

Basic Culinary Skills in Food Preparation: Lesson Study with Year 11 students aged between 15-16 years.

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## Introduction

The lesson focused on cuts using knives and blades, and the correct upkeep, handling and storage of knives. Reference was also made to other food such as (a) fish, nuts, seeds, eggs, and vegetables; (b) the rework of food to minimise waste; and (3) healthy eating.



The goal of the lesson study team was to introduce co-teaching to facilitate teaching in the Hospitality lessons. The teacher teamed up with two Chefs, who also lecture at the Institute of Tourism Studies. Together, they worked to develop a practical lesson which was to be implemented in the hospitality lab. The lesson had two central aims, that is, for students to: (1) familiarise themselves with knives, their aftercare, handling and proper storage, and (2) become aware of different vegetable cuts and their uses.

## School context and the students

St Benedict's College Secondary School has a population of over 750 students and a teaching staff of over 150 teachers and learning support educators. The school acts as a receiving school for boys and girls hailing from the eight southwest villages of Malta (Safi, Mqabba, B'Bugia, Zurrieq, Kirkop, Qrendi, Ghaxaq and Gudja). The school offers a range of academic subject choices and vocational subjects (i.e. Engineering, Health and Social Care, Hospitality, Information Technology, Media, Retail and Hospitality).

The school's vision is to create a centre of creativity and learning where all students from all backgrounds and, through different educational paths, acquire and develop the skills to adapt and succeed in an ever-changing world.

The targeted class was a group of 8 students who are in Year 11. This class was in their final year of studies in Hospitality. The group was heterogeneous, having students with behavioural and social issues and learning difficulties and, therefore, targeting students with mixed-ability. Having foreign non-Maltese students in class, the language of instruction was English. However, some students required the teacher to explain in Maltese to ensure that all understood. The table below refers to the identified learning intentions for the lesson and how these fit within a range of student abilities.

<b>Behavioural Objectives/Learning Intention:</b>			
<i>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</i>			
<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Low ability</b>	<b>Average ability</b>	<b>High ability</b>
Justify the use of different cuts in food preparation.	Identify at least <b>TWO</b> different cuts of vegetables through the workshop held with the chef/poster.	Briefly outline at least <b>THREE</b> vegetable cuts through the workshop held with the chef/poster.	Describe the <b>SIX</b> vegetable cuts through the workshop held with the chef/poster.
Explain the importance of correct upkeep, handling and storing knives in food preparation.	State <b>ONE</b> important point about the correct upkeep, handling and storing of knives through the cooking workshop with the chef.	Outline <b>THREE</b> important points about the correct upkeep, handling and storing of knives through the cooking workshop with the chef.	Describe the points about the correct upkeep, handling and storing of knives through the cooking workshop with the chef.

### Lesson scope and focus

Due to the fact that hospitality education typically focuses on preparing students for careers in the hospitality industry, such as hotels, restaurants, and tourism, it was challenging for the lesson study team to choose a topic – the subject covers a range of areas including customer service, food and beverage service, hotel management, and event planning. Our area in the lesson study was the food and beverage specifically food preparation and production.

There were two main reasons why this lesson was selected:

1. Knife skills are an essential component of the final year practical assessment.
2. The secondary school teacher, who assumed the role of teaching the lesson, felt that his students needed more confidence in the content material and required the support of the more experienced chefs/lecturers.

This lesson study was intended to help students to:

- Explain the importance of correct upkeep, handling and storing knives in food preparation.
- Justify the use of different cuts in food preparation.

Resources:

- Laptop, pen drive/external hard drive and projector
- Handout
- Posters (to be distributed to students)
- PowerPoint presentation
- Ingredients and equipment for the cooking workshop
- Tablet

The lesson study involved the following people:

- **The lesson study team:** the lesson study facilitator working with a teacher with six years of experience teaching Hospitality and two other chefs/lecturers from ITS who co-taught the lesson together with the teacher.



## Reflections and main findings

Overall, the lesson study was a successful and efficient professional development strategy that assisted the team to improve teaching techniques and support student learning. The students managed to work well and achieve good exposure to the required basic skills and asked a good number of questions meaning they were engaged in learning. The students collaborated on the given tasks.

The preparation of equipment is ideally prepared well in advance of the lesson delivery. The class structure, which had a traditional setting with students facing the teacher, should have been in a fishbone layout to ensure students are well distributed in the classroom space. The eighty-minute time slot for the lesson seemed enough to prepare two dishes at the planning stage. However, the teacher and the chefs/lecturers noticed that once the students became engaged, it was nearly impossible to do both dishes during lesson delivery. The lesson study team, then, decided that the extra ingredients could be used the following day in another lesson. This decision allowed the students to understand the concept of rework rather than discard food.

During the lesson, instructions were delivered in English. However, some students needed help with expressing themselves in English. The lesson study team agreed that to support the students and ensure standardisation, using a textbook could replace the fact that teachers must compile their notes for student handouts and worksheets. There were some instances of silence, and to overcome this matter, the class teacher started by asking pre-planned questions as a filler.

The main findings:

- Planning and reflection can improve teaching methods and teacher learning.
- Lecturers may better understand student learning needs and adapt their lesson plans by observing students during such a lesson.
- Improving student accomplishment can be accomplished by concentrating on the results of student learning and using data to inform instructional decisions.
- Planning, instruction, observation, and reflection cycles that are iterative can aid teachers in improving their techniques and enhancing outcomes for student learning through their scholastic year

Overall, lesson study provided a powerful and effective professional development approach that helped us as a team to enhance teaching practices and be in a better position to promote student learning.

The following are two conclusions from our experience that may be relevant to other teachers:

1. Successful teaching techniques: Lesson study frequently entails experimenting with new teaching techniques or altering current ones to better suit the needs of students. Learning about these techniques and thinking about using them in one's own teaching methods may be helpful for other educators.
2. A broader understanding of how students learn and the elements that influence their success can be gained by teachers through lesson study. Other teachers can benefit when observations like these are shared for future reference.

The sharing of findings with other teachers is one of the most crucial elements of lesson study. This makes it possible to promote best practices and transfer information between contexts and classrooms.

## The Lesson Study journey

The lesson study team met six times to prepare the lesson: holding four online sessions to discuss the material and another two face-to-face meetings. Furthermore, the lesson study team used Facebook Messenger for quick and easy communication, facilitating the planning when the team needed to agree on dates or other matters. The 40-minute post-lesson discussion was held just after the lesson on 3rd February 2023. The lesson was 80 minutes long.

Although, during the lesson, the teacher was supported by two chef/lecturers who collaborated well on the development of the various hands-on initiatives, the team would have benefitted from a trial run. This is because this was the first time that this group was delivering a lesson together and more effective practice in collaborative teaching needed to be developed.

From a broad viewpoint, the chance for us teachers to participate in collaborative, reflective, and evidence-based professional development is the most valuable benefit of our lesson study. With this lesson study, we collaborated to develop, deliver and evaluate the selected lesson in an effort to enhance student learning outcomes. We gained fresh perspectives, improved our teaching strategies, and obtained a better grasp of how students learn by exchanging our knowledge, experiences, and viewpoints. Due to time restrictions, the workload, and the fact that we only had 3 people on our team, this was a significant challenge for us as a team.

Additionally, this lesson study promoted a culture of continual development where teachers were encouraged to work together, try new things, and come up with creative ways to enhance student learning.

This lesson evaluation also inspired us to reflect more and improve our teaching methods to better meet the changing requirements of our students. Lesson study has indeed proven to be a successful professional development strategy for raising the standard of vocational education and training.