Comparing the content of qualifications across borders

The strengths and limitations of the learning outcomes approach

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Riga, 20 February 2020

CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Why compare VET qualifications?

Comparison of education and training

- A tendency to compare input factors - institutions, structures, financing, governance and pedagogics
- PISA and PIAAC addresses the need to focus on outcomes
- In VET, a weaker focus on the comparison of outcomes,

- Can we develop reliable and scalable methodologies to systematically map, analyse and compare the content of VET-qualifications to better understand similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses across borders?

Comparison of qualifications – the comparability system of 1985

- The 1985 Council Declaration on comparability of VET qualifications
  - A way to facilitate ==cross-border recognition==
  - A way to ==promote convergence== of VET qualifications
- Referred to a 5-level structure based on a mix of input and outcome features
- 219 occupations in 19 sectors in 12 Member States compared and published in the Official Journal of the EU
- Made no impact; repealed following the adoption of the EQF

Comparison of qualifications – towards a large scale assessment of VET-qualifications (VET PISA)

- Initiative 2007 of the German EU-Presidency to pursue a possible large scale assessment of VET qualifications ('PISA for VET')
- The 2009 feasibility study establishes measurement dimensions for a large scale assessment
- The 2009 study acknowledges the critical role played by learning outcomes in establishing a methodology
- Tested in 8 countries and 4 areas, using the US O*Net as a reference point
- Not taken forward.

Review and renewal rather than harmonization and ranking…

Comparative methodologies can help us to get systematic insight into the content and profile of qualifications

- To better understand different national skills priorities
- To better understand how education and training systems respond to changing skills needs
- To better understand how education and training systems respond to internationalisation of technologies and labour markets

Cedefop recent work on comparing qualifications

- The 2016-17 pilot-study *'The use of learning outcomes to support labour market dialogue' compared 10 VET-qualifications in 10 European countries*

- In a joint project with ETF and UNESCO, building on the Cedefop-approach, 4 VET qualifications were compared in 26 countries worldwide

- The 2018-20 study 'Comparing VET-qualifications-towards a European methodology' builds on the findings of the pilots

The shift to learning outcomes – creating a new opportunity for comparison

Learning outcomes
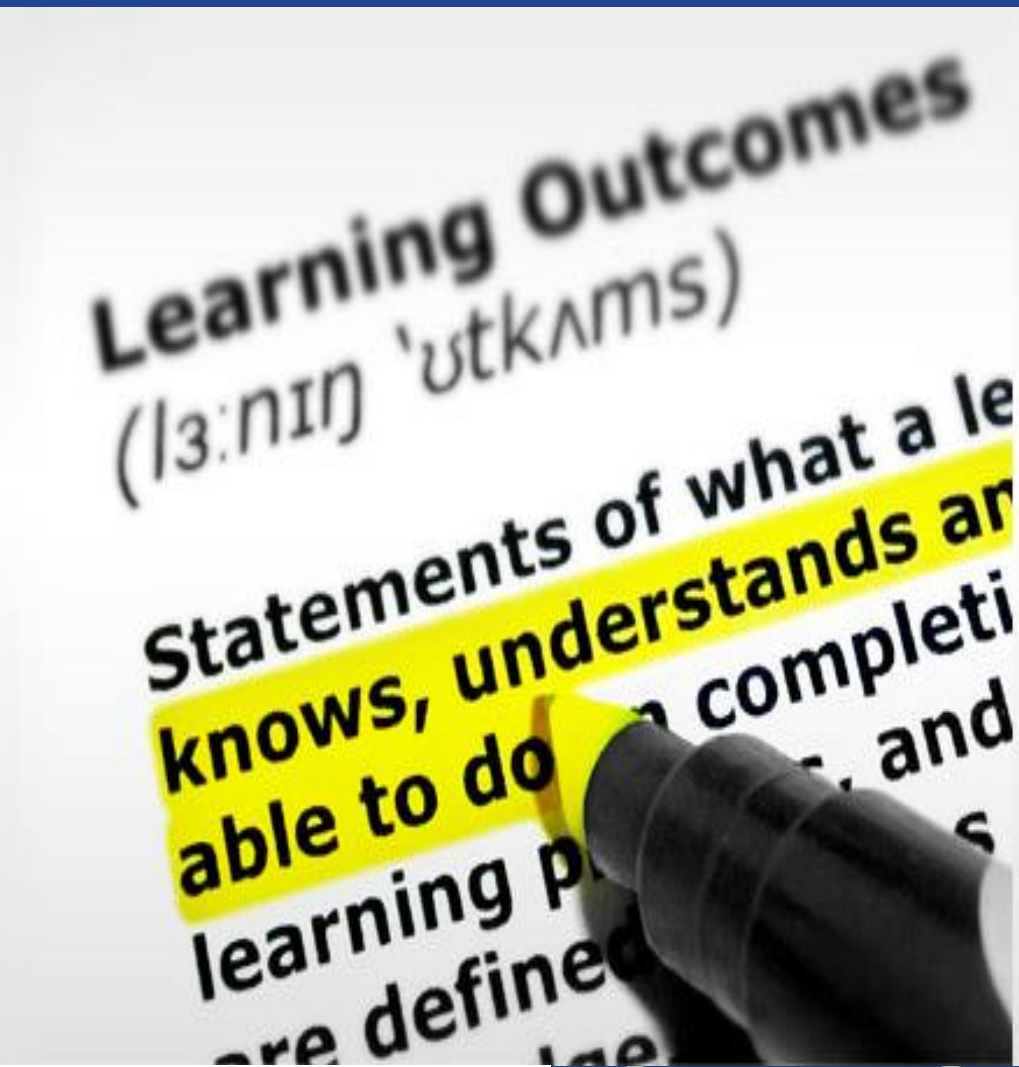
The shift to learning outcomes

Cedefop's **2009** study showed an overall shift to learning outcomes across Europe; although with clear differences between countries and education and training sectors

Cedefop's **2016** study on learning outcomes demonstrated that the shift to learning outcomes is gaining speed and that differences between countries and education sectors are diminishing

Intended and actually achieved learning outcomes

Intended learning outcomes
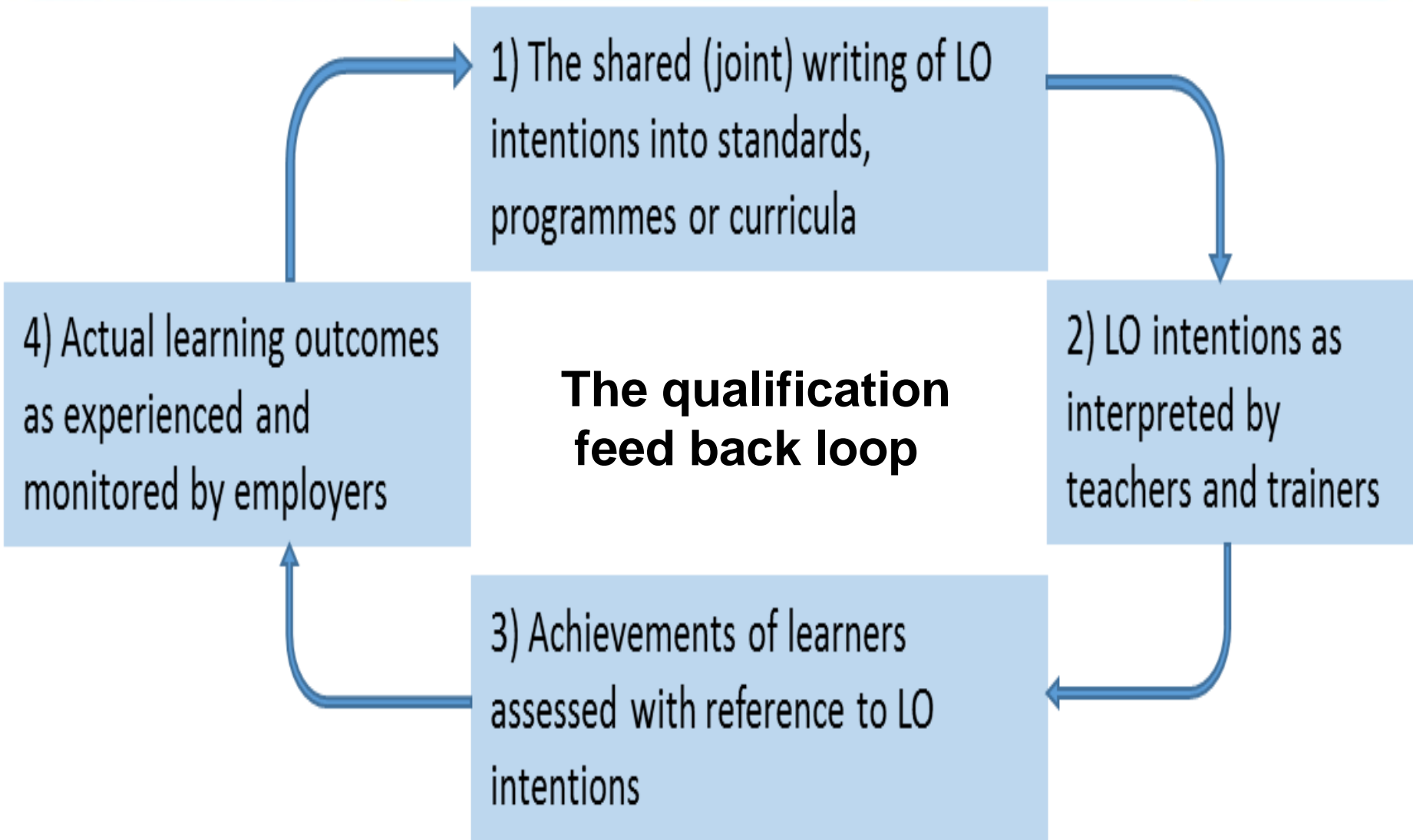
A learning outcome is a statement of what a learner is expected to know, be able to do and understand after having completed a learning process

Achieved learning outcomes

Set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process

The qualification feedback-loop and the relevance of learning outcomes

The qualification feed back loop

1) The shared (joint) writing of LO intentions into standards, programmes or curricula

2) LO intentions as interpreted by teachers and trainers

3) Achievements of learners assessed with reference to LO intentions

4) Actual learning outcomes as experienced and monitored by employers

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- The feed-back loop is only partly completed in the 10 countries covered

- The feed-back from employers/labour market to the education and training system (step 4 in the loop) is not systematically developed

- This influences directly the relevance and quality of qualifications

CAUTION

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2) LO intentions as interpreted by teachers and trainers

3) Achievements of learners assessed with reference to LO intentions

4) Actual learning outcomes as experienced and monitored by employers
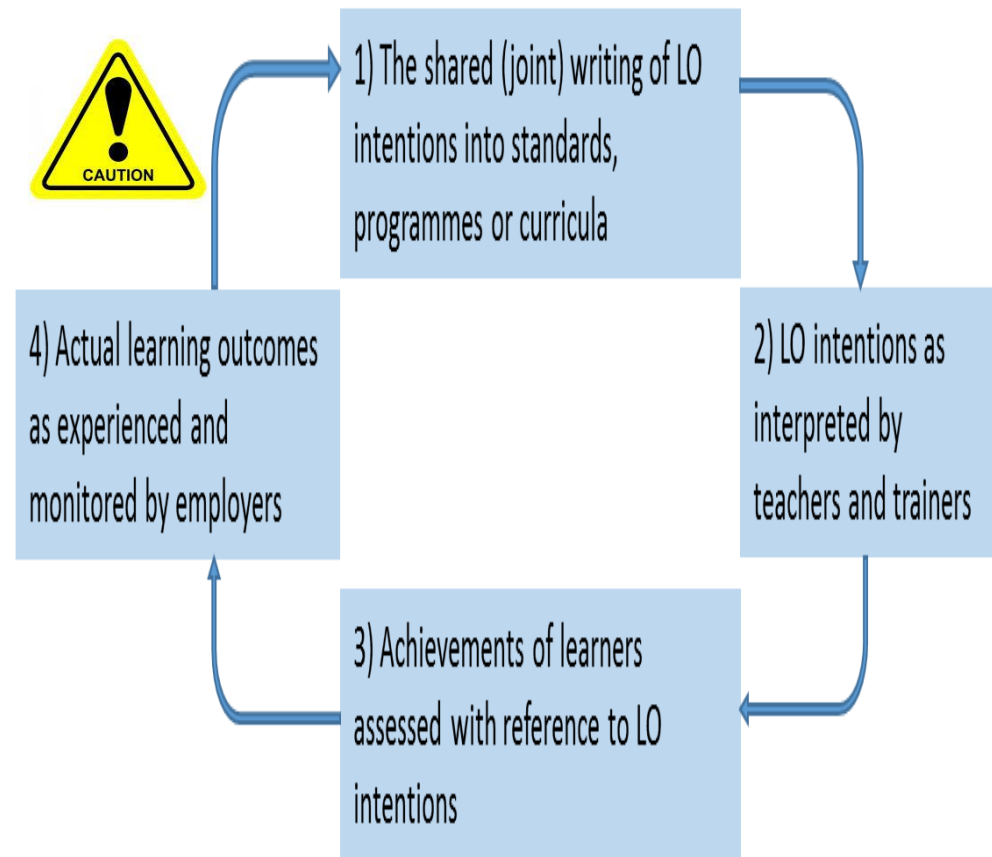
Cedefop pilot study 2016-17
Conclusions regarding the feed-back loop

- Tri-partite working groups/advisory committees play a key role in all countries, the expertise in/support to these groups vary
- Although surveys and forecasts are used, this is the exception rather the rule.
- Surveys and forecasts are frequently too general to be of direct relevance to the review of single qualifications
- Comparative methodologies, systematically looking at the experiences and priorities outside the national system are not identified

- The learning outcomes approach is generally recognized as relevant and important for the review of qualifications.
- Those directly involved in the review of qualifications in working groups and tri-partite committees are not always aware of the potential of learning outcomes – or their limitations.
- The feed-back loop illustrates that learning outcomes are used for a range of different purposes and at different levels
- In practice not one learning outcomes based feed-back loop, but multiple loops at different level with different ' centres of gravity'

Key lesson – Alignment matters

The success of Learning outcomes in supporting the feed-back loop depends on alignment between learning outcomes written for
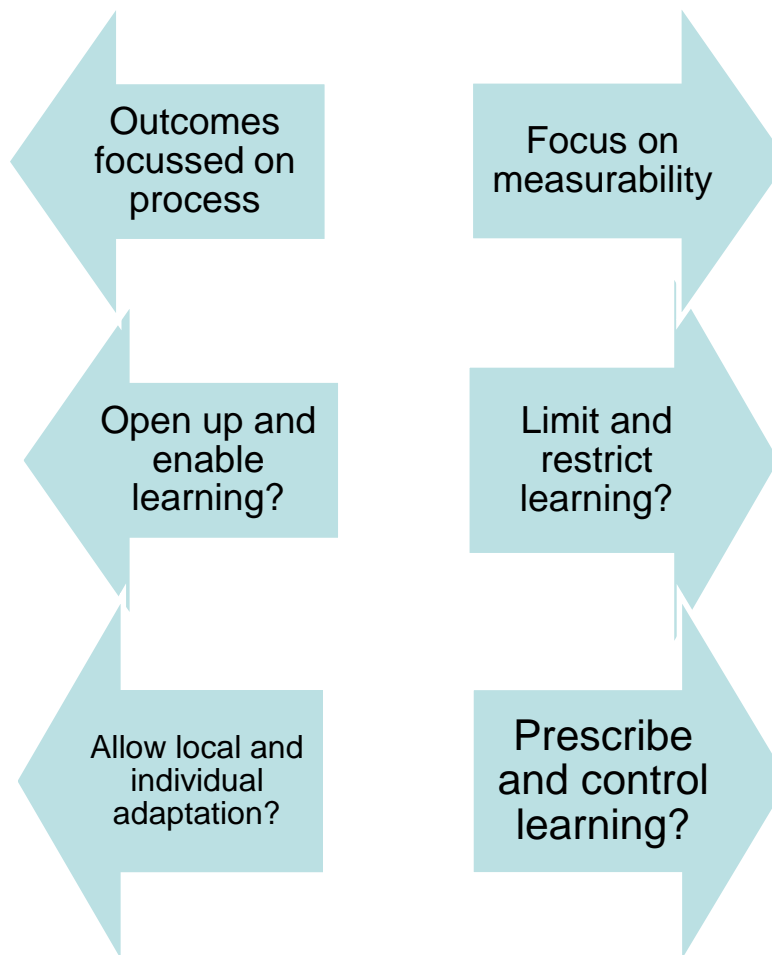
- Qualification standards;
- Curricula;
- Teaching and training;
- Assessment
- Occupation standards

Critically, learning outcomes must allow for a shared dialogue between the education and training supply side and the labour market demand side

Key challenge - when applying learning outcomes

Outcomes focussed on process

Focus on measurability

Open up and enable learning?

Limit and restrict learning?

Allow local and individual adaptation?

Prescribe and control learning?

Comparative methodologies and the feed-back loop

Findings from 2016-17 pilot study

- ==Systematic comparison of qualifications focussing on learning outcomes is possible== and can directly support the review of qualifications

- Comparative methodologies are from the outset located to stage 1 of the feed-back loop, as a way to capture the intended learning outcomes

- A comparison of learning outcomes intentions provide a valuable reference point for dialogue between labour market and education and training stakeholders, feeding into stage 4 of the feed-back loop

Transversal KSC: bricklayer

KSC preferred title	ALL	KR	PH	NZ	ZA	ZM	NA	MU	BB	CR	CL	TN	AT	BG	DK	ES	FI	FR	LT	NL	UK-EN
Follow hygienic work practices																					
Carry out work-related measurements																					
Work with shape and space																					
Apply quality standards																					
Support company plan																					
Manage time																					
Memorise information																					
Follow safety precautions in work practices																					
Communicate mathematical information																					
Evaluate information																					
Make decisions																					
Process qualitative information																					
Handle quantitative data																					
Accept constructive criticism																					
Lead others																					
Support colleagues																					
Develop strategy to solve problems																					
Carry out work-related calculations																					
Interact with others																					
Use mathematical tools and equipment																					
Report facts																					
Work in teams																					
Use learning strategies																					
Motivate others																					
Recognise opportunities																					
Think creatively																					
Follow environmentally-sustainable work practices																					
Support cultural diversity																					
Instruct others																					
Demonstrate intercultural competence																					
Give advice to others																					
Negotiate compromise																					
Persuade others																					
Use body language																					

HOTEL ASSISTANT/RECEPTIONIST
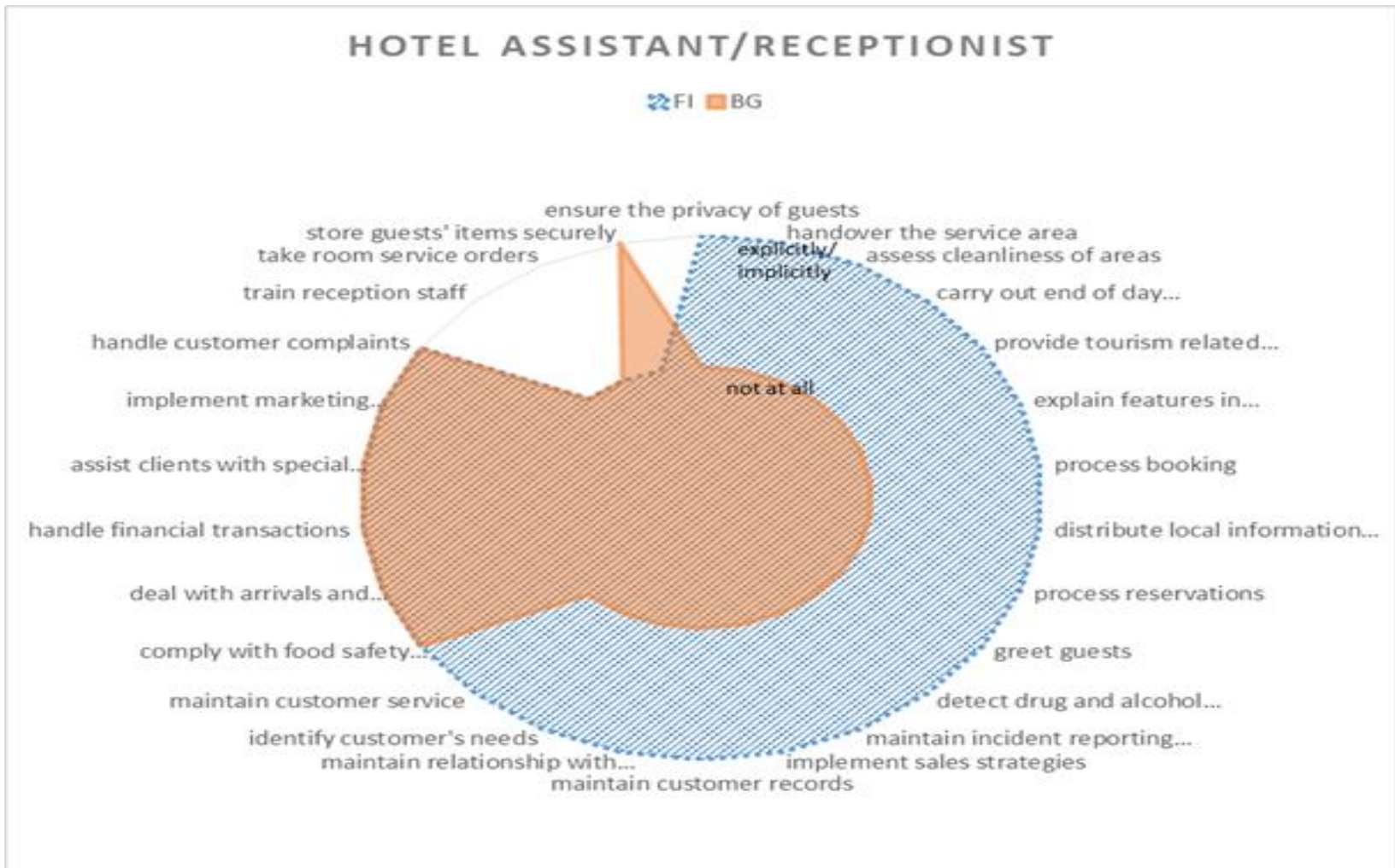
Findings from 2016-17 pilot study

- A comparative methodology requires <mark>a fixed reference point</mark>. The 2009 'PISA VET study' uses the US-based O*Net, Cedefop used an early version of ESCO

- The quality of the reference point matters,

  - relevance,
  - consistency,
  - precision,
  - granularity…

- The methodology as applied in 2016-17 is resource demanding and raises questions regarding <mark>scalability and reliability</mark>.

Towards a scalable and reliable methodology for comparing VET qualifications?

Work tasks 2018-2020

- Work Assignment 1 - Exploring and testing a reference point for VET comparison;

- Work Assignment 2 - Exploring, gathering and analysing national qualifications data;

- Work Assignment 3 - Exploring, gathering and analysing data on the match/mismatch between qualifications and labour market requirements;

- Work Assignment 4 - Methodological synthesis and the development of a ' toolbox' for comparison.

Comparing VET qualifications

28 and 29 November 2019
Cedefop, Thessaloniki

#VETQualifications

Project website

Thank you for your attention!

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