VALIDATING INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING THROUGH LIFEPASS

Suzanne GATT[1]
Richard CURMI[2]

Abstract – The need to recognise and validate informal and non-formal learning has been recognised as part of Europe's Lisbon Strategy, and again in the EU2020 Strategy. This is both for economic reasons and social reasons. On an economic level Europe needs to have a skilled workforce. Documenting all skills and competences thus becomes relevant. On a social level, many times it is those marginalised citizens or those at risk of poverty who often do not possess formal qualifications but learn through their life and work experiences. This paper describes and discusses the development of an innovative ICT tool, Lifepass, to be used for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. This tool provides new approaches to present evidence of individuals' knowledge, skills and competences which is much more powerful than the Europass CV and different to the traditional portfolio. The results of the piloting exercise of Lifepass across ten different sectors and in nine different countries will be presented. Although not finalised and some problems were identified with respect to Lifepass, the researchers felt that Lifepass is a powerful tool which, although still needing further developed for the validation of informal and non-formal learning, can be that tool which suprecedes the Europass CV at European level.

INTRODUCTION

Europe, through the Lisbon Strategy and now the EU2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010) is working towards building further the knowledge society and ensuring strong economies which promote and facilitate the mobility of workers. The recognition of qualifications and certification across European borders has become are more and more important and this is the reason for many of the developments related to the European Qualifications Framework.

The economic crisis experienced these recent years has changed European perspectives and priorities. The focus is on providing more jobs. It has brought the need to value all forms of learning, in whatever way it has taken place. There has been a shift towards the need for all citizens to have their knowledge, skills and competences officially recognised, not only to their survival in finding employment, but also for the survival and economic growth at national and European level. The Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010) explicitly calls for the promotion of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in different contexts both in the case of youths as well as in promoting lifelong learning. The strategy emphasizes the need to ensure that European citizens acquire and have formally recognised their competences in order to be able to engage in further learning and the labour market through participation in general, vocational, higher and adult education, and also including non formal and informal learning. The Council recommendations of the European Commission related to youths based on the EU2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010a) highlights the need to improve procedures and guidelines for the validation and recognition of both informal and non-formal learning in order to facilitate more mobility (for example in volunteering and youth work). The Agenda for New Skills and Jobs flagship initiative also underlines the role of non-formal and informal learning in helping to ensure that citizens acquire the competences they need to engage in further learning and the labour market. This requires that all range and types of knowledge, skills and competences within the European workforce be formally recognised such that it is possible to carry out stock taking of what the European Labour workforce can offer.

This economic demand has also brought about the need to go through the exercise of identifying all the different types of occupations and/or jobs which exist, and to outline all the competences required in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities to carry out such work. It has also raised the role of quality assurance as the need to ensure that workers are really able carry out their work well and do possess all the required competences.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: VALIDATION OF INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

In March 2000, the Lisbon European Council called on education ministers in the EU Member States «to

[1] Suzanne GATT, Senior Lecturer at the University of Malta, suzanne.gatt@um.edu.mt.
[2] Richard CURMI, Senior Manager at the Malta Qualifications Council, richard.curmi@gov.mt.

undertake a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversity and presenting a broader report to the European Council in the spring of 2001» (European Commission, 2000). In considering concrete future objectives of Education Systems (Council of the European Union, 2001), an objective identified focused on facilitating access of all to education and training. Lifelong learning education systems needed to become more inclusive and coherent and involved among other aspects, that of overcoming barriers between formal education and training and informal and non-formal learning. There was need for recognition of informal and non-formal learning within a lifelong learning perspective.

The Communication on lifelong learning (European Commission, 2001) also tackled the issue of validating informal and non-formal learning. This document tackled the validation of informal and non-formal learning extensively and argued that lifelong learning should encompass formal, informal and non-formal learning, highlighting the need for formal education to recognise and value the contribution of informal and non-formal education. It listed as priorities: the identification; assessment; and recognition of non-formal and informal learning; as well as the transfer and mutual recognition of formal certificates and diplomas. It promoted facilitating access to learning opportunities within the formal sector, adapting entry, progression and recognition requirements to take account of non-formal and informal learning. In creating a learning culture, the need to value and reward learning, especially non-formal and informal learning in all sectors was encouraged. It was acknowledged that progress in relation to non-formal and informal learning was a crucial step towards a European area of lifelong learning.

Common European principles were considered essential for the long-term development of high quality, cost efficient approaches to identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. These principles were to promote quality in the validation methodologies for actors at local, regional and national level. Individual rights were to be addressed.

The common principles developed were organised according to six themes: purpose of validation, individual entitlements, responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders, confidences and trust, impartiality and credibility and legitimacy. These European principles were developed to act as a guide and a common reference point in the development and implementation of methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. They were not designed to be prescriptive but rather to serve as a basis to be followed. The overall aim of validation is stated to be that of making visible all the competences that a person has developed, irrespective of the ways and methods through which these were acquired. The purpose is for

both formative and summative forms of assessment. Validation of learning outcomes, whether acquired in a formal, informal and non-formal setting, aims to make visible all forms of learning by an individual. Validation supports lifelong learning, employability and active citizenship as it facilitates progression in education and training, integration in the labour market as well as organizational and personal development. It can be both summative assessment, that is, leading to certification as well as formative assessment but still leading to formal recognition.

Since the validation of informal and non-formal learning must primarily serve the individual citizens, then individual issues in protecting citizens' personal rights need to be taken into consideration. Validation thus should be a voluntary process, and if compulsory, the system should ensure transparency, fairness and privacy. In organisations, the validation processes should be based on social dialogue, and individuals should have the right of appeal a validation result. There should be special provision for individuals with special needs in order to ensure equal access, and the results of the validation process are the property of the individual and privacy must be ensured.

Validation of informal and non-formal learning is closely linked to the issue of career guidance. As the competences vary across the different sectors as well as the purposes for which validation is done, it is essential for the validation process to be accompanied by career guidance service which would help individuals to make the best use of their validation exercise in the different spheres of work, personal life and education. Validation should be supported by information, guidance and counseling services. Education and training institutions should have a legal and practical basis which enables individuals to validate their learning. The value of the validation process depends on the confidence and trust that it enjoys by the difference key stakeholders involved. In order to instill confidence and trust, the validation process must be based on clear standards; provide clear understanding on how assessment is conducted, give information on the purpose of the process, provide guidance and support provided, etc.

The validation process must instill confidence in all concerned and must be designed in such a way that potential users are able to observe and judge the whole validation process. Transparency of criteria ensures reliability. It also ensures that different institutions follow the same criteria and reach the same conclusions. The criteria used by assessors need to be as clear as possible to ensure reliability. Impartiality is crucial for the professionals in the role of assessors in the validation process. The European guidelines highlight that impartiality can be strengthened through training and systematic networking and that this needs to be provided by validation providers. Credibility and legitimacy can be fostered through the inclusion of different stake holders at all the different levels.

The Education and Training 2010 report of 2007 highlighted how systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are also coming into place, even if at a slow rate. The challenge identified was the move from experiment to full application of the validation process in national qualifications systems, this including also providing access to higher education.

The Inlearning Leonardo Project

The Leonardo project Validating Learning for an Inclusive Society (INLearning) is one example of moving from policy to practice. It focuses on the validation of non-formal and informal learning and the main objective is to develop a methodological framework (tool) to process such validation against the level descriptors of the EQF. The project was conceptualised with the target that it will promote social inclusion. This is achieved through the recognition of forms of learning than the traditionally recognized certification usually achieved through the formal education offered in education and training institutions. Recognising non-formal and informal learning allows people who may have not been successful in the formal education system, or who would have dropped out of school for social and/or economic reasons, the possibility to validate the skills and competences which they would have acquired informally and non-formally at work, in their personal life, as well as other investment in learning.

INLearning aims to develop a common methodology that can be adopted in the validation of non-formal and informal learning process across Europe through the use of the tool Lifepass. Lifepass involves a portfolio stored on a pendrive and is the acronym for '*Learning through InFormal Education*'. In achieving this target in the widest sense possible, Lifepass was piloted, as part of the project activities in different employment sectors: agribusiness, printing, hospitality, transport, security, childcare, and construction.

The specific aims of the project with respect to the development of this methodological framework were the following:

- to identify existing occupational standards for specific jobs in particular sectors;
- to profile individuals in the specific jobs in the sectors identified with the intention of matching their skills and competences to the occupational standards identified;
- to develop a methodological framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning through the development of a Validation Manual for its implementation and use of the 'Lifepass' (portfolio pendrive) which can be applied to a wide variety of jobs and sectors;
- to pilot the applicability of the validation methodological framework through the use of the

Lifepass to a range of jobs and sectors profiled in the different partner countries;
- to draw up the Validation Manual on the implementation of the validation methodological framework and the use of the Lifepass in the form of a 'portfolio pendrive' based on the results obtained in the piloting stage;
- to disseminate and share the validation tool developed and its applicability with as many of the stakeholders across Europe as possible

Lifepass

The first part of the INLearning project involved the development of occupational standards in various sectors and at various levels of occupations. The Lifepass was then developed as the new tool to be piloted in the process of validation of informal and nonformal learning.

The aims of the piloting exercise thus were:

- To test the adaptability of the Lifepass to the different profiles of workers in the different sectors and different levels of occupations;
- To test the capability of the Lifepass to capture the evidence required to facilitate the process of validation of informal and non-formal learning; and
- To test what types of different media the Lifepass allows which are more comprehensive than those of normal tools such as the Europass, portfolio etc.

The process will also be evaluated to provide good and insightful review of the adaptability of the new tool – Lifepass developed for the validation of informal and nonformal learning.

The European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning published by CEDEFOP specified the criteria to be taken in consideration in an assessment method. Lifepass was developed on these criteria and ensures that it allows inclusion of a range of knowledge, skills and competences to be assessed; is able to demonstrate the depth of learning required; shows how current or recent the knowledge, skills and competences acquired are; demonstrate the adequacy of information to enable an assessor to make a judgment; and provide the authenticity of evidence for the candidate's own learning outcomes.

The portfolio method allows detail in the collection of evidence provided by learners. In the portfolio learners provide evidence of processes, reflections, achievements, outcomes as well as testimonials obtained during a period of time. This is a process that accompanies the learning process rather than is compiled at the end of each process. Learners are guided on how to build their portfolio as they gain experience and learn how to maintain it on their own. This process gives the assessors a clear view of what learners know,

what skills they possess and what competences they have developed, putting them in a better position to assess their capabilities against specified criteria.

The Portfolio is a useful tool for the monitoring of knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes acquired by individuals through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Indeed, with the help of guidance personnel, individuals are able to identify, organise and document all their experiences acquired in different settings and contexts. The Lifepass e-portfolio has been developed to serve as a source of evidence for assessing levels of performance of individuals.

The Lifepass e-portfolio was designed to be an organised collection of an individual's experiences and all the work produced and skills acquired throughout a stipulated period. The Lifepass e-portfolio portfolio was developed to describe the growth of an individual, as it documents the learning processes from the beginning to the middle and end of the learning experience. The Lifepass e-portfolio also helps an individual to reflect on the learning process, to identify how his/her skills have changed, thus celebrating accomplishments while identifying present and future challenges.

Four steps were envisaged essential in the compilation of the Lifepass portfolio. This included:

- **Identification and Collection:** This is the first step where the individual identifies his/her knowledge, skills and competences and collects the evidence of it;
- **Selection and Organisation:** At this point the Lifepass is compiled with the occupational standards for which validation is to take place in mind, and to select the relevant information, the mode of evidence to use, and how to best organize this evidence to facilitate the validation process;
- **Reflection:** The individual reflects whether the evidence being presented really and honestly represents his/her capabilities and whether this is the right time to present the portfolio for the validation process;
- **Documentation:** The individual checks that there is enough documentation of the learning which is to be validated, whether the documentation is valid, and if it has all been included in the Lifepass.

The Lifepass allows the inclusion of a variety of evidence in different forms and using different media. The Lifepass allows individuals to include: examples of all type of activities and other material that they are currently working on or have completed; audio clips of testimonials by employers, others; video clips of performance at work, experiences and achievements; records of progress used to record competence achievement; goal setting; individual learning plans, to reflect individuals' aims and objectives set; pictures/documents/certificates to demonstrate different forms

of achievement; recorded discussions, interviews, presentations; artefacts/products/displays which demonstrate competences and skills to be validated; witness testimony in different formats (letters, recording, videos etc.); and audio/video of activity or tutor/supervisor commentary.

METHODOLOGY: USING LIFEPASS IN THE VALIDATION PROCESS

Lifepass is divided into different sections. When one accesses the main page, these sections appear as subfolders. These subfolders include: personal information; work experience; formal education; non-formal education; informal education; assessment criteria; and self-awareness. The methodology used with the Lifepass in the validation of non-formal and informal learning following similar steps for ensuring standardisation of use across the different countries.

The first step involved identifying the personnel in an occupation for testing Lifepass in the process of validation using Lifepass. The first step followed was thus to have those persons who want to have their learning validated. It would be helpful at this point if the occupational standards against which these persons intend to have their learning validated was identified at this point in time.

The next step involves the counsellor/guidance person helped the individuals to fill in the Lifepass. The counsellor went through the occupational standards with the person and to guided him/her in finding the evidence to show that these skills have been achieved. Different forms of evidence were included in Lifepass. The occupational standards against which the validation was to take place were kept for reference by the counselor/guidance person.

The third step involved the actual validation of the individual's learning. The counselor/guidance sat down with one or two assessors and together they went through the Lifepass. In order to carry out the validation process, the occupational standards were converted into assessment formats which allowed the assessors to identify whether the knowledge, skill or competence had been achieved or not.

In order to obtain the validation for the occupational standard, the applicant had to fulfill all the required knowledge, skills and competences specified in the occupational standards. The validation process did not always lead to the individual fulfilling all the requirements in order for the process to be successful. The validation process also served to indicate to the individual which knowledge, skills and competences s/he possessed and what further training and education the individual needed to invest in to obtain certification in the occupational standard.

The candidate was in some cases also invited for an interview so that she/he could have the opportunity to show what s/he is able to do and knows in those

aspects of the occupational standard for which there wasn't sufficient evidence for the specific knowledge/competence. The individual was at the end provided with a report on the validation process. The format of this report included two sections: the first section providing an overall assessment, stating the degree to which the knowledge, skills and competences had been validated. The standards used were four, ranging from all the knowledge, skills and competences being validated, most knowledge, skills and Competences (about 80%); a degree of knowledge, skills and competences (50%), and limited knowledge, skills and competences (30%) of the knowledge, skills and competences indicated in the occupation standards.

SECTORS IN WHICH LIFEPASS WAS PILOTED

As the occupational standards were developed in 10 different sectors across 10 different countries, the piloting of Lifepass was also carried out across these 10 sectors. The table below gives a summary of the sectors in which the piloting was carried out and in which country.

- Malta (P1): Printing and Agribusiness;
- Austria (P2): Construction and Hospitality;
- Italy (P3): Hospitality;
- Greece (P4): Transport and Hospitality;
- Romania (P5): Construction and Transport;
- Slovenia (P6): Security and Childcare;
- Estonia (P7): Construction;
- Turkey (P8): Construction and Hospitality;
- Portugal (P9): Construction and Childcare; and
- Slovenia (P10): Construction and Hospitality;

The partners were each asked to write a report on the piloting exercise for using Lifepass in the validation of informal and nonformal learning. From the reactions and experiences in its use across so many sectors and so many occupations, an overall evaluation of the usefullness of Lifepass in the Validation of informal and nonformal learning could be achieved.

RESULTS

A number of specific issues were identified in the ping process with the aim of understanding better the potential and power of Lifepass for the validation of informal and nonformal learning across the EU Member States involved.

In most of the partners, there was no difficulty, with a few exceptions, in identifying the individuals to be profiled. In cases where there were some problems, employers directly or through their human resources managers were very supportive and considered the exercise in a positive light. This demonstrated how much employers considered the exercise as useful to them as well as to their workers. It was consequently easy to convince the workers to be interested in and to accept to be profiled and to go through the validation process. It can be concluded that, with the excpetion of Austria, the identification of sufficient number of persons to take part in the piloting of Lifepass was not a problem;

The use of Lifepass was overall not considered to be complicated by most partners and many found it friendly and easy to use. However, it has to be pointed out that it still requires a basic knowledge of IT. In fact, it was found that in the case of individuals with very low skills, the help of the counsellor/researcher was necessary to be able to complete the details on Lifepass.

There were also a number of technical problems which emerged when the tool was put to the practical test. Most of the partners commented that one needs initial support to use Lifepass as it does not work automatically and it needs to be uploaded from the pendrive since it is not supported by usual windows programmes. It is only until one realises how to change the language, how to upoad the various documents and other evidence that its potential becomes greater. Like any other ICT programme it needs experience in use and people trying to use it will see and appreciate its potential in practice as they learn how to use it better. The piloting process was too small an exercise to study in detail the technical capacity of the tool as well as identify the bugs which still need to be tackled in a comprehensive way, but it gives a first reaction to how useful and applicable it can be.

Some specific technical details and limitations emerged. These included:

- **Lifepass needing a particular programme:** Lifepass needs to be run on a particular programme and so this needs to be installed on the PC and run before one can actually access and view it. This introduced limitations in its transfer and usability;
- **Security of Lifepass:** Lifepass could not be secured by means of a passwork. This means that anybody viewing it could also change details included, even if the viewer is not the individual who inputed the data;
- **Input and Viewer options:** There was no distinction between the working document which the individual uses to input information and what someone such as an employer can see and browse through without having the possibility to change it. This issue needs to be addressed;
- **Printable version of Lifepass:** There did not seem to be the possibility of having a printable version of one's own Lifepass. Although Lifepass was conceived as a virtual tool rather than one which can be printed, this possibility should also be allowed;
- **Language of Lifepass:** It was not possible to have two interchangeable versions of Lifepass

in the same programme. However, this could be achieved through saving it in the different languages separately;

- **Help Menu:** Lifepass could have a help menu which tackles the various technological manipulations which can be done and which individuals who are unsure of how to use Lifepass to consult for help and support.

There were also some difficulties with respect to content aspects of Lifepass. The subheadings in the informal and nonformal learning were not always helpful and at times having a general and empty form would have been more helpful. It was suggested that there could be space for the person's reflections on their learning which could help. Due to the low level of some of the individuals profiles, there was a difficulty in understanding terms which are used specifically in the field. The inclusion of explanations of the main terms used in the help menu would thus be helpful to those who would like to understand the terminology used better. Although Lifepass was considered overall easy and user friendly, it still seemed challenging for those who do not have digital competences. Consequently, in such cases, there was the need for a guidance person to help with the profiling process. This means that whereas Lifepass can be self administered by individuals of certain digital competence and education level, support was required for those individual with lower level of knowledge and skills. There was the realisation that certain documentation had not been kept. For example, in the case of the nonformal education, although many had the certificates, they had not kept the course description and programme which would have shed better light on the type of learning which had taken place and what skills and competences had been learnt and developed. This meant that individuals realised the need to keep more documentation, more than just certification, but possibly any form of evidence which shows what type of learning outcomes were achieved.

It was not very clear where to include references to the occupational standards to which the lifepass was then to be compared to. The section used was that of assessment criteria. However, in this case one had to cut and paste the occupational standards so that he could then relate the evidence to this. There were comments by a number of partners that there could be space where the individuals could include reflections about their own learning.The reports reflected a difficulty in adjusting to the innovative way of presenting evidence such as through the use of videos, photos, audio, scans etc. This demanded that individuals involved in the process to think different to the traditional method and posed a challenge. Experience will help overcome this challange as the power of the different forms of producing evidence is better understood.

So overall, the lifepass was not that difficult to use and one can easily become proficient in it following some practice. There were some who wanted to have it in different languages. It was only after a while that it was realised that one could do two profiles in two different languages and to save them on the same pendrive. It also has to be said that the lifepass exercise has made most of the participants reflect and appreciate their own learning which they would otherwise have not really considered as valid, particularly to gain a qualification. This reflection is that process which individuals go through when constructing a portfolio for the validation of informal and nonformal learning.

PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT OF EVIDENCE FOR VALIDATION

This part of the exercise appeared to be particularly difficult to tackle. There were a number of challenges identified. One of the main challenges was that of finding the best way to provide evidence in an unconventional way which one could then use for the validation of learning. It was not easy or obvious to realise that one can actually upload own home-made short videos showing him/herself doing the work and explaining the process in order to shown one's own competences and capabilities. The other major challenge was how the lifepass could facilitate to the assessors the exercise of comparing the occupational standards with the evidence included in the lifepass. This was mainly for two reasons. The first was that there was not specific way of indicating in the lifepass which evidence relates to which competence. The space provided within lifepass was that for assessment criteria. However, it was not possible to upload the occupational standards as an attachment in this section. It was also difficult to compare as individuals had to go through the task of including the list of evidence provided and the aspects of occupational standards that these covered.

The participants were very appreciative of the whole process as obtaining a qualification, even if partial, was something which they never really considered that they would manage to achieve. They felt that their capabilities were being valued by their employer and consequently they also started to value their own capabilities. So it can be said that Lifepass made individual reflect on their own capabilities and how they have learnt things through informal and nonformal ways, and how this learning can have value in the same way as formal education within training insitutions is considered.

CONCLUSION

It has to be said that, based on the piloting exercise, it is possible to drawn some conclusion on the potential of Lifepass as a new tool helping individuals looking for work and learning opportunities. The different main issues identified following the evaluation exercise are discssed each in turn here below.

One of the main comments made about the Lifepass was its position between the Europass CV and the traditional portfolio. It was also noted that persons of a certain educational level could handle and use Lifepass with little need of guidance. Employers also commented that Lifepass could faciliate the selection process during recruitment in that it provided more information about appliants than the Europass CV. This all pointed in the direction that Lifepass may have a utility beyond that for the validation of informal and nonformal learning and could easily become a new more technologically advanced cv/portfolio used by individuals looking for opportunities as it could reflect people's competences, skills and knowledge in a more comprehensive way than Europass.

It would be very easy and useful for individuals to use the lifepass to upload their certificates of their qualifications, photos of their achievements, courses descriptions and learning outcomes for nonformal learning, scans of products and achievements. It is limitless and can allow a person to really show what they are capable of in a variety of aspects. Employers do not need to go through loads of papers as these are already sorted within Lifepass as they are 'attached' with the relevant reference/qualifications etc.

Having said this, there are a number of technical improvements which can be made in order to make Lifepass more efficient and adapted to the users needs. These technical improvements were idnetified to include the following:

- The possibility to lock the lifepass so that it is only the owner who can change it with a password;
- The programme to include a help file which would make it easier for persons to overcome difficulties in using it;
- The possibility to have more than one langauge within the same file although at this time one can have more than one version saved on the pendrive;
- The subheadings for skills inthe informal and non formal learning sections may be left blank so that the area is adapted to a wider variety of activities and consequently to skills and competences obtained;
- The section for the assessment criteria can have the possibility of uploading a document so that the occupational standards against which the validation is to take place is uploaded here rather than one needing to do 'cut and paste';
- The programme does not have a spellcheck and it is also not possible to have bold and underlining in the different sections. These can be included in the new version;
- The programme to allow the possibility of 'cut and paste' option;
- Once the lifepass has been completed, it does

not have the presentation view where an external viewer can see the details inputed in an attractive and presentation approach way.

It has to be said that although directions on how to use the lifepass are provided with the manual, a much more detailed instruction book may need to be developed to help users overcome the first technical problems which one may come across. It will also allow individuals to manage to use Lifepass without the need of guidance. This would make its use easier and more accessible, with human resources being necessary only for those individuals who have very low skills.

A number of issues emerged with respect to the use of the Lifepass as a portfolio for the intention of validating informal and nonformal learning leading to a recognised full or partial sectorial qualification. One major challenge was that of identifying the type of evidence which can be included and which would be useful for the validation of informal and nonformal learning. Being a new tool, one needs to explore new ways of producing evidence which other tools did not always make possible. Some of these forms of evidence which were considered possible to place within the lifepass included: job description and responsibilities of the jobs held. This can be uploaded as a document within the work experience. The same can be said with respect to a reference letter from the employer; *scans* where one can scan and show products and/ or photos of things done and achievements as part of one's job. These aim to show what the person is capable of doing and serves as part evidence to the required skills and competences for validation; and videos which were considered to have great potential. One option considered was to have a short video of oneself doing the work and showing the skill and knowledge which one possesses. This can capture the skills and competences required for validation.

There is still need for further exploration of the potential production of other forms of evidence. The innovative approach of Lifepass has also changed the nature of evidence, and those involved in the validation process still need to consider new ways and methods which so far have not been used within the traditional portfolio method. Another issue which arose was the realisation that it is not possible for persons with limited educational levels and capabilities to fill in the lifepass without the help and support of a professional counsellor, preferably an expert or at least familiar with the field for which the validation process is to take place. The reason for this need is not much for providing the individual with the skills of how to use the lifepass, but rather on how one can find different forms of evidence to be able to show what s/he has learnt through the process of informal and nonformal learning. For this reason it cannot be assumed that the Lifepass will reduce the human professional support required by those wanting to validate their learning. It was found to

be possible to use on one's own at educational level 4 or better within the EQF. It was considered difficult to compare the information included in the lifepass. This was mainly because there is no particulatr indexing reference. As already discussed, there could be the possiblity of having an attachment in the assessment criteria section so that the occupational standards can be uploaded. In addition, if the occupational standards subsections are indexed then it potentially could be possible to include an indexing facility for the different inputs to the lifepass. This also shows that there is need for further experience and exploration of the potential and value which the Lifepass can bring to the process of validation of informal and nonformal learning.

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