6 or higher within the MQF in a vocational scenario. Up to now no, practical courses exceeding Level 5 within the framework was available.

6.2 Evaluation of the study

The student or candidate should always remain and be kept at the centre of the validation process in informal and non-formal training as suggested earlier in my report. In this dynamic world, life- long learning has become the norm therefore skills and competences achieved within formal, informal and non-formal training should not be wasted, but be made visible through recognition and validation processes.

Employment also should be clearly kept at the core of the validation process since this is finally what probably counts the most for the candidate or individual sitting for validation and recognition of competences and skills. Potential identified skills and competencies must be clearly listed as individuals may shift from one job to another and common competences along potential ones should be awarded recognition in today's life – long learning environment.

A coherent approach and continuous support from all stakeholders is important to be maintained in the interest of the individual sitting for validation as disagreements within the process may lead to failure of validation of informal and non-formal assessment and learning. Distribution of allocation to the number of hours attached to ECVET and ECTS will remain a big challenge to VNFIL as these cannot in reality be always correctly applied to individuals or candidates who already have years and years of hands on or life-wide experience. These would fairly exceed what is requested especially at lower level from level 3 to level 5 within the MQF framework.

6.3 Suggestions for the further research.

I personally suggest that the Institute of Tourism Studies will continue to do further research and use the help and expertise of Haaga Helia University of Finland since

validation and recognition of prior learning is already up and running for a number of years in Finland. Haaga Helia Univeristy of applied sciences may and can offer suggestions and recommendations learned throughout their years of hands on experience, difficulties encountered and the way forward in VNFIL within their University.

I suggest that further research to fairly examine whether parity of esteem between vocational and academic subjects really exists and are at par with each other, especially at higher levels within MQF and EQF of the education framework. The link to key competencies and percentages attached to a lower level within the MQF is also an area which can be further explored and studied. These may be clearly identified and linked within the EQF and MQF levels especially in levels 3 and 4 within the EQF as obviously this might leave room for disagreements without being too bureaucratic.

Clearer suggestions within these key competencies linked to different levels can reduce further injustice to underachievers ,migrants or workers travelling from one country to another and even students which have and possess low academic qualifications. Suggestions for further studies on how credits in a credit based system can be worked out so these can be transferred into life-long learning environment. (Howieson, 2013).

From my years of experience at the Institute and also in the role of both an ESTS and Foundation coordinator, students with low academic background may have been inclined to choose to enter formal vocational education programmes at levels 2 and 3 within in the MQF because they might think that writing and reading skills might not be so important and needed in a vocational scenario programmes.

Personal experience have taught me that these students might and still face difficulties in writing and reading skills in English let alone using other foreign languages. They are also assessed for underpinning knowledge in English and though they might be able to answer clearly if assessed in Maltese which is their mother language, students might be at a disadvantage with foreign counterparts since examination papers are also prepared and written in English.

English language is currently the language used as the main tuition language at the Institute of Tourism Studies. The hospitality industry might be losing motivated students because of these hurdles which these students might have had along already within compulsory education. Students might have strong sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge, though they cannot explain themselves correctly when assessed in English.

Because of this situation students may sometimes be lost since they are failing within the system because of reading and writing skills rather than identifying their strong sectoral skills and recognise while validate these skills which could help them seek employment. This does not mean that students are not employable in the hospitality industry as most probably some of them would still excel in showing and using their skills and competencies.

Courses should be closely analysed in what skills and competencies are considered most important when linked to different positions in the hospitality sector including key competences. This could and may be linked to further studies to why students are probably leaving formal education after compulsory education and or after the first year of tertiary education.

I suggest that further research should also be carried out by the Malta Tourism Authority to collect useful data and be officially published for future students to use for their interesting thesis's they might have. Very little published information may be found in this regard.

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List of Acronyms an Abbreviations

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CVET	Continuous Vocational Education and Training
ECTS	European Credits Transfer System
ECVET	European Credits in Vocational Education and Training
EQA	European Qualifications Framework
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education & Training
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ETC	Employment and Training Corporation
EU	European Union
GBCC	Gozo Business Chamber Council
GRTU	General Retailers and Traders Union
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
KC	Key Competences
MEA	Malta Employers Association
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
MCAST	Malta College of Arts,Science and Technology
MCCEI	Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry
MUT	Malta Union of Teachers
MQC	Malta Qualifications Council
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
MHRA	Malta Restaurants and Hotels Association
MTA	Malta Tourism Authority
NCFHE	National Commision for Further and Higher Education
NSO	National Statistics Office

QA	Quality Assurance
SEC	Secondary Education Certificate
SSC	Sectoral Skills Committee
UK	Underpinning Knowledge
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VINFL	Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning
VPL	Validation of Prior Learning
WBL	Work Based Learning

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Appendix 1.

The Nordic Model

Follow Up

Information

Assessment

The Individual in the Centre

Pre-Conditions

Mapping

Documentation

Guidance

Coordination
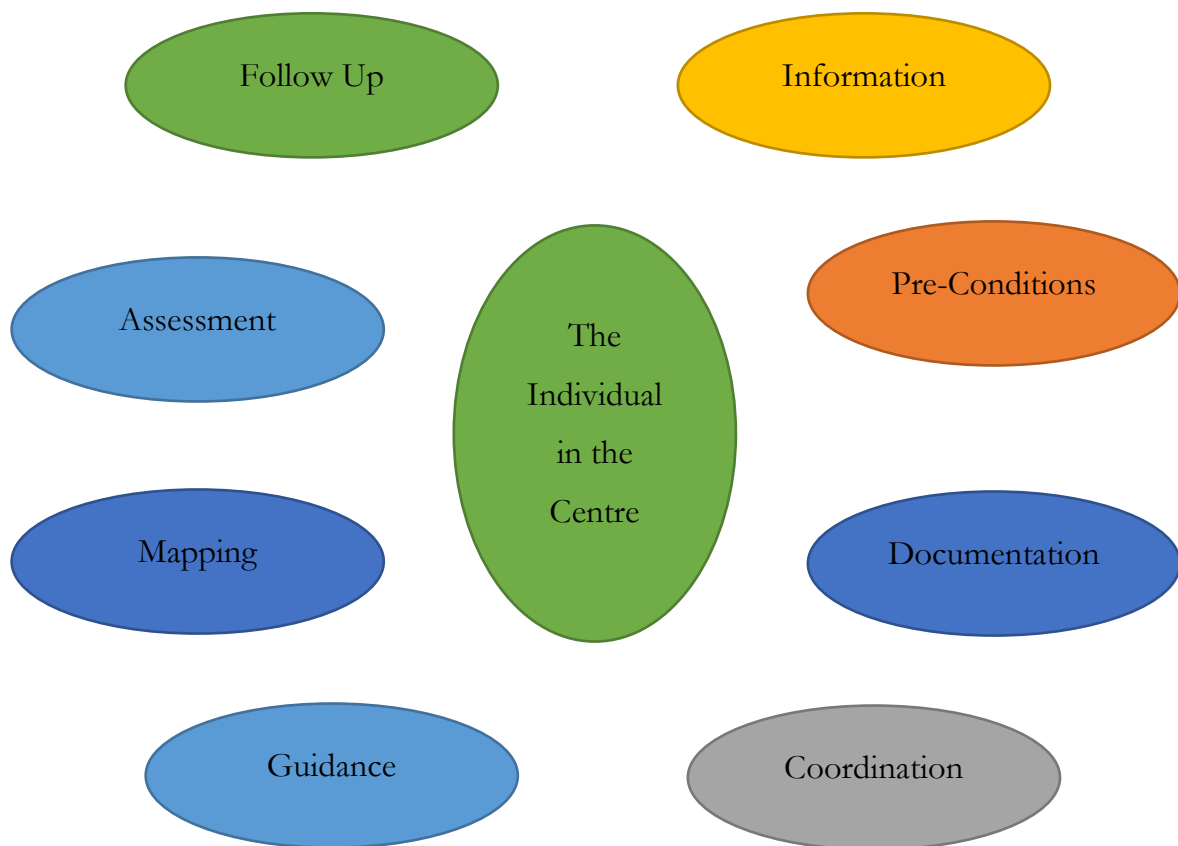
The Nordic Model (Grunnet, 2013)

Appendix 2.

1. Clarify the purpose of the validation initiative

2. Identify how the initiative responds to the interest of the individual

3. Make sure that guidance and counselling is coordinated, targeted and in place

4. Take steps to coordinate relevant stakeholders to avoid fragmentation and ensure a coherent approach

5. Ensure the visibility and sustainability by linking arrangements to national qualifications framework

6. Strengthen the value and currency of validation outcomes by referring to the same or equivalent standards as those used for formal education

7. Strengthen the trust in credibility of validation by linking to quality assurance arrangements

8. Take steps to strengthen the professional competences of validation practitioners

9. Systematically reflect on the role of validation in different sectors as well as on relationship between validation arrangements in these sectors

10. Clarify the tools and instruments to be used for identification, documentation and assessment of learning

CEDEFOP (2015)

Appendix 3.

1. *Communicating in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate way in the full range of societal and cultural contexts — education and training, work, home and leisure.*

2. *Communicating in foreign languages shares the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal contexts — work, home, leisure, education and training — according to one's wants or needs. Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills, such as mediation and intercultural understanding. An individual's level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions, different languages and according to their background, environment and needs/interests.*

3. *Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology Mathematical competence is the ability to use addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and ratios in mental and written computation to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. The emphasis is on process and activity, as well as knowledge. Mathematical competence involves – to different degrees - the ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought (logical and spatial thinking) and presentation (formulas, models, constructs, graphs/charts). Scientific competence refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. Competence in technology is viewed as the application of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human wants or needs. Both areas of this competence involve an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen.*

4. *Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange*
Information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.

5. *Learning to learn is the ability to pursue and persist in learning. Individuals should be able to organise their own learning, through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. Competencies also include awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities and the ability to handle obstacles in order to learn successfully. It means*

gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts – at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence.

6. *Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way socially and professionally, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.*

7. *Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports active social participants in their day to day lives, makes employees more aware of the context of their work and, acts as a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by entrepreneurs in establishing social or commercial activity. The business community in Malta believes that this must be given a boost and should be fostered in the early stages of education.*

8. *Cultural expression refers to the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts.*

Key Competences (CEDEFOP, 2015)

Appendice 4.

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
Has a good standard of personal hygiene					
Uses correct posture during interview					
Food Handlers License A (Valid up to _____)					
Food Handlers License B (Valid up to _____)					
Knowledge of Basic Health & Safety					
Can you name health and safety points in relation to kitchen attire ?	□ Answered in full - Chef's Jacket, Trousers, Shoes, Apron & Neck-Tie	□ Mentioned only 3 from Chef's Jacket, Trousers, Shoes, Apron & Neck-Tie	□ Could only identify 1 good health & Safety practice	□ No idea	
Knowledge of Good Hygiene Practices					
Can you name at least 3 good hygiene practices in a kitchen environment?	□ Answered in Full - clean as you go, Food Labelling, Temperatures	□ Any 2 from those 3	□ Could only identify 1 good hygiene practice	No idea	
Knowledge of Food Allergens					
1)Do you know what food allergens are?	□ Explained in detail	□ Just mentioned but unable to explain	□ No Idea		
2) Can you name the most common food allergens?	□ Mentioned 5 Food Allergens - Nuts, Dairy, Eggs, Celery, Flour, Mustard, Shellfish, Peanuts, Sulphide	□ Mentioned 3 Food Allergens - Nuts, Dairy, Eggs, Celery, Flour, Mustard, Shellfish, Peanuts, Sulphide	□ Mentioned 1 Food Allergens - Nuts, Dairy, Eggs, Celery, Flour, Mustard, Shellfish, Peanuts, Sulphide	Mentioned None	

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
Knife Skills					
1) Can you explain safety aspects to look for when purchasing knifes?	□ Non-Slip Handles, Argonomic Shape	□Mentioned only 1	□ No idea what to look for		
2) What is a paring knife?	□ Explains in detail that it is the most commonly used knife in the kitchen and is also known as an office knife	□ Knows but finds difficulty to explains in detail that it is the most commonly used knife in the kitchen and is also known as an office knife	□ Only knows it exists	No idea	
3) What is the difference between a filleting knife and a boning knife?	□ Explains in detail: Filleting knife is used for filleting of fish & it is also flexible to avoid having waste and different in shape to boning knife. Boning knife is used for butchery of meat and is not flexible	□ Only mentions 1 difference Filleting knife is used for filleting of fish & it is also flexible to avoid having waste and different in shape to boning knife. Boning knife is used for butchery of meat and is not flexible	□ Knows they exist but cannot differentiate	No Idea	
Preparation of Cold Dishes					
Can you explain some techniques associated with preparation of cold food?	□ Mentions 5 Chopping, Dicing, Peeling, Marination, Curing, Salting	□ Mentions 3 Chopping, Dicing, Peeling, Marination, Curing, Salting	□ Mentions 1 Chopping, Dicing, Peeling, Marination, Curing, Salting	No idea	
Knowledge of Basic Stocks					
1) Explain the difference between a white stock and brown stock?	□ Can differentiate easily that White stock vegetables and bones are not brown whereas for brown stock vegetables and bones are brown	□ Can differentiate with difficulty that White stock vegetables and bones are not brown whereas for brown stock vegetables and bones are brown	□ Cannot differentiate		
2) White Stock can be prepared using?	□ Identifies all ingredients: Bones except pork bones, celery, parsley, carrots, onions, bouquet garni	□ Identifies 4 ingredients: Bones except pork bones, celery, parsley, carrots, onions, bouquet garni	□ Identifies 2 ingredients: Bones except pork bones, celery, parsley, carrots, onions, bouquet garni	No idea	

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
3) Chicken Stock should simmer for?	□ Can approximate correctly 6 - 8 hours	□ Can approximate correctly 6 - 8 hours	□ Out of range		
4) Fish Stock should simmer for how long and explain why?	□ 20 minutes as otherwise bones will break up and the jelly from the bones will turn the stock sour	□ 20 minutes but not able to explain why	□ No Idea		
5) Stocks should be cooled down immediately after preparation. Why?	□ Yes, to close the danger zone & risk of going sour	□ Yes but not able to explain why	□ No Idea		
Knowledge of Basic Hot Sauces					
1) Can you name some basic hot sauces?	□ Identifies 3 - Tomato Sauce, Bechamel Sauce, Veloute, Espagnol Sauce, Jus	□ Identifies 2 - Tomato Sauce, Bechamel Sauce, Veloute, Espagnol Sauce, Jus	□ Identifies 1 - Tomato Sauce, Bechamel Sauce, Veloute, Espagnol Sauce, Jus	No idea	
2) Explain what a roux is and what it is used for and mention the 3 different types of roux?	□ Equal amounts of flour & butter cooked to a different degree & used as a thickening agent & can mention 3 types of roux	□ Able to explain what a roux is but cannot mention what it is used for & can name 2 different types of roux	□ Able to explain what a roux is but cannot mention what it is used for & cannot name any type of roux	No idea	
3) Name 5 different thickening agents that can be used in the preparation of sauces?	□ Can mention 5 Roux, Cornflour, Fecule (Potato Starch), Arrowroot, Rice	□ Can mention 3 Roux, Cornflour, Fecule (Potato Starch), Arrowroot, Rice	□ Can mention 1 Roux, Cornflour, Fecule (Potato Starch), Arrowroot, Rice	No idea	

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
4) Explain what a veloute is?	□ Fish/ Chicken/ Veal Stock thickened with blonde roux	□ Can identify it is white Stock thickened with blonde roux	White stock	No idea	
Knowledge of Basic Cold Sauces					
What is vinaigrette?	□ A basic cold dressing served with salads made with 3 parts oil, 1 part vinegar and french mustard	□ A basic cold dressing served with salads, knows the ingredients but not ratios	□ Cold dressing	No Idea	
Can you state the ingredients needed to prepare a basic vinaigrette?	3 parts oil, 1 part vinegar and french mustard	□ Have a vague idea but is not able to determine ratios	□ No idea		
Preparation of Soups					
1) What is a mirepoix?	□ A basic preperation of vegetables used as a base for stocks and sauces; Carrot, Celery, Onions, Bayleaf & Thyme	□ A basic preperation of vegetables used as a base for stocks and sauces and is able to state at least 4 ingredients	□ Can sate that is a basic preperation of vegetables	No idea	
2) What is the difference between a broth and puree?	□ Is an unthickend soup that has cut ingredients and is served with liquid whilst a puree is a soup liquidised, passed & thickend by its own ingredients	□ Knows that both exist but can mention serving of only 1	□ Knows they both exist but cannot explain difference	No idea	
Preparation of Fresh Pasta					
1) What type of flour is mainly used for the preparation of fresh pasta? State the ingredients for the preperation of fresh pasta	□ Strong Flour. Ingredients - Strong Flour, Eggs, Olive Oil, Salt & Pepper or Flour, Oil & Water	□ Strong Flour & can name only 2 ingredients	□ Strong Flour only	No idea	

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
2) Can you explain the difference between fresh and dried pasta?	□ Fresh Pasta is prepared using the ingredients mentioned in previous question & Dried Pasta is normally done as for egg dough paste and then dried	□ Knows the difference but not in detail	□ Unable to explain		
Preparation of Rice Dishes					
1) What is the difference between short grain rice and long grain rice? Can you name 1 type of each	□ Short grain - short and a wider grain. Long Grain is longer and thinner. Short Grain - Carnaroli or Arborio. Long Grain - Basmati	□ Cannot identify difference but can state types. Short Grain - Carnaroli or Arborio. Long Grain - Basmati	□ Cannot identify differences or confused in details	No idea	
2) What is normally the required time to cook rice?	□ 18-20 minutes. Able to answer correctly	□ 18-20 minutes. Near correct timings	□ No idea		
3) What type of bacteria is normally associated with rice dishes?	□ Bacillus Cereus - Able to answer correctly	□ Bacillus Cereus - Able to answer correctly	□ No Idea		
Filleting of Fish					
1) Explain to me four quality points when purchasing fresh fish?	□ Eyes full not sunken/bright, Red gills, Firm flesh, Has sea slime & smell. Able to mention 4 out of the 5	□ Eyes full not sunken/bright, Red gills, Firm flesh, Has sea slime & smell. Able to mention 3 out of the 5	□ Eyes full not sunken/bright, Red gills, Firm flesh, Has sea slime & smell. Able to mention 1 out of the 5	No Idea	
2) How would you clean and fillet a fish?	□ Remove scales, remove gills, remove guts. Filleting from head to tail starting from the back bone, remove all possible fish bones. Mentions correct order.	□Knows how to clean but cannot describe proper filleting.	□ Confused	No idea	

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
3) What is the optimum temperature of the refrigerator for keeping of fish?	□ 1 - 3 degrees celsius states correctly and can explain why	□ Can approximate 1 - 3 degrees celsius	□ Confused	No idea	
Dissection of Poultry					
1) How would you dissect a whole chicken for the preparation of chicken for sauté?	□ Remove wishbone, cut winglets, remove legs, cut the legs into pieces dividing the thigh and the drumstick, cut 2 pieces of small breast, cut th emiddle breast in 2 and finally cut the carcass into 3 pieces	□ Be able to explain but not correctly described	□ Has no idea or Confused	No idea	
2) What can chicken bones be used for?	□ Stock or Jus	□ Stock or Jus	□ Confused	No idea	
Preparation of Meat					
1) Can you name at least three prime cuts of beef?	□ Sirloin, Fillet, Rump, T-Bone. Can mention 3	□ Sirloin, Fillet, Rump, T-Bone. Can mention 2	□ Sirloin, Fillet, Rump, T-Bone. Can mention 1	No idea	
2) What are cheaper cuts of beef normally used for? How are these cooked?	□ Stew or Braising. Wet methods of cooking with low temperatures for a long period of time	□ Can answer but not complete.	□ Confused	No idea	
Vegetables					
1) How are normally root vegetables cooked in liquid?	□ From cold water. Explains correctly	□ From cold water, but confused to state why.	□ Cannot answer properly		

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
2) Why is it important to cook green vegetables in boiling water and cool down immediately after cooking.	□ To retain colour and vitamins. Can explain correctly	□ To retain colour and vitamins, but confused to state why.	□ Cannot answer properly		
Cooking Methods					
Can you explain at least five different cooking methods and temperatures associated with them?	□ Boiling - 100 degrees, Poaching - up to 95 degrees, Steaming - 100 degrees or above, Roasting - 180 degrees or above, Deep Frying - 180 degrees, Stewing - below 100 degrees, Braising - 160 degrees. Can mention correctly	□ Boiling - 100 degrees, Poaching - up to 95 degrees, Steaming - 100 degrees or above, Roasting - 180 degrees or above, Deep Frying - 180 degrees, Stewing - below 100 degrees, Braising - 160 degrees. Can mention different cooking methods but not temperatures.	□ Cannot answer properly		
Preparation of a sweet pastry dough:					
1) Give the ingredients required to prepare sweet pastry?	Rubbing in or creaming method should be used. Ingredients required are: soft flour, eggs, sugar, fat and vanilla.	Ingredients required are: soft flour, eggs, sugar, fat and vanilla.	□		
2) Can you explain one method used in the preparation of sweet pastry?	Rubbing in or creaming method should be used. The fat used should be at room temperature. Soft flour should be used. Pastry should rest for 20 minutes	Rubbing in or creaming method should be used.	□		
Preparation of a laminated pastry dough:	Puff pastry / Danish pastry	Puff pastry			
1) Can you identify one laminated dough?	Identify the ingredients required for full, rough or flaky puff pastry; croissant and Danish pastry.	Identify the ingredients required for puff pastry including the ingredients required (strong flour, pastry margarine, cold water and lemon juice.	□		

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
2) Can you briefly explain how it is prepared?	Puff pastry prepared by French or English method; to indicate folding techniques. Rough puff and flaky pastry by using less fat.	incorporating fat to dough using folding techniques.	☐		
Preparation of a yeast dough:					
1) Can you identify the ingredients required for a yeast dough?	Fresh / instant yeast can be used. Strong / soft flour can be used. Prover, fat, milk powder enhance dough. Importqnce of salt and sugar and lukewarm water.	Yeast, water, flour, sugar, salt, fat, prover and milk powder.	☐		
2) Can you explain the method of preparation for the above dough?	Yeast is best dissolved in warm water and added to dry ingredients. Allowed to prove at double the size before it is baked. Glazed only after dough is proved.	Butter is rubbed in with flour, dry ingredients are added with yeast dissolved in warm water. Dough should be allowed to prove before it is baked.	☐		
Preparation of a sweet fermented dough:					
1) Can you identify the ingredients required for a sweet fermented dough?	Same as above but with the addition od butter and eggs as ingredients.	Same as above but with the addition od butter and eggs as ingredients.	☐		
2) Can you explain the method used to prepare a sweet fermented dough?	Same for a yeast dough but without any prover.	Same for a yeast dough but without any prover.	☐		
Preparation of sponges:					
1) Can you identify the ingredients required to prepare a vanilla sponge?	Soft flour, castor sugar, vanilla, whole eggs at room temperature and melted butter or oil. Option of adding a stabilizer.	Flour, eggs, vanilla and sugar.	☐		

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
2) Can you explain the method of preparation for the above?	Whisking of castor sugar with eggs, folding soft flour, add vanilla and folding melted butter or oil.	Whisking of sugar with eggs, add vanilla and fold flour.	☐		
Preparation of cakes:					
1) Which ingredients are required to prepare a plain cake?	Butter and eggs at room temperature, castor sugar, soft flour, baking powder and vanilla powder or essence.	Butter, sugar, flour, eggs, vanilla and baking powder.	☐		
2) Can you describe the method required to prepare a basic plain cake?	Creaming of butter and sugar, adding eggs gradually, folding in of sieved soft flour mixed together with baking powder and vanilla.	Creaming of butter and sugar, adding eggs and vanilla and fold in flour.	☐		
Preparation of pastry cream:					
1) Which ingredients are required to prepare pastry cream?	Full or skimmed milk, eggs or egg yolks, sugar, flour or cornflour and flavouring.	Milk, eggs, sugar, starch, flavouring.	☐		
2) Can you briefly describe the method used for the above?	Whisk eggs /egg yolks with sugar, add flour / cornflour and gradually add hot milk and flavouring. Continue to stir on stove until thick. Add cold butter.	Whisk eggs with sugar, add flour and gradually add on hot milk and flavouring. Continue to stir on stove until thick.	☐		
Preparation of choux pastry:					
1) Which ingredients are required to prepare choux pastry?	Milk or water, strong flour, butter or oil, eggs, pinch of salt and sugar.	Water, flour, butter and eggs.	☐		

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
2) Can you briefly describe the method used for the above?	Boil liquid with fat, add strong flour and cook roux on stove. Cool mixture and add eggs gradually until consistency is dropping, glossy and free from lumps.	Heat water with butter, add flour and cook roux on stove, cool mixture and add eggs gradually.	☐		
Preparation of egg based desserts:					
1) Can you identify one egg based dessert?	Cream caramel, creme brulee, bavarios, bread and butter pudding, diplomat pudding.	Cream caramel	☐		
2) Can you give the method required to produce the chosen dessert?	Water, sugar for the caramel.Milk, eggs, sugar and vanilla for the custard. Milk, double cream, sugar, eggs, egg yolks and flavouring for crème brulee.	Water, sugar for the caramel. Milk, eggs, sugar and vanilla for the custard. Bain marie in the oven.	☐		
Preparation of a chocolate mousse:					
1) Which are the ingredients required for a chocolate mousse?	Egg yolks, pasteurized egg whites, castor sugar, frsh cream and melted chocolate.	Chocolate, eggs, sugar and cream.	☐		
2) Can you briefly explain the method required to prepare a chocolate mousse?	Whisk egg yolks and sugar over a bain marie, fold whipped fresh cream at ribbon stage, melted cooled chocolate and whisked pasteurized egg whites.	Whisk egg yolks and sugar over a bain marie, fold cream, chocolate and egg whites.	☐		
Preparation of a cold cheesecake:					
1) Can you give an example of a cold cheesecake?	Various flavours added to the basic mixture of a cheese cake with fruit toppings or curds.	Lemon cheese cake	☐		

Skill/Competence	Fully Competent Level 2	Fully Competent Level 1	Training Needs	Not Competent	Comments
2) Can you briefly explain the method of preparing a cheesecake?	Biscuit base (various). Sabayon folded with a soft cheese mixture, whipped fresh cream and flavouring. Set and top with stewed fruit or curds.	Biscuit base. Whipped cream, cream cheese, flavour and topped with stewed fruit or curd.	☐		
Preparation of meringue:					
Which are the three main types of meringue?	French (cold meringue), Swiss (warm meringue), Italian (boiled meringue)	French, Swiss and Italian.	☐		
Preparation of ice-cream:					
What are the basic ingredients required to prepare an ice-cream?	Milk, egg yolks, sugar, cream, stabilizer, glucose and flavouring.	Milk, egg yolks, sugar, cream and flavouring.	☐		
Preparation of petit fours:					
Can you give an example of two petit fours?	Chocolate and orange rum truffles and almond macaroons.	Chocolate truffles and macaroons.	☐		
Preparation of traditional Maltese desserts:					
1) Can you give an example of at least two Maltese desserts?	Prinjolata, kannoli ta l-irkotta and Mqaret	Prinjolata, kannoli ta l-irkotta and Mqaret	☐		
2) Can you briefly explain the method of production of one Maltese dessert?	Prinjolata: biscuits, Italian meringue and almonds. Mqaret: pastry and date filling. Kannoli ta l-irkotta: deep fried pastry tubes filled with cream cheese	Prinjolata: biscuits, Italian meringue and almonds. Mqaret: pastry and date filling. Kannoli ta l-irkotta: deep fried pastry tubes filled with cream cheese	☐		

Appendix 5.

Menu

Spinach and Ricotta Ravioli served with Tomato Sauce & Basil Sauce

Candidates are to prepare and present two plated portions of ravioli tossed in tomato and basil sauce with 5 ravioli in each plate.

Candidates must prepare a 200grm flour fresh egg dough for the preparation of ravioli

Shallow Fried Sea-Bass Fillets Meuniere Style

Candidates have to clean, fillet and shallow fry and present two plated portions of fish and with one fillet of fish on each plate

Supreme of Chicken glazed with Chicken Veloute set on a bed of Risotto with Parmesan

accompanied with Broccoli Mornay and Glazed Carrots

Candidates have to dissect a whole chicken having two pieces of chicken breast with the wing bone left on and the two legs left whole.

Carcass of chicken must be used to prepare a white chicken stock for the preparation of half a litre chicken veloute. Candidates are to cook and present two plated portions as stated in the menu above

Chicken Stock by 1ltr each

Chicken Veloute by 250ml each

Mornay sauce using Bechamel 500ml each

Risotto Parmesan by 120grms each

Glazed Carrots 75grms per portion

Broccoli – 3 florets per portion

Appendix 6.

KITCHEN PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT SHEET –GOZO ESF2.141

Date :	Marks Allocated	Marks Obtained	
Spinach & Ricotta Ravioli	**20**		
Pasta Dough Correctly Prepared	5		
Adequate Size / Well Cooked	10		
Well Seasoned / Tossed Ravioli	5		
Tomato & Basil Sauce	**10**		
Correct Consistency	5		
Well flavoured	5		
Filleting Of Fish	**10**		
Fish Well Filleted / No Waste	10		
Fish Meuniere Style	**10**		
Shallow Fried / Meuniere	4		
Served with Nut Brown Butter/ Lemon	4		
Well seasoned & Cooked Well	2		
Chicken Supreme	**13**		
Chicken Breast Correctly Prepared	5		
No Waist / Neatly Trimmed	5		
Cooking of Chicken	3		
Chicken Stock	**7**		
Vegetables not Browned	2		
Well Flavoured	5		
Risotto Parmesan	**10**		
Rice cooked as for risotto/ Well Cooked	5		
Well Flavoured	5		
Mornay Sauce	**10**		
Sauce not Lumpy	7		
Well Seasoned / Egg Yolk not curdled	3		
Broccoli Mornay	**5**		
Well Cooked / Colour Retained	5		
Glazed Carrots	**5**		
Well Cooked & Glazed	5		
Total Marks	**100**		

Station :   Student Name:

Other Comments

Assessors Name: Signature:

Appendix 7.

<u>**Re-affirming Competences Practical Examination - Pastry**</u>

Menu

Quiche Lorraine

Students to prepare a 4 portion recipe using short paste 5-8 portions recipe (pg 474)
Students are to present Quiche Lorraine on Cake Board provided

Chocolate Eclairs
Students to prepare chocolate éclairs using choux paste using half 5-8 portions recipe
Students can use butter or oil for the choux paste

To present two plated portions with 3 eclairs on each plate
Melted Chocolate will be provided by our technicians

Fruit flan
Students to prepare Pastry Cream using 1 ltr of milk of which half a litre will be used for
the filling of éclairs and the other half to be used for the preparation of the Fruit Flan

Sweet Paste to prepare 5-8 portion recipe
Students are to present Fruit Flan on Cake Board provided by technicians
Fruits must be glazed with Apricot Glaze.

White Bread Rolls

Students to prepare bread rolls using 500grms of bread roll recipe and present six rolls
but in at least two different shapes.
Bread should be presented in Bread Baskets provided by our technicians

Appendix 8.

PASTRY & BAKING PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT SHEET –GOZO ESF2.141

Date :	Marks Allocated	Marks Obtained		Station : Student Name: Other Comments
Quiche Lorraine	**25**			
Short paste correctly prepared	5			
Well baked- Golden Brown	5			
Correct ingredients	5			
Pastry not shortened during cooking	5			
Clean and well presented	5			
Choux /Chocolate éclairs	**25**			
Choux correctly prepared	4			
Well baked –Golden Brown	7			
Light consistency	5			
Chocolate Covering	4			
Clean and well presented	5			
Fruit Flan	**25**			
Sweet paste correctly prepared	5			
Pastry cream correctly prepared	5			
Well baked and nicely decorated	10			
Fruit well prepared / correctly glazed	5			
Bread Rolls	**25**			
Dough not dry	5			
Well proved	5			
Well baked – Golden Brown	5			
Lightness of Bread	5			
Size and shape – equal	5			

Assessors Name: Signature:

Appendix 9.

RPL/VNFIL Process Flow Chart
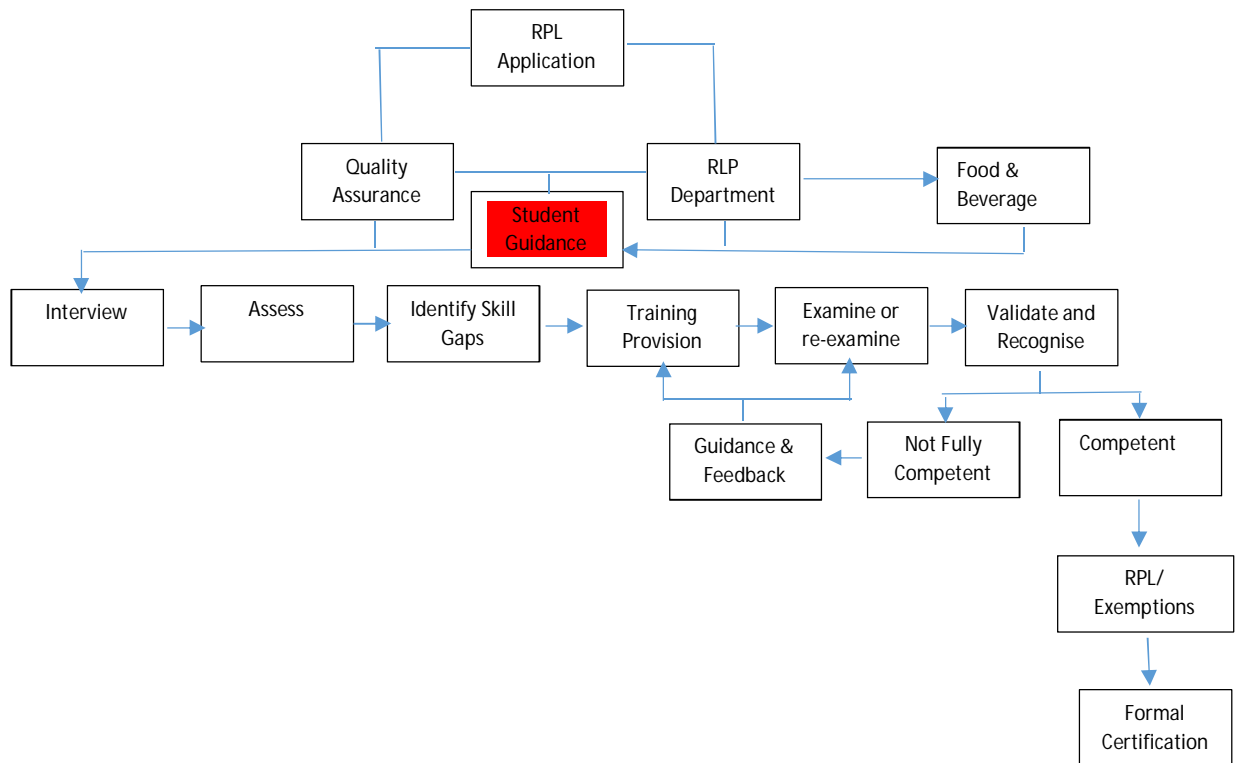
Appendix 10. Survey Questionnaire Sample and Results

An online google form was created and sent to various hotel human resources as well as restaurant and hotel food and beverage employees.

The questionnaire could be seen on the following browser link.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1jw-s969nwPAETrhMylnAK6yEmPelusSX-798Nkpis5w/edit?usp=forms_home&ths=true

 The following rationale and questions were used to conduct the survey.

I am currently conducting a survey questionnaire to analyse how many people who work in the hospitality food and beverage area which have years of experience and necessary skills but have little or no formal college or institution qualifications. This will help me understand and possibly develop a tool to assess non formal training, indicate common skills gap to achieve a formal qualification.

Such questionnaires will remain confidential and solely used for my study purposes. I would also like to thank you for your participation and help in achieving such information.

How long you have been working within the hospitality industry?
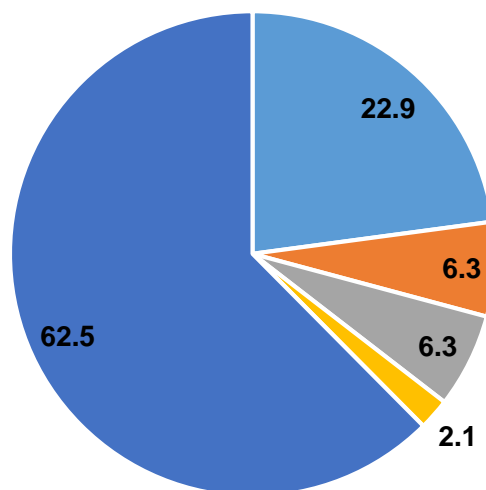
Number of Years	Number of Responses	Percentage
1-3 years	11	22.9%
4-5 years	3	6.3%
6-7 years	3	6.3%
8-10 years	1	2.1%
10 or more years	30	30%

What is your nationality?
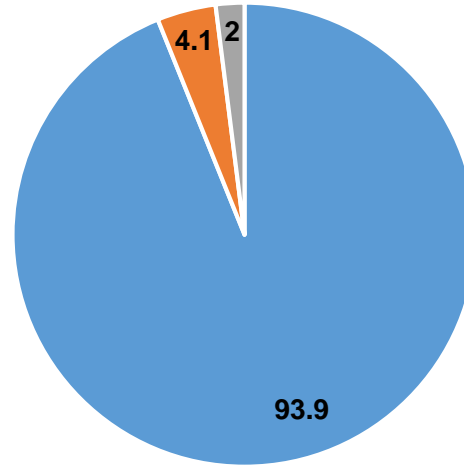
Nationality	Number of Responses	Percentage
Maltese	46	93.9%
EU Citizen	2	4.1%
Other	1	2%

In which of the following hospitality outlets do you work?
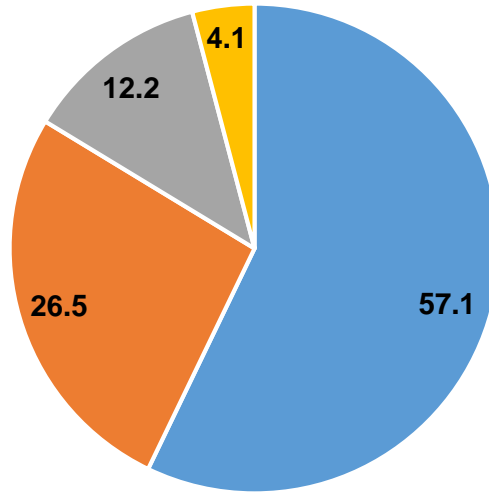
Hospitality Outlets	Number of Responses	Percentage
Hotels	28	57.1%
Restaurants	13	26.5%
Food & Beverage Outlets	6	12.2%
Other	2	4.1%

In which Food & Beverage Area do you work or specialize?

- ■ Food Production & Preparation (Kitchen)

- ■ Food Beverage Service (Restaurant Service)
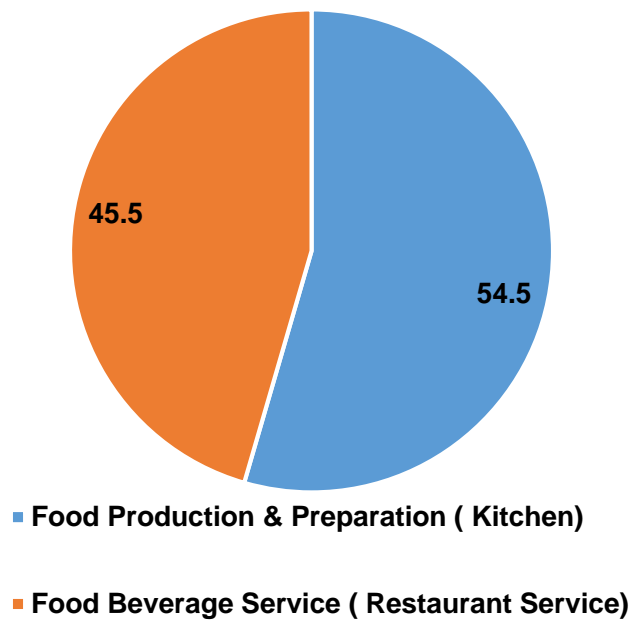
| F&B Area of Specialization	Number of Responses	Percentage
Food Preparation & Production	24	54.5%
Food Beverage Service	20	45.5%

What is the position/role do you currently have in the kitchen?
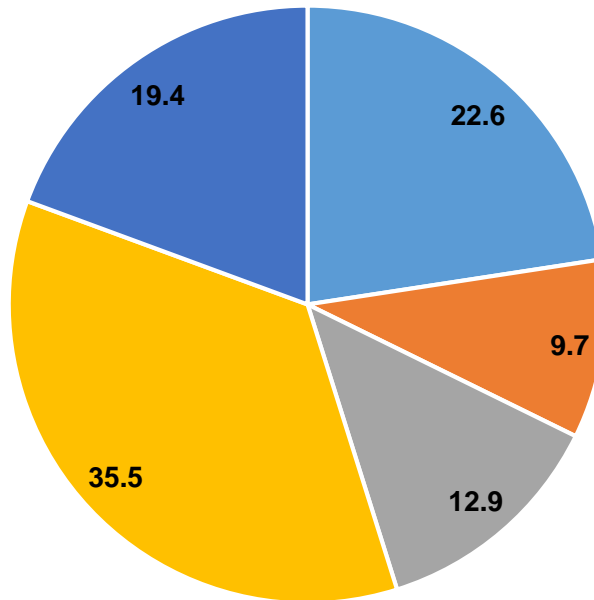
- Head Chef
- Chef de Partie/Demi-Chef de Partie
- Other
- Assistant Chef/ Sous Chef
- Kitchen Helper / Commis Chef

Position/Role	Number of Responses	Percentage
Head Chef	7	22.6%
Assistant Chef/ Sous Chef	3	9.7%
Chef de Partie – Chef de Partie	4	12.9%
Kitchen Helper / Commis Chef	11	35.5%
Other	6	19.4%

## What is the position/role do you currently have in the Restaurant?
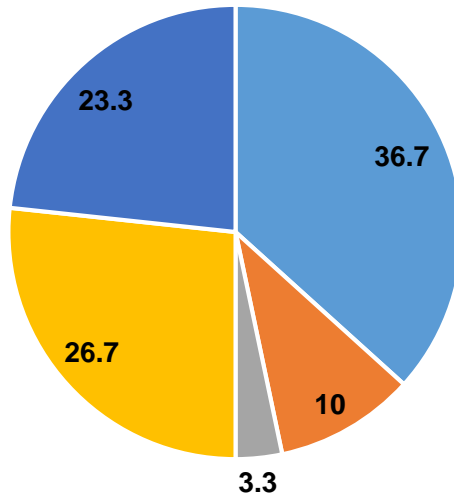
- Restaurant Manager/ Head Waiter
- Waiter/Waitress
- Demi-Chef de Rang
- Commis / Helper
- Other

Position/Role	Number of Responses	Percentage
Restaurant Manager/ Head Waiter	11	36.7%
Waiter/Waitress	3	10%
Demi-Chef de Rang	1	3.3%
Commis/Helper	8	26.7%
Other	7	23.3%

Have you ever had any kind of hospitality training in any institutions?

0

29.2

70.8

■ Yes ■ No ■ Other ■
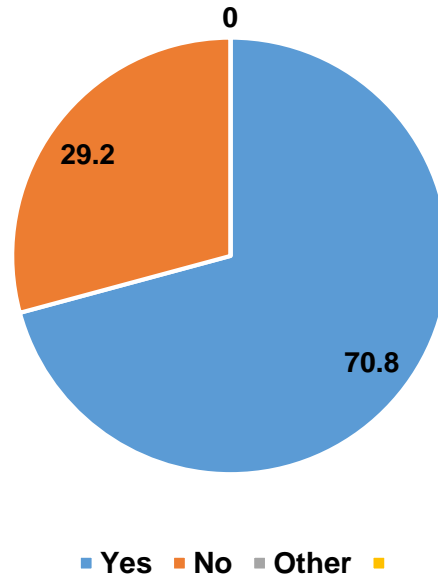
Hospitality Training in an Institution	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	34	70.8%
No	14	29.2%
Other	0	0%

Do you have any qualifications in hospitality ?
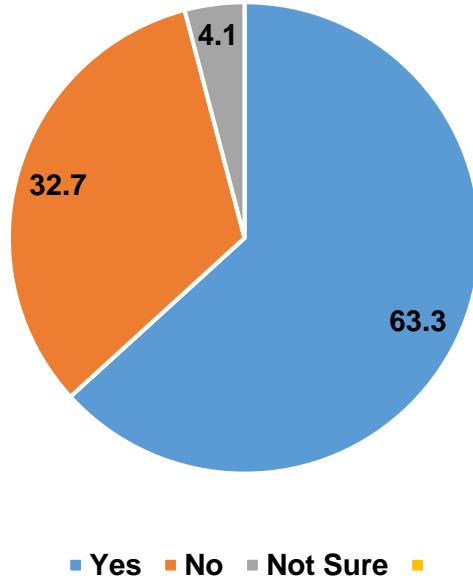
Hospitality Qualifications	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	31	63.3%
No	16	32.7%
Not Sure	2	4.1%

If yes , at which of the following level of recognition?
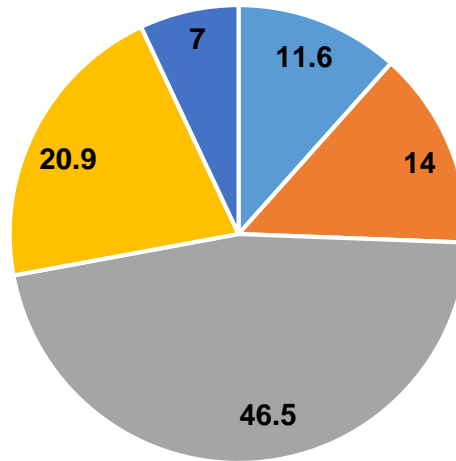
■	**Level 2- School Leaving Certificate or Apprenticeship**
■	**Level 3- Basic Level Certificate**
■	**Level 4 - Intermediate or Diploma**
■	**None of the above**
■	**Other**

Problem achieving Formal Qualification	Number of Responses	Percentage
Financial Stability / Started Young Age	9	40.9%
Not given the Opportunity	2	9.1%
Problems with reading and writing	1	4.5%
Problem with Languages	1	4.5%
Did not bother	1	4.5%
Not considered important	1	4.5%
Other	7	31.8%

Would you consider being assessed for your current skills that you have achieved during your working experience and have a formal recognized award or qualification ?
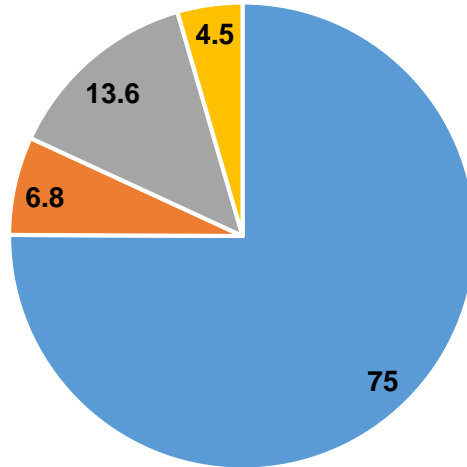

Hospitality Qualifications	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	33	75%
No	3	6.8%
Not Sure	6	13.6%
Not Bothered	2	4.5%

If yes , would your head of department/management support you in doing so?

2.4   14.3

83.3
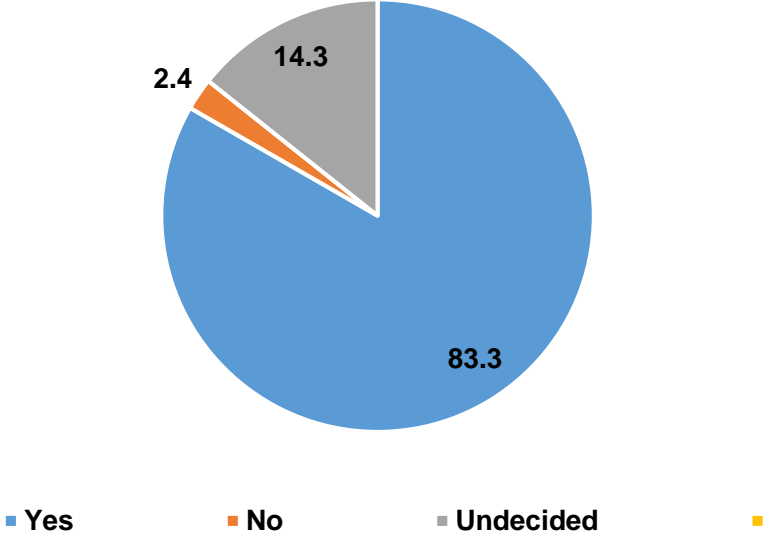
■ **Yes**   ■ **No**   ■ **Undecided**   ■

Management Support	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	35	83.3%
No	1	2.4%
Undecided	6	14.3%

Would you consider a qualification important for your career advancement?
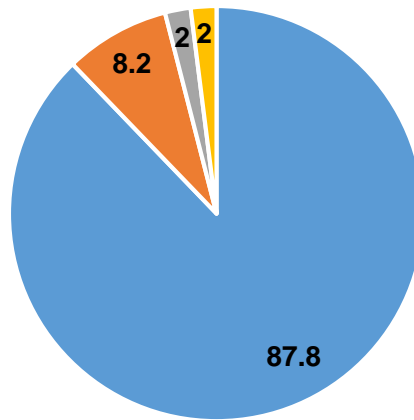
- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
- Other

Qualification is important for career advancement	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	43	87.8%
No	4	8.2%
Not Sure	1	2%
Other	1	2%

Appendix 11.

RPL/VNFIL Process Flow Chart