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Abstract

The principal objective of this dissertation is to exam the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education in third level programmes in Ireland. The hospitality sector is one of the most important service sectors in the Irish economy, however there is limited research relating to studies of authentic assessment practices in practice-based disciplines of restaurant service in Irish higher education. This research aims to contribute to the existing literature on assessment practices in the context of practice-based restaurant modules in higher education.

This study employs a multiple case study methodology. The research tools adopted are semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The interviews were conducted with seven academics who are experts in the field of restaurant service in higher education. The seven participants were required to provide their module descriptors and assessment strategies at the first stage of the research. This was done so that they could be used in the formulation of the structure of the semi-structured interview questions.

The research aims to provide rich context data that will contribute to the existing literature in the teaching and learning environment. The case studies provide a detailed description of the authentic assessment practices identified within the discipline of restaurant education. Assessment in the restaurant modules is a fundamental part of the teaching and learning process. It is an integral part which contributes to the enhancement of the learner's development and progression in the modules. The restaurant module descriptors examined in this research have identified a broad and balanced range of assessment practices that the lecturers employ in their classroom.

Chapter 1:

Serves as a rationale and introduction to the dissertation. It outlines the research objectives and the rationale for this examination of the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education in the Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland. The primary focus of the research will be on lecturers in the field of restaurant service education and how they assess their students.

Chapter 2:

An in depth analysis of the extant literature review focusing three thematic areas. The first theme focuses on assessment in higher education. This theme examines assessment practices that will provide the reader with an insight to good assessment practices. The second theme focuses on practice based teaching and learning. The third theme focuses on the policy documents relating to the purpose of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) that advises the Irish Government on the current and future skills needs of the economy. This will link into the third theme which examines the policy context provided by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Further Education and Training (FET) bodies who provide the formal education in the hospitality sector in Ireland at various qualifications levels. This will also examine the policy document used by the European Higher Education Area, 2013 (ESG).

This is followed by a critique of the authentic assessment practices employed by restaurant service lecturers in third level education around Ireland.

Chapter 3:

This chapter critiques the decisions supporting the author's choices of research methodology and methodological tools. It begins by discussing the methodological approach and the research tools employed in this research. This is a qualitative research project which adopts a multiple case study methodology. This chapter covers research design, objectives and the methodology used in this research which was exploratory, in-depth and qualitative in nature. The research tools employed are semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The ethical considerations around this research will also be evaluated.

Chapter 4:

Chapter four presents the research findings on the examination of the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education throughout Ireland. This chapter is broken down into the twelve core research questions. Each question has its own sub-heading which addresses the relevant findings garnered from the semi-structured interview process.

Chapter 5:

This chapter provides a discussion and an analysis of the case-study research findings from the semi-structured interviews and the document analysis. This will inform and generate new insights in the area of assessment in a practical-based module which will benefit those charged with making assessment an integrated and coherent activity, with learners as the ultimate beneficiaries in third level higher education institutions. This chapter is supported by references from relevant academic papers highlighted in chapter two, while maintaining a focus on addressing the three research objectives outlined in chapter one.

Chapter 6:

Presents the research conclusions and evaluates the extent to which the study answered the research questions and objectives set. It also discusses recommendations based on what the author has learned throughout his research on assessment practices and for further opportunities in research.

DEDICATION

To my family and loved ones for their understanding and constant support over the years, which is now permitting me to complete my sixth third-level course at college, which was often a dream but now reaching a reality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been fortunate to be in the position to undertake this Masters in Learning and Teaching. I set out on this path in order to gain a greater understanding and knowledge in the area of education. I undertook this Masters degree on a part-time basis, with the pinnacle of this course being this dissertation.

When I first undertook this research I had no idea of the way that this dissertation would considerably alter and enrich my perspective in education and teaching. I am delighted with this opportunity to thank everyone who has given me support, encouragement and motivation throughout this endeavour, and in particular Dr. Lynn Ramsey my supervisor for her overwhelming patience, time, advice, constructive comments, her enduring faith in me and her wonderful inspiration.

The great support of all the staff in LYIT and a special thank you to the School of Tourism department, which I am very lucky to be a part of in Killybegs, Co.Donegal. To all my participants who contributed to the dissertation research.

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CHAPTER ONE – RATIONALE & INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The primary focus of the research will be the professional practice of lecturers in relation to the assessment of learners. The research undertakes an examination of assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service in Irish Higher Education and the implications for authentic assessment in teaching and learning.

This examination of assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service aims to identify and highlight the benefits of authentic assessment. This examination aims to highlight the importance of authentic assessment in order to support lecturers in the area of assessing the learners in pratical based modules. As a result of providing authentic assessments, the learner will improve on their knowledge, skills and competencies that will enable them to operate in a professional manner within a variety of dining environments in the hospitality industry. This will help provide high standards and excellent service in the hospitality idustry. However it is vitally important that the industry engage with the third level institutions in providing feedback on the progress of learners.

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2015 (EGFSN) states that formal education is provided at a range of qualification levels from both third level institutes of Higher Education (HE) and Further Education and Training (FET). The FET is normally provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) throughout the regions in Ireland. The HE institutes generally provide courses at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level 6 to level 10, while FET institutes provide courses from NFQ level 1 to level 6.

The education provided in the third level institutions throughout Ireland range from level 5 courses right up to level 10 in the hospitality sector. This study examines level 6, 7 and 8 programmes currently delivered in six third level HE institutes. These levels in particular have a strong practical and skills based practice orientation. This is evident from the research data generated by this study. The third level institutions were selected to give a geographically diverse representation of areas throughout Ireland. Each institution provided its module descriptors and assessment startegies. The module descriptors provide the learners and staff with a detailed outline of each module. They give details on credit values, module levels, semesters, learning outcomes, curriculum and descriptions of the modules. These modules aim to provide the learners with the requiste skills, knowledge and competencies to initially undertake an operational role in the tourism and hospitality industry. Futhermore it is the responsibility of each third level institution to try and encourage industry engagement in order to find out what the industry needs from the undergraduates and graduates in the future.

By having strong networks with industry representatives, third level education can be fruitful for both the learners and the industry. It is through the use of industry feedback and student feedback on their learning experiences that institutions can tailor and design course content programmes to better provide a more focused course, based on both industry needs and the wants of the undergraduates and graduates. EGFSN (2015) states that the skills gaps in the hospitality industry are due to insufficient numbers of people in Ireland having the appropriate training and the right level of experience. Further to this point highlighted by the EGFSN (2015), it was suggested in the report that the reasons for skills gaps included an imbalance between academic and hands on practical based training. This research project data has identified the skills gap that was identified by the EGFSN (2015).

The author is motivated to conduct this research by a desire to become an expert in the field of assessment practices. He hopes to achieve this not only through teaching the necessary skills and competencies to each learner in the field of food and beverage service, but also by enhancing good practice on the application of authentic assessment while exploring ways in which assessments can better engage learners. By exploring the assessment practices the author aims to discover new ways that will help motivate and encourage the learners of the future.

In previous research the author examined assessment strategies for a restaurant service module which he had teaching responsibility for. It was noted how a recent re-design of the module had increased the number of low stake assessments to ease learners into the demands of third level assessment. The research analysed the balance between high and low stakes assessment practices in restaurant service education at third level. It looked at whether some assessment practices, in particular those in the formative assessment category, were dependent on age and gender. The author in his own classroom received feedback from his learners which highlighted the assessment practices which they considered to be of most benefit from a teaching and learning perspective. This prompted the author to ask which assessment practices were most effective according to third level lecturers (as opposed to learners) in the field of restaurant education.

More recently there is an emphasis on "Assessment AS learning" which uses both formative and summative assessment experiences to help lecturers learn and develop in their future planning of assessment practices (NFETL, 2015). This assumes reflective conversations and dialogue with lecturers and peers.

It is envisaged that this research will generate new insights in the area of authentic assessment practices which will benefit those charged with making assessment an integrated and coherent activity, with learners as the ultimate beneficiaries.

1.2 Research Question

The research question which forms the foundation of this research is as follows:

"*An examination of assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service in Irish Higher Education and the implications for authentic assessment in teaching and learning.*"

Assessment in higher education is a live issue at present, evidenced by the fact that the NFETL's current theme is "Assessment FOR, OF and AS Learning". However, there is a lack of research in the assessment of practice/skills based teaching in Ireland in general. To address this lack of research, NFETL established the Hospitality and Tourism Educators' Group with a focus on conducting, engaging with and disseminating research in the area of teaching and learning. This group aims to engage with industry and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to develop a coherent set of occupational/professional standards which will facilitate the following three themes: a more comprehensive approach to programme design, a better understanding of the skills sets of graduates a different levels on the NFQ, and the recruitment and development of staff in industry (Ó'hAnnracháin and Noone, 2014).

This research question is designed to fill a gap in the existing literature. More is known about best practice regarding principles of effective assessment design. The author has employed a variety of formative and summative assessment processes with his own learners in a holistic fashion. It is hoped therefore that this research project will generate research data regarding the assessment practices of the Irish geographical spread of lecturers in the field of restaurant practice. There are very few studies concerning the assessment practices in skills based teaching in Ireland and in particular in the hospitality sector. Since 2009, Fáilte Ireland has reduced its involvement in curriculum design and programme delivery, while maintaining an oversight role in terms of demand for education from industry. To fill the gap in curriculum design and programme delivery of level 5 and level 6 courses, the IOTs collaborated on a project of national programme design in four main areas: Culinary Arts, Hospitality Studies, Bar Studies and Tourism Studies. This was the founding of the group, heads of schools, heads of departments and heads of sections came together on a regular basis to discuss issues of national importance in hospitality and tourism education (EGFSN, 2015). This collaboration has been extended through recent cluster activities in education with the ETBs, Solas, and HE. In recent years, the group has been engaged in co-ordinating programme design and delivery, industry liaison and quality standards in education and research. In undertaking these projects the group has had broad and significant engagement with a variety of industry representative bodies, including but not limited to the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF), the Restaurant Association of Ireland (RAI), Euro-toques, the Irish Hospitality Institute (IHI), the Vintners Federation of Ireland (VFI) and Fáilte Ireland both in relation to its role as employer and industry standards (EGFSN, 2015).

1.3 Research Objectives

The following research objectives are designed to explore the research question in more detail.

1. What is the approach to assessment practice in this discipline area for example (final assessment versus Continuous assessment, essay/written assignment, research report, book review, case-study, poster, portfolio/reports, written/oral/multiple choice questions exam, self-assessment/peer-assessment, group projects, presentation, practical's, approaches to feedback formative/summative) employed by lecturers?

2. Understanding the motivations of lecturers in relation to their decisions relating to assessment practices?

3. An examination of any changes in approaches to assessment practices and reasons why example (Changes in institutional practice, policy context, cuts in government funding)?

1.4 Value of the Research

There is very limited research conducted on the assessment practices (or indeed of the teaching methods) of lecturers in the area of restaurant service in IOTs or Universities in Ireland. It is envisaged that the project data will inform and generate new insights in the area of assessment practices which will benefit those charged with making assessment an integrated and coherent activity, with learners as the ultimate beneficiaries in third level higher education institutions.

It is hoped that the findings will contribute to the national skills policy and practice on teaching and learning. The research will provide the opportunity to make recommendations which will improve assessment practices. It will also suggest opportunities for future research.

The outcomes of the research will be particularly important to the Institute of Technology Sector and Universities where there are hospitality food & beverage operations courses. It will also create an opportunity to promote and engage industry involvement in course input and development. Conducting placement visits with industry allows one to identify what learning outcomes are required in modules in the redesign stages of programme reviews. This valuable feedback and input from industry and learners can help create an authentic learning experience for future learners in the courses provided. In order to provide the most up to-date skill set training, knowledge and competencies for current learners it is vitally important that academic bodies engage with past learners and industry contacts in order to create a smooth transaction from third level education to real life industry practice and engagement.

In relation to other practice/skilled based sectors, I hope to improve my own professional practice on assessment using the research data generated from this project. In so doing I hope to enhance the learner experience and to highlight some importance for other practice based courses. I hope to create an insight on how to improve assessment practices that will help to facilitate the lecturer and support the learner in developing a deeper approach to a learning experience and to bring forward in real life practice after studies. Boud (2000) also suggests that over time progression to develop a sustainable assessment practice, assessment can be used to actively motivate the development of student's lifelong learning skills.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines both the academic literature and policy documents related to assessment in higher education in general. It focuses on authentic assessment with particular reference to assessment within practice based teaching and learning.

The review on policy documents provided an insight on the report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2015 (EGFSN). This group advises the Irish Government on the current and future skills needs of the economy. In Ireland formal education in the hospitality sector is provided at various qualification levels, via both HE and FET. The standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, (ESG), (2013, p.17) also states that “the assessment of learners is one of the most important elements of higher education”. It also suggests that the assessment of learning measures not only the achievements of learners but also the effectiveness of course modules and programmes.

It could be argued that the field of hospitality and tourism education is very different to other social sciences due to the hands-on, practical and business-related nature of the discipline. Therefore it is expected that lecturers may use a variety of assessment approaches to assess their students in conjunction with a variety of teaching methods. While no studies have been conducted on the assessment practices (or indeed of the teaching methods) of lecturers in the area of restaurant service in IOTs in Ireland, as discussed in the Chapter 1, NFETL has given 2016-2018 the theme “Assessment FOR, OF and AS Learning”. NFETL is made up of a number of sub-groups. The importance of discipline specific research in the tourism and hospitality sector has been recognised by the NFETL with the establishment of the Hospitality and Tourism Educators’ Group. This group has many roles, such as the review of occupational standards and professional standards, improvement of curriculum design (including authentic assessment practices), review of teaching and learning practice, and industry engagement in education and training.

2.2 Assessment – An Overview

This section reviews the salient literature relating to the purpose of assessment. Assessment has been defined by Brown, *et al*. (1997) as coming from the Latin "*ad sedere*", which means to sit down beside. Therefore Brown, *et al*. (1997) continues to state that assessment 'is primarily concerned with providing guidance and feedback to the learner'.

Earl (2003) states that the purpose of assessment can be considered in the following three parts: assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning. Assessment *of* learning describes the summative experiences which provide effective, valid, reliable approaches to measure, evaluate, consider, record and report on a learner's level of success in being able to achieve the learning outcomes of the module (NFETL, 2015). Assessment *for* learning is formative and investigative. Where formative experiences are designed as part of the teaching and learning processes during which the lecture encourages the students to assess, improve, develop and enhance their performance in the module. Black and William (1998) suggest that formative feedback lectures provide learners with information on their achievement of the module and allows not only the learner to improve, but also allows teaching and learning activities to be tailored in response to the needs of the learner. This also highlights the importance of receiving feedback from the learners in order to discover what worked well and where they may have found challenges in the module. Finally assessment *as* learning uses both formative and summative assessment experiences to learn and develop as well as possible, along with the support of reflective discussions with lecturers and peers in the classroom about what went well and where one can improve for the next class (NFETL, 2015).

Sadler (1989) suggests that for improvements to occur they need to involve the following three elements:

- Learners must understand clearly the learning outcome that they are trying to achieve. This can be helped by the lecturer providing clear rules and guidelines of the assessment.
- Learners need to know where they are currently at in relation to their standards and the maximum standard they could achieve. This can be accomplished by immediate, clear and positive feedback from the lecturer.

- Both lecturers and learners must take action responsibly in order to close the gaps between the first and second points. This can be achieved by regular formative feedback.

2.2.1 Authentic Assessment

This next section will look closely at authentic assessment. Authentic assessment connects assessment to tasks the learner will meet when employed in the real world. Struyven *et al.* (2002) assert that students value assessment activities which appear to have value beyond completing the activity. In addition to this, Torrance (1995) states that authentic assessment is viewed to be more practical, realistic and challenging. Therefore this form of assessment encourages the students' learning, influencing what they research, when they research and how much effort they are willing to put into the module and the overall approach they take in their learning.

Stein, Isaacs & Andrews (2004) argue that the hospitality discipline offers opportunities for authentic, problem-based learning. It sounds reasonable to argue that the same discipline should offer opportunities for authentic assessment in order to ensure alignment between teaching methods and the assessment process. Alignment between assessment, teaching methodologies and learning outcomes was an important principle for Baume (2009).

Whilst there is a lack of research on authentic assessment practices in Irish third level hospitality education, much has been written on what constitutes good practice in the area of assessment design. It is reasonable to assert that such principles should be evident in any research on assessment practices undertaken by HE lecturers in the field of hospitality education.

O'Farrell (2009, p.10) argues that effective assessment practices should allow for both summative and formative elements. He defines summative and formative assessment as follows:

> "Summative assessment is assessment that is used to signify competence or that contributes to a student's grade in a course, module, level or degree. Formative assessment, on the other hand, is assessment strictly used to provide feedback to the student on their learning. It provides the student with advice on how to maintain and improve their progress, but should not form part of their summative grade or mark."

Assessment practices which promote formative feedback are known to promote deep learning rather than surface learning. In this regard, Race (2005, p.13) suggests that "deep learning is regarded as the 'best' form of learning and can be thought of as being fired by a strong 'want' to make sense of what is being learned,…. to really understand".

Summative assessments can be used formatively when both lecturers and learners take the results and use them to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent learning. Bloxham and Boyd (2007, p21) refer to this as 'feedforward', '…which focuses on what a learner should pay attention to in future assessment tasks' (Bloxham and Boyd 2007, p.21). Used in this way formative assessment is assessment *for* learning while summative is the assessment *of* learning measured by grades.

The enhancement theme for NFETL in 2016 is "Assessment AS learning" which uses both formative and summative assessment experiences to help lecturers learn and develop in their future planning of assessment practices. As alluded to in the rationale, this type of assessment practice requires reflective conversations and dialogue between lecturers and peers to succeed. It is hoped that this research will provide insights as to the prevalence of this assessment approach by lecturers in third level education, in the discipline of hospitality and tourism.

Nicol (2007) includes self-assessment as one of his ten principles of good assessment and feedback practice arguing that it leads to self-empowerment and self-regulation. Black and William (cited in Bloxham and Boyd, (2007 p.22)) contend that 'self-assessment is a sine qua non for effective learning'. It can be reasonably argued that self-assessment helps learners to become more responsible and more effective learners as 'it is important for all learners to develop the ability to be realistic judges of their own performance and to effectively monitor their own learning' (Boud 1995, p.13). Ramsden (1992, p.34) argued strongly that assessment practices should allow for learners to engage in such peer assessment activities as these '….not only increases a learner's sense of responsibility and control over the subject matter, it often reveals the extent of one's misunderstandings more vividly than any other method'. Nicol (2010) states that while feedback from the lecturer is vitally important, peer review is equally as important because peers generate and receive positive feedback in relation to the same assignment/practical activity. This process allows the learners to learn not only about their own work but also about their fellow class-mates.

Traditionally the skills and knowledge expected of the restaurant sector are usually gained through repetitive and craft based training (Robinson *et al.* 2014). Hegarty (2011) suggested that in order to raise the field to a more cognitively based discipline and adopt the higher order thinking required in restaurant management, the curricula would need to promote reflective practise in learners. This, according to Hegarty (2011) would teach the learners how to learn and to assess their own and others' learning through collaborative, peer and self-assessment processes.

Nicol's (2007) second principle for good practice recommended that assessment tasks should 'encourage time and effort on challenging learning tasks' in order to promote deep learning. It is hoped that this research will discover if assessment practices of third level lecturers include opportunities for tasks which challenge learners.

The author believes that it is necessary to ask oneself how assessment practices in the restaurant module respond to the above principles of good practice. There are many practical elements in a standard third level restaurant module which allow the learners to demonstrate a wide range of skills.

In order for authentic assessment to take place, one needs to take into account the importance of the module's learning outcomes. This is important because in order to conduct efficient authentic assessment, lecturers must keep in mind the learning outcomes and overall goals of the module, and in doing so, address any issues or deviation from the course plan which may occur. Gibbs (2010, p. 1) highlighted the importance of assessment on learning effectiveness, he states: “Assessment makes more difference to the way that students spend their time, focus their effort, and perform, than any other aspect of the courses they study, including the teaching. If teachers want to make their course better, then there is more leverage through changing aspects of the assessment than anywhere else, and it is often easier and cheaper to change assessment than to change anything else”.

Clear learning outcomes in the form of statements of assessment criteria, allow learning to be individualised in a purposeful manner. Academic staff are able to give feedback to learners that is directly related to the assessment criteria and which can look forward to criteria that are yet to be encountered, as well as offering comments on present performance (Harvey and Knight, 1996). There is the potential to offer more useful and focused feedback than is usually the case where goals and criteria are implied. Furthermore, the development sequence of criteria can have a motivating force through showing learners what they need to do and where they are heading through target setting. Moreover, with explicit learning outcomes criteria for each module, it not only becomes possible to encourage self-assessment, it is arguably necessary to do so (Harvey and Knight, 1996).

Boud (1992) states that self-assessment has been identified as something of value in its own, as an important part of becoming more autonomous as a learner and to encourage life-long learning. By allowing learners to self-assess their own work they are allowed to progress at their own rate and it provides a basis for the competency of prior experiential learning. Learners needs to be able to demonstrate that their previous experience in training restaurants led to mastery of being able to complete the range of tasks that are required in order to achieve the learning outcomes.

The overall aim of all assessment is to record achievement and to use that evidence to plan both for further practise and for future development. The aim is also for immediate formative feedback that will identify areas for the learner to improve on for future tasks. Providing rich feedback allows learners to understand their learning rather than simply being grade focused.

2.3. Practice-based Teaching and Learning

The National Forum Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) has developed links since 2014 in order to create an environment for the enhancement of teaching and learning in Ireland. The development of teaching and learning in HE is supported by many membership organisations, institutional collaborative networks, discipline specific networks and communities of practice. The National Forum was established to connect links with groups and to work in partnership with them to support the important role that each plays in education and professional development. Third level lecturers have access to resources and support relating to discipline-based teaching and learning practices, also known as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Lecturers can link up with their colleagues in their department or discipline or through engaging in broader national and international disciplinary groups and professional associations (NFETL, 2016). A range of participating groups were identified in a report conducted by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 2014. The following disciplines were included in the report however: Chemistry, Early Childhood Studies, Engineering, Finance and Accounting, Mathematics, Nursing, Philosophy, Physics and Psychology. Once again the author will highlight the importance of research in the field of practice/skills based education in the development of authentic assessment practices and teaching methods in the area of hospitality and tourism.

While the HEA report did not include a Hospitality and Tourism group, it did say that they would be requesting assistance in opening these events out more broadly to disciplinary academics, relevant professional associations and industry links in the future (HEA, 2014). A 2015 report by the EGFSN suggests that in order to successfully develop the skills requirements of the hospitality sector into the future close collaboration between industry and education and training providers is essential. This will benefit the learner/employee of the hospitality establishment that wants to strengthen their knowledge and skill set and will provide an opportunity for the hospitality employers to support their staff in every means possible. This can be facilitated by the third level institutions providing each learner with the opportunity to take on study in a full time or part time basis, as well as allowing them to study single modules spread over a time frame if necessary. This report also suggests that time frame flexibility would be very beneficial in the completion of both major and minor awards where the learner is undertaking industry work and needs to accommodate the varying work patterns and seasonality of the industry.

2.4 Policy Context

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs was established in 1997 with the role of advising the Irish Government on current and future skills needs of the economy.

A 2015 report from Skills Ireland highlighted the vital importance of education and training in the hospitality and tourism sector. It found that in order to retain staff in the sector it is vitally important to invest in education and training. This report found that the impact of higher education funding cuts is now exposing the lack of investment in practical based skills training. In the last few years there has been a shift towards academic modules in education which has now challenged those students who are more talented and skilful in the practical elements of a module.

This Expert Group is primarily focused on the funding system and the need for a considerably higher level of investment. However, the group is of the view that the current national policy context and system of performance management has an important role in both developing wide support for enhanced funding and in creating a new, effective funding model which meets the goals set out above. It is imperative that any funding arrangements proposed must reflect and be supportive of this broad policy framework.

2.4.1 Future Developments

Government bodies in this area need to address the funding issue as a key priority as it underpins the overall reform programme. There are also other key enablers of success at third level institutions. Examples of these include: the capacity to plan and act strategically (including the ability to identify clear goals and strengths), the partaking in the various activities across the institutions and the highlighting of suitable forms of best practice in the area of teaching methods and teaching practices. In addition, the institutions must develop the capacity to act as partners in a cluster and deliver improved regional outcomes (HEA, 2014). This is an area that the HEA plans to develop in the future in conjunction with the institutions in Ireland. In order for this to be successful the hospitality industry needs to work closely with third level education members who hold specific roles and provide structural support to the development of a department's annual programme planning. When the third level academic members engage on a regular basis with the industry, they are able to update course content and provide students with up-to-date knowledge, skills and competencies as discussed in the previous section of practice based teaching and learning EGFSN (2015). The third level institutions need to plan and discuss with industry and the academic staff, the range of course programmes and the suitability of the modules learning outcomes being delivered each year. This helps involve all staff in the decision making process and enhances their understanding, it also contributes to the smooth running of the courses being provided to the learners each year.

The funding strategy report from the Department of Education and Skills (2016) discovered four critical channels through which HE supports were delivered, they were: support for an increasingly dynamic and open innovation system, a high quality student experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of organisations in the private, public and social sectors, and further widening of participation as a driver of social mobility.

This report also found that industry is a major beneficiary of the outcomes of higher education, particularly due to the high proportion of graduates in the Irish hospitality workforce. As stated by them: "The expert group strongly recommends the introduction of a structured contribution from employers as a core element of future funding for higher education. This should be delivered by increasing the National Training Fund levy. The funding should be used to support programmes in areas of skills demand and flexibly delivered programmes and can also act as a catalyst for greater engagement between academia and employers." Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education (2016, p.8).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature relating to assessment in the context of authentic assessment in a practical based module. It also examined practice based teaching and learning and included an analysis of policy documents relating to the purpose of higher education.

The first section focused on the purpose of assessment in third level education. This was followed by an examination in the second section of the importance of authentic assessment and how it can benefit learners provided the assessment procedure and choice is credible, fair and also consistent in providing clear, meaningful feedback in a timely fashion. The third section focused on practiced based teaching and learning. This section looked at the support network that is put in place to assist and support lecturers in growing and developing their skills and improving their delivery of course content to the learner. It also looked at the importance of industry engagement with the educational bodies in supporting course development. It was concluded that this leads to learners being better prepared for the professional work environment in industry after completing their studies. The final section discussed the policy context in areas of higher education. It also discussed the skills shortages, funding concerns and the importance of industry engagement and feedback from both learners and industry.

In summary, studies on the assessment practices of third level lecturers in restaurant education are scant. However, much research exists on principles of good practice in the design of effective assessment practices and this research has influenced the design of the semi-structured interview questions used in the author's research. It is also very important to highlight the necessity of strong networks and support between both industry and government for the maintenance of a competitive national tourism industry. This research therefore has aimed to address the gap in the existing literature.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the methodology and methodological tools employed in this study and provides a clear rationale for their selection. It considers the ethical issues around this research and the position taken in addressing these throughout the study. The research design and methodology used in this research is exploratory, in-depth and qualitative in nature. The research took the form of a multiple case-study research and focused on lecturers from the discipline of restaurant service. The author selected participants who would represent a geographical spread of HE across Ireland, identifying the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service.

Participants were invited to submit their module descriptors and their assessment strategies before taking part in a thirty minute, semi-structured interview. The interviews took place at an agreed location, time and date or a skype/telephone interview was arranged to accommodate the participants. The interviews were all recorded, transcribed and anonymised.

3.2 Research Approach and Justification

In reviewing different research approaches the author was initially drawn to a mixed method research approach which integrated quantitative and qualitative research methods. At first the author was going to send out a questionnaire to all third level institutions that deliver a restaurant module. In the initial planning it was hoped that the information from the questionnaire would aid the author in conducting a beneficial interview process in the second phase of the research. However the author decided against the use of a questionnaire as it was felt that it would not allow for probing or follow-up questions to be asked of the participants. The author felt that the use of a semi-structured interview process rather than a questionnaire would allow the author better opportunities to probe for the views and opinions of the participant. Gray (2004, p. 217) states that probing is a way for the interview to discover new paths which were not initially considered. Further to this, David, & Sutton (2004, p. 87) highlight the importance of having key themes and sub-questions prepared in advance as it gives the researcher a “sense of order from which to draw questions from unplanned encounters”. It was for this reason that the author sent the semi-structured interview questions to all participants in advance of conducting the interviews.

A multiple case-study research methodology approach was employed by the author in this research. Nisbet and Watt (1984) state that case-study based research is an important source of research data, as a case research is a detailed instance that can be designed to represent a more general principle. Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) state that all researchers must acknowledge their own subjectivity and bias. Adelman *et al*, (1980) suggests that a case-study can be a valuable research method that can facilitate readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together. Adelman *et al*, (1980) also continue to suggest that the information of a case-study, or in this research, multiple case-studies is ‘strong in reality’ and therefore it is appealing to experts in the field of practice that will be able to identify with the topics and points raised.

Nisbet and Watt (1984) go on to further outline the benefits of a case-study approach in research:

- They are instantly understandable.
- They provide strong authenticity.
- They provide insights into other similar situations and cases, thereby assisting interpretation of other similar cases.
- A single researcher can undertake the research independently.

The next section will take the reader through the case-study design stages.

3.3 Case Study Design

The author selected a case study approach for the research because it allowed him to thoroughly examine the area of assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service in a geographical spread throughout Ireland.

Adelman *et al.* (1980) states that a case-study research is an instance in action. Yin (2009) also notes that case-study based research provides a unique example of real situations that allows readers to understand ideas more clearly than by simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles. A case-study research can allow readers to recognise how ideas and abstract principles can link together. Yin (2009) also points out that case studies have an advantage over historical studies as they contain direct observation and semi-structured interviews with participants. By using a multiple case-study research method for this piece of research the author is able to provide data-rich findings from which the reader can make their own judgements, Adelman *et al.* (1980). Nisbet and Watt (1984) also suggest that the results from a case-study based research are more easily understood by a wide audience (including non-academics) as they are often written in everyday language and the piece speaks for its self. Nisbet and Watt (1984) also go on to state that case-studies highlight unique information that may be lost in larger scale data, for example questionnaire surveys. Due to the relatively small sample size of this research, the author has opted for a qualitative approach as opposed to a quantitative one. This choice in approach results in the findings being based on more detailed and accurate data, as the author was able to drill down into the participants' responses in order to get a more complete picture of each participants' assessment practices.

3.4 Sampling/Selection of Cases

The research population comprised of third level lecturers who teach modules related to the discipline of restaurant service education. It was originally proposed to sample at least two lecturers from each of the third level institutes of technology and universities in the Republic of Ireland that deliver programmes in this discipline area from levels 6-10 QQI. However, due to the short time frame to carry out this research it was decided to select seven participants, of varying levels of experience, from six third level institutions comprising institutes of technology and one university covering a broad geographical region across

Ireland. The author sent an email to each hospitality and tourism department head from the participating institutions. The heads of department had been selected to act as the gate keepers for the request of the module descriptors and assessment strategies. Following on in phase two of the research, the author conducted a 30 minute semi-structured interview that was recorded, transcribed and anonymised. The research tools employed will now be examined in greater detail.

3.5 Research Tools

The research tools adopted in this research are documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. The author felt that analysing the module descriptors helped construct relevant, probing questions. Through the semi-structured interview process the author was able to become an integral part of the research, as he was able to respond to the answers received from participants and ask more exacting follow up questions from the interview participant (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The data extracted from the module descriptors received from each participant proved to be beneficial and greatly assisted in the construction of the second phase of the research. The semi-structured interview provided strong evidence to support the literature behind this study. It also highlighted the most common form of assessment that is carried out in the education of restaurant service practice around Ireland. The document analysis of the module descriptors gave a broader perspective of these assessment practices, allowing the author to construct highly relevant questions which resulted in the semi-structured interviews providing a detailed insight of each research participant's experience of assessment practices.

The use of a questionnaire was considered during the early planning stages, however the author felt that a questionnaire would not have yielded as much rich information as the semi-structured interview process. This was due largely to the fact that the sample size for this research was relatively small at only seven participants, because of this, it was felt that any data received by way of a questionnaire would not give a rich account of current assessment practices compared to a qualitative approach.

The validity of the research was enhanced by the use of a triangulation approach. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) states that triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of an aspect of human behaviour.

3.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The author selected semi-structured interviews with the aim of providing comparability and consistency across the case studies while also allowing for flexibility which accommodated the individuality and diversity of each case-study. Drever (1995) states that the selection of semi-structured interviews are beneficial because they provide a very flexible technique for small-scale research.

It appears that this method provides more useful results when the sample size is relatively small as it allows for thematic analysis of the qualitative data received (Alvarez and Urla, 2002). The use of semi-structured interviews usually occurs where the research being carried out would benefit from an open framework approach. They are particularly effective for obtaining rich data as they allow the researcher to engage in focused, conversational, back and forth communication with the participants (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.5).

Bryman (2008) states that there are four different types of interviews used for research purposes, they are: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews and non-directive interviews. Bryman (2001) explains that structured interview entails: 'the administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer. The aim is for all interviewees to be given exactly the same context of questioning. The goal of this style of interview is to ensure that interviewees' replies can be aggregated'. These questions are usually very specific, the type of questions are called closed, closed ended, pre-coded, or fixed choice. This type of questioning introduces some rigidity to the interview (Cohen and Mannion, 2003).

According to Bryman, (2008), semi-structured interviews allow the various topics to be dealt with in order, while the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. The interviewer can ask the questions he/she deems appropriate in the words he/she considers best.

The type of interview most appropriate for this research is the semi-structured interview. This method of interviewing was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, because the interviewees are experts in the field of restaurant practice and education, secondly it will allow flexibility within the interview, allowing the author to examine areas of the interview in more depth after researching each lecturer's restaurant module descriptors and assessment strategies. As Cohen and Mannion (2003) state, the strengths of semi-structured interviews are that the researcher can prompt and probe deeper into the given situation by leaving the questions more open ended.

One concern the author had in conducting this style of interview process was that the duration of the interview could go over the time frame set out, which was 20- 30 minutes, as opposed to using other interviewing methods which may last for a shorter length of time. Extra time was allocated for this stage of the research process, should the interviews run past the time frame set. Before holding the interviews, the author conducted a pilot run with colleagues and found that the questions would take 18-22 minutes to answer on average. The final 8 minutes were added to allow sufficient time to complete the full process of the semi-structured interview. The author received permission in advance from all interviewees to record their interviews.

All interviewees completed a consent form and were brought through the information sheet which provided a break-down of the research being carried out. The author emailed a list of indicative questions to each participant in advance of the semi-structured interviews (see appendix A). This was to allow participants the opportunity to examine and for reflection in advance of the interview. In addition to this, they also received a hard copy on the day of interview. Heritage (1984) states that researchers that use qualitative interviewing tend to record and transcribe their interviews and suggests the following advantages:

- It allows more thorough examination of what people say.
- It permits repeated examination of the answers.
- The interview can be used by other researchers, (if permitted by the interviewee) and therefore helps reduce any accusations of bias.

For this reason, the author transcribed the interviews conducted this was followed by an aural review by listening to the recordings while reading through each transcript (a sample transcript is provided in appendix B).

The author had hoped to conduct all interviews face to face in order to gain as rich data as possible, however due to the time frame and scheduling constraints of the participants this was not possible. Instead, the author conducted four interviews face to face and three by telephone. Miller and Cannell (1997) defines an interview as a social situation and suggested that because of this, a telephone interview may lack essential social elements which could undermine the appropriate conduct of the interview, and hence its reliability and validity. Miller and Cannell (1997) went on to elaborate that non-verbal paralinguistic cues affect the conduct, pacing and relationships in the interview and the support, threat and confidence felt by the interviewees. However Nias (1991) and Miller and Cannell (1997) also suggest that the lack of a face-to-face element may actually strengthen the reliability of the interview, as the interviewee might release information that may not be so readily forthcoming in a face-to-face interview environment. The literature identifies both strengths and weaknesses with telephone interviews and these must be acknowledged within this research design.

With the consent of the interviewee, the author recorded each interview in a quiet environment, this was to aid in the transcribing process. The author used the list of interview questions as a visual prompt to ensure that every question was addressed.

3.5.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic. Corbin and Strauss, (2008) defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing both printed and electronic documents. As with other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires data be examined and interpreted in order to gain understanding, elicit meaning, and develop empirical knowledge about the subject. The author felt that the use of documentary analysis as a research tool would support examination of the research question in order to keep the subject matter discussed in line with the title of the research “An examination of assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service in Irish Higher Education and the implications for authentic assessment in teaching and learning".

By reviewing the module descriptors received from the participants, the author was given an insight into how each participant assesses his or her students, and as such was better able to prepare relevant questions for use in the semi-structured interview. Further document analysis was carried out after the conduction of the semi-structured interviews. The author recorded and transcribed these interviews before carrying out an analysis of each transcription. This analysis yielded rich data which aided the identification of authentic assessment methods in the discipline of restaurant service practical classes.

3.6 Ethical Issues

The author has followed the LYIT standard guidelines regarding the carrying out of research on human beings. Therefore the principles of voluntary participation, informed and signed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and data security has being treated with the utmost care and academic rigour. Streubert and Carpenter (2010) argued that the research participants should receive adequate information concerning the research and are able to comprehend the information. They also noted that participants should have the power of free choice allowing them to contribute to the research or decline (Streubert and Carpenter, 2010). In addition, the researcher has ensured that all participants were aware of the risks and benefits associated with the research. This was provided to all the participants in the proposed letter of consent and email information that was sent out in advance of the research. Importantly, in this research, the gatekeepers were the heads of department in each of the HE selected for the research (a copy of the sample ethics consent form can be found in appendix C).

The participants in the author's research were all given the opportunity to withdraw at any time of phase one and phase two of the research. This is in keeping with the Code of Human Research Ethics outlined by the British Psychological Society who state that it is the right of the participant "to withdraw at any time without penalty".

In addition, an Ethics Form was completed by the author and submitted to LYIT before the research began. The research did not proceed until the author obtained the permission of the LYIT research ethics committee via email. Cognizance was also taken of The Nuremberg code and The Helsinki Declaration when undertaking the research. The Nuremberg code emphasizes the importance of obtaining voluntary consent from the research participants and to avoid force, fraud, deceit, duress and over-reaching. In addition to this, the Helsinki Declaration highlights the ethical principles which provide comprehensive guidance to research participants.

In relation to data storage, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that appropriate levels of storage security arrangements are in place to reflect the sensitivity of the data (UCD, 2015). According to the Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003) researchers must store all data securely and ensure that research participants are aware of how the data will be utilised. They must also ensure data is not misused beyond the timeframe of the research project. The author stored all notes, data and files in a securely locked filing cabinet in LYIT. The data has also been electronically stored on a password protected database on a data-encrypted hard-drive. This data will be disposed of by formatting the hard drive when the research has ended. The data will be retained for 5 years following the completion of the research and then a shredder will be used to dispose all notes and files following the ethics guidelines of LYIT.

The author plans to forward an executive summary of the results of this research to all of the participants who participated in the research.

3.7 Validity/Understanding

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.180), validity is a principal by which much qualitative research abides. They further state that this validity has several tenants, some of which include:

- The natural setting is the principal source of data.
- Context-boundedness and “thick description”.
- The researcher is part of the researched world.
- The data are descriptive.

- Seeing and reporting the situation through the eyes of participants = from the native's point of view (Geertz, 1974).
- Participant validation is important.
- Catching meaning and intention are essential.

Agar (1993), states that the intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals helps to secure a sufficient level of validity and reliability in qualitative data collection. In addition to this, Lincoln and Guba (1985), also argue that rigour can be achieved within these criteria through the use of participant validation when categorising results, peer debriefing, careful audit trails of evidence and triangulation.

To help ensure validity and best design, the semi-structured interviews were piloted with lecturing colleagues in the hospitality discipline to ensure wording and length were appropriate. Verbal feedback on any other issues was also sought regarding the ease of understanding and use of the semi-structured questions. The valuable feedback received from colleagues was instrumental in performing additional improvements to the interview questions. For example, the interview was originally made up of eleven core questions, however during the process of the trail run, the subject of future development was mentioned by several of the author's institutions. This influenced the author's decision to include an additional twelfth question, the subject of which was exclusively dedicated to development of assessment practices into the future (see appendix A).

The author emailed the questions as an attachment to be used in the semi-structured interviews to the heads of departments in the hospitality and tourism departments of the HE in advance, as they would be acting as the gatekeepers before the semi-structured interviews were carried out with the lecturers (see appendices A & D). The author placed telephone calls to each HE to confirm location, dates and times of the semi-structured interviews.

The data collected through the semi-structured interview process was safely stored on a laptop computer owned by the author. All information collected throughout the research was safely locked away and stored in compliance with LYIT policy on research ethics. In accordance with this policy, it will be kept for five years, strictly following the LYIT ethical guidelines and procedures. An Endnote software package was used to keep track of reference sources throughout the research.

3.8 Reliability/Dependability

Within the context of qualitative research the use of the term reliability is contested. Nisbet and Watt (1984), state that case studies suffer from three weaknesses. These are:

- The results may not be generalizable except where other readers /researchers see their application.
- They are not easily open to cross-checking; hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective.
- They are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity.

(Nisbet and Watt, 1984)

In addition to this, Yin (1984) highlights four critical tests that he believes confronts case-study researchers. These are:

- Construct validity (establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied).
- Internal validity (establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships).
- External validity (establishing the domain or population to which a study's findings can be generalized).
- Reliability (demonstrating that the study van be replicated with similar results) (Cited in Nunan, 1992, p.80).

(Yin, 1984)

In summary, as with other education research methods, there is a need to meet any challenges that may be encountered when trying to ensure that the research is reliable and valid. The research design for this study has attempted to take all possible steps to ensure reliability and validity.

3.9 Limitations of Methodology and Methodological Tools

One of the limitations the author has identified while conducting this research is the relatively small sample size. The author is of the opinion that this research would have benefited from having a larger sample size, however due to time and scheduling constraints a limited number of participants were able to take part. Had the sample size been larger, the author would have had a greater knowledgebase from which to draw rich context data while conducting this research.

A second limitation identified was the difficulty the author faced when trying to organise face to face meetings with all seven participants. Every participant was in full employment and as such, the author needed to work around both his and their schedules (please see appendix E for the author's research schedule). The conduction of face to face meetings was not possible in some instances, however phone interviews were successfully arranged in lieu of these. A contributing factor towards the difficulty in arranging face to face meetings was the author's own heavy workload and finding a balance between both full time employment and course work.

3.10 Conclusion

The research methodology was reviewed in this chapter. The research design and methodology used in this research was in-depth, exploratory and qualitative in nature. The research method selected was a multiple case-study and focused on lecturers from the discipline of restaurant service in various HE across Ireland. The subject of this study was an examination of assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service.

The research tools used were semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were chosen with the aim of providing comparability and consistency across the multiple case studies while at the same time allowing for the flexibility necessary when handling the individuality and diversity of each case-study. Document analysis was employed in order to provide a better insight and achieve a deeper understanding of the pedagogical aspects of assessment in practice based modules of restaurant service.

This chapter also highlighted the ethical issues connected to ensuring the research met the correct standards of validity and reliability set out by the author's institution. In addition to this, the author discussed limitations which were identified through the course of conducting this research.

CHAPTER FOUR – ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data derived from the semi-structured interviews and the document analysis. The document analysis includes the module descriptors that have been provided by the seven participants of the six institutions which helped to support the existing literature in chapter two. It begins with the consideration of each of the semi-structured research questions based around assessment:

1. What is your approach to assessment?
2. Why do you take this approach?
3. How do you assess their knowledge?
4. How has your approach to assessment changed over the years?
5. What has motivated these changes?
6. How do you know that your assessment approach is effective?
7. Would you have a balance of low-stakes and high-stakes assessment practice?
8. What is your approach to feedback?
9. How could we improve our feedback?
10. How do you get your students to engage in class?
11. Is there something distinctive that works well in the restaurant practical environment?
12. Where is teaching and learning assessment going in the restaurant classroom for good future developments?

This chapter will now examine each individual question and the responses from all the participants in the research. The author will then discuss the similarities of the participants' module descriptors. This will be achieved by linking the literature chapter to the analysis chapter. The author will highlight the importance of the module descriptors and how this document has an important part to play in the enhancement and progression for each individual learner.

4.2.1 Results Related to RQ1: What is your approach to assessment?

All of the participants interviewed cited the use of continuous assessment as being key in their approach to assessing their students. Formal exams were also cited by all participants as being an important indicator of how well each student has progressed throughout the year. Several participants indicated that while they felt that continuous assessments of a practical nature were the most important type of assessment utilised, they also felt that the final end of year semester exams were a very important indicator of how each student has progressed as a whole throughout the year.

Participant A stated that his assessment choice "depends on the level of the student". To elaborate on this point, he went on to state the following: "Level 6 is quite practical based, and Masters and undergraduate levels are group or individual. Also, the Restaurant Service module is individual and based on performance, for example, 8.3% over 12 weeks". This participant chooses to use a continuous assessment approach at level 6, where he applies a percentage mark of 8.3% over 12 weeks, as the module leans more towards a practical-based approach in learning in both year one and year two of the course. This approach also allows the student to be able to develop and demonstrate a strong skill set of techniques ability in class. The author would like to highlight that this is a learning outcome that has been identified in all the participants' module descriptors.

Some of the participants noted that they prefer to use a more practical based course with students researching at level 6, before introducing a mix of practical and theory based learning for undergraduate and masters-level students.

4.2.2 Results Related to RQ2: Why do you take this approach?

All participants stated that their use of continuous assessment coupled with an emphasis on practical learning was due to their belief that this type of learning best prepares their students for working in a real-world environment. When participant B was interviewed he stated that his job is "to get people ready for work", it was his wish that every student who graduates will graduate with a standard of knowledge that will allow them to be successful in the industry, and he believes that continuously assessing each student, while providing constructive feedback is the best method to achieve that.

Participant G stated that his approach to assessment came about “as the result of a meeting with industry peers held two years ago”. This meeting concluded that the introduction of continuous assessment would not only allow the lecturer to better monitor and provide feedback to the students, but it would also motivate the students to improve their attendance at lectures, as their grades were directly linked to their attendance record.

In addition to this, participant D stated that “students are required to go to industry with a certain level of competence but this level can’t be achieved through learning theory alone, it needs to be learned through practical work”.

4.2.3 Results Related to RQ3: How do you assess their knowledge?

This research found that a variety of different assessment methods are being employed across the participating institutions. These include in-class MCQs, in-class quizzes, individual and group presentations, and the assignment of projects/portfolios, essays and reading assignments.

Participant F stated that he assesses learners’ knowledge through the use of “practical, continuous assessments” and that in particular “the use of class tests is very prevalent in level six”. He further stated that the introduction of quizzes, portfolios, workbooks and opportunities for them to talk about the areas of the hospitality industry aid learners in demonstrating their knowledge of source material and of the industry.

Participant C referenced her use of Bloom’s Taxonomy as being an important part of her decision making process when it comes to classifying her learning outcomes and assessments into different levels of specificity and complexity.

All participants stated the conducting of end of term, or end of year, exams as being a useful tool in assessing the knowledge their students have learned. Participant A detailed how each result must be approved by an exam board, a progression board, and finally an award board, before it can be ratified by the academic council. This participant also stated that every student must complete a student survey before progressing to the next year, or before receiving their reward, as the case may be. These checks are conducted by institute staff with the aim of maintaining the reliability and validity of the assessment procedures and practices implemented by the institution.

4.2.4 Results Related to RQ4: How has your approach to assessment changed over the years?

The most common change reported was the increase in the use of continuous assessment as a means for assessing students. Participants B and D cited the introduction of semesterisation as having a negative impact on their ability to teach their courses effectively. These participants felt that semesterisation has condensed the opportunities to carry out assessments, and has led to a shift in focus towards summative assessment, rather than ongoing, regular assessments, which they view as being more beneficial in allowing them to provide constructive feedback to their students. Participant B further stated that he had "at least 2 formative feedback sessions pre-semesterisation". However, post-semesterisation he now has "more summative points of assessment instead".

An increase in the use of IT for assessment purposes was also reported. One participant detailed how their use of taking photographs of each student for roll call improved the amount of attention and care their students put into their own personal appearance in the practical restaurant environment. This participant also introduced peer group learning sessions and found them most beneficial in allowing students to critique and learn from each other.

The growth in the use of IT was also cited by participant A as being beneficial in delivering feedback to students - as he felt that most students nowadays are used to receiving news and other types of information almost instantly online, and thus prefer the delivery of their feedback to be instant, timely and relevant to their work.

4.2.5 Results Related to RQ5: What has motivated these changes?

A variety of different motivating factors for these changes were reported. The growth in the use of IT was due to two factors. The first was to improve the time efficiency of the classroom through the use of online assessments and feedback, and the second was due to feedback from the students requesting more IT based learning.

Participant G stated that negative feedback from the industry motivated a shift towards increasing the amount of practical-based elements on the course. This feedback highlighted areas in which the students on industry placement were not adequately prepared for the restaurant environment. As a response to this, participant G increased the amount of practical learning hours on the course. In shifting it away from a theoretical based course it is now leaning towards a more balanced course in providing both theory and practice.

The responses to this question also highlighted a consensus that a one hour, end of year exam was not enough to adequately test the knowledge of the students. Instead it was felt that an ongoing, continuous assessment style approach should be used. This approach not only ensures that students are marked and assessed regularly, it also allows the lecturer to provide regular, insightful feedback to each student on a one to one basis. The participants' views on continuous assessment also supports the literature cited in chapter two, where Black and William (1998) state that formative feedback lectures provide the learner with information on their achievement in the module and allows not only the learner to improve, but also allows teaching and learning activities to be tailored in response to the needs of the learner.

4.2.6 Results Related to RQ6: How do you know that your assessment approach is effective?

All participants reported that the best way to judge whether an assessment approach is effective or not is by reviewing the end of semester results. Every participant felt that the use of continuous assessments increased the performance of their students. Three of these participants stated their belief that the allocation of a certain percentage of the end of semester grades to class attendance was a major motivating factor for the students to attend their classes as often as possible. Participant D detailed how being absent from one class equated to a loss of 10% of the continuous assessment grade for that module.

Participant G felt that the use of continuous assessments helped him to identify any weak students in his class. He was then able to take this into account when placing those students into hotels for their year of industry experience. By being able to assess the learners on an ongoing basis, he was able to allocate each student to a suitable establishment that would not be too demanding or challenging for them. This ensured that a weak student would not be allocated to a five star hotel if they could not fully achieve the learning outcomes in the classroom, for example, the setting up of a table or carrying plates. Instead they would be allocated to a less demanding environment which allowed them to develop at a pace more appropriate to their skill level.

4.2.7 Results Related to RQ7: Do you have a balance of low-stakes + high-stakes assessment practice?

Every participant interviewed stated their belief that it is better to conduct high-stakes assessments in latter half of the semester, as opposed to the first half. Some participants interviewed said that they never hold continuous assessment in the first few weeks of a semester, due to the students being unprepared and new to the course. The consensus is that high-stakes assessments should only be carried out during a period sometime after six weeks from the start of the semester. It is believed that this gives students enough time to develop a good understanding of the course material and practical skills which will allow them to perform well in these higher-stakes assessments.

While continuous assessments were found to be conducted across the whole duration of each semester, the research found that only low-stake assessments were being carried out in the early stages of each semester. This, the participants feel, gives the students an added incentive to attend classes, while also giving the lecturer the opportunity to provide insightful, regular feedback and impart useful knowledge to students on an individual basis.

4.2.8 Results Related to RQ8: What is your approach to feedback?

All participants responded with a strong belief in the importance of feedback in the development of their students. An emphasis was placed on the need for feedback to occur frequently in order to best correct any mistakes a student may be making. All participants felt that this allows the student to improve the quality of their work, and gives them a better foundation on which to further increase their skillset in subsequent classes.

Participant F stated a belief that "feedback towards students is directly linked to the rate of student retention". The consensus across all participants was that feedback should be a regular occurrence, not just at the end of class sessions, but also during class where possible. Individual and group discussions were also cited as being important tools in retrieving questions or concerns students might have about their coursework.

Participants A and B highlighted their belief that feedback should not just be given at the end of the course, as they felt that by then it is too late for students to sufficiently take the feedback on board and increase the quality of their work before the final exam. This further supports the literature cited in chapter two where Brown, *et al*. (1997) states that assessment 'is primarily concerned with providing guidance and feedback to the learner'. In this regard, assessment is vital in order for the learner to understand clearly what they need to do the next time around to improve their grade.

4.2.9 Results Related to RQ9: How could we improve our feedback?

Participants responded with a variety of different suggestions to improve feedback. One such suggestion was the use of technology as a means of receiving and giving feedback to and from students. Participant G stated that he started to use the Blackboard online learning system six months previous and had found it to be an excellent tool for both giving and receiving feedback.

Another suggestion was the need to be wary of over-prescribing feedback to groups of students. There was an emphasis placed on the need for feedback to be one-to-one based, and tailored to each students performances and needs.

There was a consensus that more time should be allocated for holding feedback sessions with students. However some participants felt that recent changes in the semester structure made this a difficult task to accomplish, due to what they felt were fewer hours left to carry out these feedback sessions. Participant E stated that “more immediate individual feedback early in the module would be beneficial if you have the time”, however he also noted that “it is difficult to find time especially with a large class”. Participant F also stated that assessment “needs to be structured more”, while noting that “there is sometimes a lack of time for feedback, and some lecturers are reluctant to give it as they don’t want a negative reaction from students”.

4.2.10 Results Related to RQ10: How do you get your students to engage in class?

Every participant stated the importance of engaging with students on a personal level in order to get them to engage with the class. A variety of different methods were used to achieve this. These included giving highly detailed practical demonstrations, pairing strong students with weak students, and giving each student a different task to perform week to week.

Participant G regularly assigns a new restaurant manager from his class on a daily basis. This is then followed by a menu briefing, after which students may be asked questions such as “What is the starter today?”. The participant felt that his method encourages students to engage with the course content, as doing something practical by its nature, is more engaging than theoretical bookwork.

Participants A and B detailed their practice of handing out a summary of the following week’s class content at the end of the current week. This is then followed by short, informal questions about the summary in the following week’s class. These participants found that this informal style of questioning increased the level of student engagement with the course content, while also making them better prepared for their classes.

Participant F stated the importance of good preparation, involving the class and how he sometimes asks the learners for their views on the subject area. He also asks them about places they've worked in the past in order to encourage class discussions and engagement.

4.2.11 Results Related to RQ11: Is there something distinctive that works well in the restaurant practical environment?

All participants feel that the live restaurant practical environment is invaluable in preparing students for real world restaurant service. The inclusion of live service, where real customers from the public are brought into the restaurant, was cited by one participant as being extremely important in developing the interpersonal skills of the students. This belief was due to the fact that when students are placed in such situations, they are exposed to challenges and learning opportunities that occur organically, and as such, they must learn to handle these situations quickly and effectively. Many situations that occur in the live restaurant environment are difficult to replicate inside the classroom. Examples of such situations include: greeting the customers, bringing them to their table, giving advice on the different menu options, and answering questions on the contents of the menu, such as the sourcing of the ingredients, and providing dietary and allergy information. The live restaurant environment also gives the students the opportunities to learn how to handle complaints from customers, something that is very difficult to recreate in a classroom.

Four participants said that one of the best things about having a restaurant practical environment was the opportunity it afforded them to show their students their own enthusiasm and in depth knowledge of the subject that they're covering. These participants stated their strong belief that when students see how passionate their lecturer is about a subject, it increases their own motivation to perform well within the class. The ability to show the students this passion at work up close, with real equipment and food, was cited as being very important in engaging students, as it brought the entire experience out from the textbook and into the real world.

Further to this, the author asked each participant to state one beneficial thing that they believe the current practical training classroom environment adds to their courses. The following is a selection of their responses:

- Participant B- “I place huge value on customer care. Gaining the confidence to interact with customers. It’s not the number of plates you can carry, it’s whether you can make the customer happy.”
- Participant E- “The live service, having customers, because it’s the real world experience in a live, controlled environment, the restaurant is great because everyone’s busy/engaged.”
- Participant F- “What works for me is showing the students the passion I have for restaurant service. Also, encouraging students when they complete things they might be nervous about attempting in front of the class, like flambé.”
- Participant G- “Standard operating procedures allows students to prepare for the class before the class, it also allows students who miss class to learn the procedures. It’s good to have standardised rules.”

4.2.12 Results Related to RQ12: Where is teaching and learning assessment going in the restaurant classroom for good future developments?

The general consensus from the interview process was that more and more emphasis is being put on the preparation of students for work in the industry. This is being achieved in a variety of ways, one of which is cross-modular integration. This involves having multiple modules working in the practical restaurant environment at the same time. The result of this process is that students get a broader overview of the hospitality industry, as it gives them the opportunity to see how the different sections of a hospitality team work together to provide a good customer service experience.

This shift in emphasis towards the requirements of the industry is coming about as a direct result of feedback received by the institutions from hotels involved on the student placement program. The feedback highlighted the need for students to have both stronger core skills, and better interpersonal skills when interacting with customers. Participant A stated that the best way to produce high quality graduates is to instil in them the belief that they are working towards a career in which they can progress and further develop themselves, as opposed to being just “fodder for the industry”.

The increased use of digital media in classes was highlighted as being a growth area in the field of hospitality education. The use of multiple cameras in the practical restaurant class allows both the lecturer and students to review everybody’s performance. One participant noted that this is especially useful when they have large classes. In such instances it is impossible for the lecturer to view each student’s performance in real time, however through the use of recording equipment the lecturer can review each student’s own individual performance and also the performance of the class as a cohesive group. Having the performances recorded on video also affords the lecturer the opportunity to give feedback to the students by playing back the recordings, showing them what they have done incorrectly and informing them of how they can improve their performance for the next time.

Participant C also highlighted the increased popularity of craft beers and artisan food products as being an area in which both students and lecturers will need to educate themselves in the future. This participant also recommended that every hospitality student spend one year being taught in a kitchen environment. This, the participant believes, would give the student a more thorough understanding of how the ingredients are sourced and prepared, which in turn would improve the student’s ability to answer questions and give dietary related advice to customers.

4.3 Document Analysis

Each institute provides the lecturer and the learners with a module descriptor. This assists lecturers in delivering new modules and is also useful when reviewing modules each term to see if any new changes are required. The intended use of the module descriptors is to allow heads of departments to manage curricula across the institutes and to provide a clear statement of the lecturers’ teaching schedule.

The module descriptors provided by the participants from the six institutes has been summarised in the following module descriptors chart:

Institution/ Participant	Module	Learning Outcomes	ECTs Credits	NFQ Level	Assessments	Assessment Mark %	Formative/ Summative	Hours: Theory/Practical
A	**XXXXXX**	6	5	6	Report & presentation/ In-class test/ Continuous-assessment	30/40/30	Both	T=___/P=___ Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 14/13 weeks
A	**XXXXXX**	8	5	8	Report/ Final exam	40/60	Both	T=___/P=___ Weekly = 2 hrs 24 hrs over 14/13 weeks
B	**XXXXXX**	6	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ Final exam	40/60	Both	T= 4 /P= 4 Weekly = 8 hrs 104 hrs over 13 weeks
B	**XXXXXX**	5	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ assignment **or** in-class test/ Final practical exam	20/40/40	Both	T= 3 /P= 4 Weekly = 7 hrs 91 hrs over 13 weeks
C + F	**XXXXXX**	4	5	6	Continuous-assessment	100	Both	T= _ /P= _ Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
C + F	**XXXXXX**	7	5	8	Continuous-assessment: Reflective journal-Assignment 3000 words/practical exam	100	Both	T= _ /P= _ Weekly = 5 hrs 60 hrs over 12 weeks
C + F	**XXXXXX**	5	5	-	Continuous-assessment/ Project/Case study/Reflective -Journal	100	Both	T= _ /P= _ Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 12 weeks
D	**XXXXXX**	6	5	6	Continuous-assessment: Practical in Restaurant & IN Culinary, In class-test (short Q)	35/35/30	Both	T= 2 /P= 6 Weekly = 8 hrs 96 hrs over 12 weeks

Institution/ Participant	Module	Learning Outcomes	ECTs Credits	NFQ Level	Assessments	Assessment Mark %	Formative/ Summative	Hours: Theory/Practical
D	XXXXXX	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment: Practical in Restaurant & IN Culinary, In class-test (short Q)	35/35/30	Both	T= 2 /P= 6 Weekly = 8 hrs 96 hrs over 12 weeks
E	XXXXXX	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment Practical exams	100	Both	T= /P= 4 Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 12 weeks
E	XXXXXX	5	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ Final exam	50/50	Both	T= 3 /P= 3 Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
E	XXXXXX	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment Practical	100	Both	T= 3 /P= 3 Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
G	XXXXXX		____	___	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	-------
G	XXXXXX		-------	------	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	-------
G	XXXXXX		-------	-------	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	------

A detailed module descriptor can provide learners with a clear view of a course's learning outcomes, credits, level, assessment methods and the percentage weights of its modules.

Some of the module descriptors detailed above have more detail than others. For example, while participant A provides a clear break down on the assessment mark for his learners, participants C, F and E only provide the total continuous assessment mark as a one hundred percent mark. Also of note is the fact that participants A, B, C, D, E and F all provide information on the amount of learning outcomes and credits of the module, while participant G does not provide this information. Every participant provided their assessment information for the module and from this, the author has identified that all restaurant lecturers strongly favour the use of continuous assessment practices.

The literature in chapter two and chapter five highlights the importance of linking the learning outcomes to correct assessment practices. Clear learning outcomes, in the form of statements of assessment criteria, allow learning to be individualised in a purposeful manner. Baume (2009) states the importance of lecturers ensuring alignment between assessment strategies, learning outcomes and teaching methodologies. In addition to this it is vitally important that lecturers regularly review and update their assessment regimes for modules. Maringe and Sing (2014) also stated that as a ‘rule of thumb’, there should be no more than four to five Learning Outcomes for a standard five credit module.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter, which presented the findings from the semi-structured interviews and the document analysis will be followed in the next chapter by an examination of how these findings align with the three research objectives laid out in chapter one. In order to consolidate the data received with the aims of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The results of the case studies presented in chapter four are discussed in this chapter and supported by references from relevant academic papers highlighted in chapter two, with a focus on addressing the three research objectives outlined in chapter one. These research objectives were as follows:

1. What is the approach to assessment practice in this discipline area for example (final assessment versus Continuous assessment, essay/written assignment, research report, book review, case-study, poster, portfolio/reports, written/oral/multiple choice questions exam, self-assessment/peer-assessment, group projects, presentation, practical's, approaches to feedback formative/summative) employed by lecturers?

2. Understanding the motivations of lecturers in relation to their decisions relating to assessment practices?

3. An examination of any changes in approaches to assessment practices and reasons why example (Changes in institutional practice, policy context, cuts in government funding)?

The following section utilises the research data gathered to provide an examination of the outcomes of each research objective in more detail.

5.2 Discussion of Results

The purpose of this research was to examine the assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service in Irish Higher Education and the implications for authentic assessment in teaching and learning. The early stages of the research the author examined the module descriptors that allowed him to design appropriate research questions. The following research questions provided the foundation for the research:

1. What is your approach to assessment?
2. Why do you take this approach?
3. How do you assess their knowledge?
4. How has your approach to assessment changed over the years?
5. What has motivated these changes?
6. How do you know that your assessment approach is effective?
7. Would you have a balance of low-stakes and high-stakes assessment practice?
8. What is your approach to feedback?
9. How could we improve our feedback?
10. How do you get your students to engage in class?
11. Is there something distinctive that works well in the restaurant practical environment?
12. Where is teaching and learning assessment going in the restaurant classroom for good future developments?

5.2.1 Objective 1: Approaches to Assessment Practice

Research into this objective was carried out through research questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10 and 11. These questions probed each participant on their individual approaches to assessment practices. The results of this questioning gave the author a very clear insight into the various approaches taken by the lecturers in the case studies. The document analysis process was instrumental in the creation of these questions because it gave the author a detailed breakdown of each participants' modules, including data on percentage weights, level, credits, learning outcomes and assessment methods. This data was required in order to create highly relevant questions for use in the semi-structured interview process.

All participants articulated their belief that continuous assessment practices are important as not only can they have a positive impact on the learning experience for the learners, they also better prepare the learners for entry into the workplace. The participants further expressed the view that continuous assessment lends itself well to authentic assessment. This accords with the academic literature Struyven *et al.* (2002) assert that learners value assessment activities which appear to have value beyond completing the activity. In addition to this, Torrance (1995) states that authentic assessment is viewed to be more practical, realistic and challenging.

The use of a variety of different assessment methods was reported by the participants. These included MCQs, class discussions, quizzes, projects, portfolio development, both practical and theoretical exams and continuous assessment. Participants stressed the usefulness of continuous assessment in better understanding what level their learners are at. This knowledge allows the lecturer to provide relevant feedback to the learner in a timely manner, ensuring that they have the best chance at fulfilling their potential in the module. It was stressed by several participants that it is important not to over-prescribe assessment, as this can overwhelm learners and result in them feeling disenfranchised with the course. This can result in them surface learning instead of partaking in deep learning, and can in some instances, lead to them dropping out of the course. Entwistle (1997) defined surface learning as an approach that learners take when their intention is to cope with the requirements of the task without real personal engagement or a deep understanding of the course material. It applies to the method of getting by with minimum effort with a focus on simply memorising material, the end goal of which is to pass the end of year exam.

This method is in keeping with Sadler (2009) who advocated that students should be involved in the assessment process to encourage them to think deeper and make their own judgements on assessment feedback. In essence this allows the learners to develop and maintain a high standard of learning from week to week, using the formative feedback as guidance.

5.2.2 Objective 2: Motivations for Assessment Practices

Questions 5 and 6 address the motivations for assessment practices. The overwhelming response from all participants to the questions regarding the motivation for their choices of assessment practices was that they were based on direct communication with the hospitality industry.

Participants reported being influenced by both positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback highlighted areas in which the learners were performing well after entering industry, while negative feedback helped to highlight areas in which learners were lacking skills necessary to complete their work to the standard required by the industry. Participants stated that this feedback equipped them with the knowledge necessary to adjust their teaching and assessment practices to maximise the skills level of each learner better preparing them for work in the real world. This is supported by the 2015 report by the EGFSN which suggests that in order to successfully develop the skills requirements of the hospitality sector into the future close collaboration between industry and education and training providers is essential.

5.2.3 Objective 3: Changes to Assessment Practices

Questions 4, 9 and 12 addressed changes to assessment practices. This research discovered two main changes in assessment practices across the participants. The first was a change regarding an increase in the value attributed to continuous assessment. This increased value was reflected by an increase in time allocated to continuous assessment activities on a semesterisation basis. This theme was supported by the findings from the second objective of the research, specifically the feedback received from industry strongly indicated a need for more practical classes with a particular emphasis on the importance of formative feedback between lecturer and learner in the development of these skills. A key facilitator of this formative feedback is the process of regular continuous assessment. This is further evidenced in the percentage value given by lecturers to continuous assessment activities when considering learners' end of year grades from the participants module descriptors and assessment strategies (see appendix F).

The second change that has taken place in the assessment practices of the participants is the use of technology in both assessing the learner and in providing valuable feedback to the learners. Also of note is the increased use of technology in the process of engaging learners with the course work. This is seen in the increase in the use by the participants of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) such as Blackboard, Whiteboard and YouTube based lectures/seminars. Several participants noted the usefulness of technology when providing feedback to learners.

The use of multimedia technology to assist in the delivery of classes was also raised by several participants. Participant C stated that video recordings of practical classes would assist in the reviewing of learners' performances, as class sizes were often too large to allow for proper invigilation of every learner's work. Participant G echoed this sentiment, and also noted how they performed a trial run of such a system using GoPro cameras, the results of which were found to be very useful in reviewing how the learners worked both as individuals and as a team when performing the practical aspect of the restaurant service module. It was noted however that such a camera set up would be very expensive to implement and as such may be an unrealistic goal for the immediate future considering budgetary constraints imposed by the current economic climate.

Several participants stated their belief that these budgetary constraints have been responsible for a shift away from practical based classes in favour of more academic theory classes in recent years. This was viewed as a negative shift, as participants D, E, F and G all stated their preference for an increase in practical module elements over an increase in academic work. Participant D stated the need for more practical classes that are focused on developing industry skills, as opposed to the textbook based classes. This participant stated that due to the heavy emphasis on academic work in the past, his students required "much more practical class time before going out into the industry".

Participant D further stated that it costs a lot more money to run a 2-4 hour practical class, as it does to run a theory class. The general consensus among participants was that the downturn in the global economy has affected the budgets available to conduct practical classes in a negative way. This is further evidenced in a (2016) funding strategy report by an expert group from the Department of Education and Skills which highlighted several issues regarding a decrease in the amount of money available, this report states “a deteriorating student-staff ratio, inadequate facilities and other pressures are having a severe impact, particularly on the ability to provide high-quality undergraduate programmes.” Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education (2016, p.19).

While many positives of increased technology use were stated by the participants, concerns were raised by some of the risk of replacing hands on practical classes with interactive, online exercises. This concern was due to the consensus that restaurant service is at its core an interpersonal activity. Because of this fact, the participants interviewed felt that their job is not only to teach learners practical skills such as food and beverage service, but also to teach them how to interact and engage with customers in a friendly manner. To quote participant B “It’s not the number of plates you can carry, it’s whether you can make the customer happy”.

5.3 Conclusions

This chapter discussed the results presented from the analysis of data in chapter four, identifying areas where the research is consistent with the literature and areas of assessment in restaurant practices. It examined the importance of applying authentic assessment practices in the teaching and learning of restaurant service modules.

In discussing the results gathered from both the semi-structured interview and the document analysis, the author paid close attention to the three core objectives defined in chapter one. This was done to ensure that the analysis didn’t stray from the purpose of the research undertaken.

The first objective concerned the participants’ approaches to assessment practices. The second concerned the motivating factors driving these approaches, while the third discussed both past and possible future changes in approaches to authentic assessment practices.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to consolidate the aim and objectives, defined before the undertaking of this research, with the data gathered. Supporting literature is also employed to bolster the strength and validity of the findings.

6.2 Aim & Objectives

The aim of this research is to provide an analysis of authentic assessment practices in the area of restaurant service education. The research highlighted the importance of authentic assessment practices in assessing learners. The strength of this research is due in large part to the inclusion of data from fellow lecturers and heads of departments. The ability to draw on their experience has provided great insight, not only into assessment methods, but also into how assessment methods have evolved over decades. These professionals are best placed to predict how these methods evolved.

The objectives laid out in conducting this research were three-fold. The first objective was an analysis of the approach to assessment practices employed by the participants of the study. The second objective was an examination into the motivations behind the decisions by each participant when selecting the type of assessment method to use. Finally the third objective was the conducting of a detailed examination of any changes in approaches to assessment practices and reasons for these changes.

This research applied a qualitative approach when considering how to formulate the research objectives for two reasons. The first reason was that due to the relatively small sample size of participants it was felt that semi-structured interviews would provide more in depth data than other methods. As Alvarez and Urla (2002) state, this method provides more useful results when the sample size is relatively small as it allows for thematic analysis of the qualitative data received. The second reason for using a qualitative approach was the fact that it allows for a degree of flexibility in the research. This was important during the semi-structured interview process, as often the author would have several follow up questions which were based on the participants' responses to the twelve original core questions. As Denscombe (2010) states, "the success of qualitative research, indeed, can often depend on its ability to react to developing circumstances. Qualitative research designs, as a result, tend to have a built-in flexibility that allows them to be responsive to emerging circumstances" (Denscombe, 2010, p.109).

This choice in approach results in the findings being based on more detailed and accurate data, as the author was able to drill down into the participants' responses in order to get a more complete picture of each participants' assessment practices.

6.3 Analysis of Questions

The twelve questions constructed for use in the semi-structured interviews were developed by analysing the module descriptors received from each participant in the early stages of the research. These questions were designed with the aim of addressing each of the three research objectives.

Questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10 and 11 examined the participants' varying approaches to assessment practices. Questions 5 and 6 queried the motivating factors that drove these approaches. While questions 4, 9 and 12 explored past, present and possible future changes in approaches to authentic assessment practices.

6.4 Research Limitations

Throughout the course of this dissertation, the author has become aware of some limitations inherent in conducting research of this scope in such a relatively short timescale. He hopes to address these limitations in future research. For example, the author would have preferred to use a larger sample size of hospitality based lecturers to draw data from. However, as it was necessary to work around both his own and each participants' work schedules in order to conduct interviews, this was not feasible. In addition to this, the author feels that an extra dimension would have been added to this study had learners' perspectives been included in this research. This could have been achieved through the use of focus group discussions.

6.5 Conclusions

This research uncovered eight key findings relating to current assessment practices in the discipline of restaurant service education. These findings are detailed below.

- There was a broad range of assessment practices employed within restaurant service education. These included continuous assessments, final exam, in class tests, portfolios, reflective diaries, self-assessment, peer-assessment, quizzes, multiple-choice questions (MCQ), group projects, oral presentations, written exams, live practical and online-assessment.
- This research found strong evidence and support for the use of continuous assessment practices in restaurant education. It was the most popular method of assessment employed by the participants who took part in this study.
- This research found strong support for the use of formative feedback. However, all participants stated their belief that semesterisation has resulted in fewer opportunities to conduct formative feedback sessions due to time constraints.
- Formative feedback is the preferred method of feedback among hospitality educators. Further to this, the research suggests that curricula should ideally be designed with a view of maximizing the amount of formative feedback learners can receive on their work.
- There is a general consensus among hospitality educators that while the introduction of new technologies, such as video recordings of practical classes, would be beneficial, such a thing would probably not be feasible at the current time due to a shortage of funding. Participants cited governmental budgetary constraints over recent years as being a major factor in limiting what they can do in practical classes as these classes are usually more expensive to conduct than theoretical classes.
- There is a strong belief among hospitality educators that their role is not only to educate, but also to prepare learners for a life in the industry.
- The data gathered supports the policy arguments put forward by bodies, such as the EGFSN, who argue that there needs to be a strong link between industry and HE.
- The research also suggests that lecturers need to be mindful of the dangers of over-assessment, as it could lead to passive learning, low attendance and low student retention rates.

The conducting of this research has resulted in the formulation of several recommendations on how assessment could be improved upon in the future.

6.6 Recommendations

Little research has been conducted to date into the teaching methods and activities used by hospitality and tourism educators in the practical skills based training classroom environment.

This research identified additional gaps in the existing academic literature and identified the need for further research in this area. In particular, the need to examine other forms of assessment practices which lecturers could use in the future to help learners achieve their learning outcomes and to better prepare them for the industry was identified. The author has already highlighted his interest in the examination of assessment practices in the restaurant context. He plans to reflect on his own teaching practices now and into the future. This will be achieved by closely assessing his module learning outcomes and making sure that they align with the correct assessment practices and teaching methods.

This research will be of interest to educators in the discipline area of hospitality. It will also be of interest to educators from other disciplines who conduct assessments in their own fields. It is also submitted at the research has identified risks for policy makers and managers. In particular the challenge of meeting industry demands in a constrained budgetary environment. It is hoped this research will help inform and shape debate among these policy makers and managers.

On a personal level, the author has learned much and has had the opportunity to reflect on his own professional practice. The data has allowed him to identify the following actions which he will undertake in the future:

- Investigate additional classroom assessment techniques and choose a suitable technique to assess the learning outcomes.

- Implement new appropriate classroom assessment techniques to examine what the learners are learning and how they are learning.
- Encourage more peer-assessment and self-assessment in the training classroom.
- Use effective questioning in his future teaching practice as the learners take part in the assessment activities. This will also encourage active learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

An examination of the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education in Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland.

Semi- structured interview process will take 20-30 minutes.

Questions/thematic areas:

Personal Information

- Gender
- Role in organisation lecture/assistant lecture
- Permanent/temporary
- Length of time in organisation
- Highest qualification

Assessment

1. What is your approach to assessment?
2. Why do you take this approach?
3. How do you assess their knowledge?
4. How has your approach to assessment changed over the years?
5. What has motivated these changes?
6. How do you know that your assessment approach is effective?
7. Would you have a balance of low-stakes and high-stakes assessment practice?
8. What is your approach to feedback?
9. How could we improve our feedback?
10. How do you get your students to engage in class?
11. Is there something distinctive that works well in the restaurant practical environment?
12. Where is teaching and learning assessment going in the restaurant classroom for good future developments?

(N.B) **Assessment practices**: portfolios, reflective-diary, self-assessment, peer-assessment, quiz/multiple- choice questions (MCQ), group project, oral presentation/quiz, written exam, live practical, filming of practical classes as part of peer review, online-assessment, continuous assessment (CA).

Appendix B

Transcribed Interview with Participant B

Researcher: You’re very welcome, thank you for accommodating me today on the 20th of June, 2016. Today, as you know is a semi-structured interview. I have a few brief questions I would like to ask you in relation to restaurant assessment practice.

What is your approach to assessment when you're in a restaurant practical environment, or even in the restaurant theory classes also?

Participant B: Ultimately the learners must walk out of here with specific skills and knowledge. And that they can evidence this in the workplace. So my assessment is very much geared, any time I assess student, it's very much geared at reinforcing what they've covered in theory. To evidence that they can achieve it in practice. And that they know why they're doing it, how they do it, how they approach it, it's quite structured. In terms of assessment I use both formative and summative assessment techniques. The learners throughout a semester or previously throughout the year long semester need to receive feedback at various times to see where they’re growing in, how they can improve, and ultimately they should be tested. So a final practical should be encouraged, because I think there should be some sort of a capstone, or culmination towards the end in display of analytic practical experience.

Researcher: Why do you take this approach in assessment?

Participant B: Ultimately our job is to get people ready for work.

Researcher: Get ready for industry?

Participant B: That is our job, and that the reputation of the school of tourism for any graduate that comes out is of a good quality so that we constantly are reinforcing our strong relationship with our industry peers. I want people to recognise the school of tourism. Whilst it may be that every learner isn't going to be strong, there will always be variances in the quality of the output, but that every learner has a minimum standard when industry undertakes a placement or employs somebody from **XXXXXXXXXXXX**.

Researcher: How do you assess their knowledge?

Participant B: Two ways, we use, during the practical sessions we would have covered the theory beforehand and during the practical we would go through quick questions: Why are we doing it? How are we doing it? What do we need to have prepared beforehand? How do we know if we did it right? And it's that sort of quick questions, nothing formal, just on point. Then at various points I think it's very good to have class tests and possibly part of a final exam as well. For example for wine knowledge, we have a theory session and then we have a class test as well. The learners are given a series of short answer, multiple-choice options and it's at the, semester three, and it is to inform us of their fundamental wine knowledge, grape varieties, where different appellations are located, nationalities, and impact on the production, sparkling wines and still wines. So it's just short class tests. And again there's written evidence then that if I give a grade that an external is there to, they can see why I gave a certain learner.

Researcher: So it might be like an example of multiple choice questions, so they get immediate feedback to where they're going?

Participant B: Precisely, and short answers as well.

Researcher: How has your approach to assessment changed over the years?

Participant B: I think the arrival of semesterisation condensed our assessment opportunities. We have to be very careful of over-assessing and putting too much pressure on them throughout the semester. And it's a very fine balance. Previously the emphasis during the yearlong semester, or the yearlong program, there was ongoing assessment throughout and at least two times during the year we would sit down and have formative feedback. Post-semesterisation we now have summative, we have more summative points of assessment. I'm not necessarily convinced that’s better, I think in some ways the yearlong practical assessment was good. We're taking in kids at 18 and 19, often they've never actually had restaurant experience before they've come into college. So we have to take them through physical skill development, we also have psychological skill development as well, it's hard to do in thirteen weeks.

Researcher: Fantastic, Thank you. What has motivated these changes in your practice?

Participant B: These have been institutional changes. We've had no say in it. There are pros and cons to semesterisation. For the theoretical classes I think semesterisation has been very good but I'm not convinced that, we are asked to pigeon hole practical elements that should be taken in an analytic and in the round whilst we're often asked to identify and train specific skills, we often don't get an opportunity to, industry will expect them to be able to operate in the round, but we will only assess them at individual at very minute a level. There are pros and cons.

Researcher: How do you know that your assessment approach is effective?

Participant B: You constantly have to work with the group. And you have basic criteria you have to meet in terms of the module. Make sure that your external can see, and justify why you have given grades. And then you try to adopt your assessment with the group. You can't turn around for example and say "every year on week 12 we do a certain activity". Your group mightn't be ready at week 12, particular individuals mightn't be ready at week 12. You must show a degree of flexibility.

Researcher: Tailor the classes to groups?

Participant B: To a certain extent, the standard must be maintained, but that's not to say that we should be overly prescriptive as to when, or the exact structure.

Researcher: So sometimes occasionally the weekly plan might be adjusted in order to suit the level, the standard that the group has progressed to.

Participant B: Precisely, you might have a particularly weak group, and if you're doing for example, a class test on wine, you may not have got through as much, depending on the group that you have, they may not be academically minded, so you may just have to be mindful of the amount of information you give them. So their assessment maybe will be a little bit softer one year from another group who may be a bit more motivated, higher achievers et-cetera. And it's not that there's a dramatic difference, there could be subtle differences.

Researcher: Would you have a balance of low stakes and high stakes assessment?

Participant B: Yes because the learners cannot be given high stakes all the time. And I think that a low stake assessment practice encourages attendance, it encourages class participation, and it informs students of how their doing at particular junctions. But equally I would be supportive of a high stake, of at least one element being high stake, because it's very important to put the learners under pressure at the end of the semester, to let them shine, give them an opportunity to egg each other on and encourage each other. So I think there has to be an appropriate balance. We currently have 40% for the final practical assessment, and I think that is a perfectly apt percentage point to be at. The other 60% is made up of class tests and cumulative practical assessment criteria. I think that's a good balance.

Researcher: Excellent, fantastic. Thank you. You've answered the majority of this question now: What is your approach to feedback?

Participant B: I think the learner needs to be given feedback at appropriate junctions, at least once, if not twice for both the practical and the theoretical elements. They need to have an idea of how they're doing, and as human beings if we aren't doing as well as we thought, I think it's healthy to give encouragement, and equally if we are doing well we should be complimented for it too. So I see it as an opportunity for a compliment sandwich, and as human beings we need to know where we're standing.

Researcher: In relation to feedback when you're in the practical element of it, would you look to give feedback individually to a student, or in a group?

Participant B: It depends, I think for the first few weeks, I think it's very healthy to conduct a post-service debriefing, and ask what could we have done better? Where were the bottlenecks? What will we have to make sure we address this time next week, or whenever the next live service is up? And rather than identify individual pros and cons, we look at things in the whole. After maybe about four live services for each module, when you're developing skills we would then turn a little more individualistic, and turn around and identify the pros and cons. If I do go individualistic, I talk to people individually, if I go analytic, I talk to the group.

Researcher: It also helps to engage the students, to get them more active, engage them in feedback as a group?

Participant B: Yes, I think that in the first few weeks, if we make it non-personal, and as a group, there's a degree of peer assessment going on too. So if somebody had been nominated to complete a certain task in terms of mise-en-place but there was a delay in service because that task hadn't been completed to a sufficient level, then the group rather than criticising the individual would turn around and say we need to be tighter on that element of mise-en-place. And that peer assessment develops a notion of teamwork. Because when they go into industry they're going to be assessed individually in their individual output and also in their contribution to the team.

Researcher: How could we improve our feedback in our practical classes?

Participant B: I think again it goes back to how prescribed it is. If we have an overly prescribed method, then we are not allowing for the fact that each individual is different, each class group is different, they maybe come from a different discipline, so for example the chefs may not place great importance on restaurant operations because they see it as plate carrying, but we actually have to communicate to them that this is terribly important. So I think we have to tailor our assessment with the individuals, we should never allow our modules to become overly prescriptive in terms of feedback.

Researcher: Perfect thank you. How do you get your students to engage in class?

Participant B: It depends again on the group. I don't consider it a break, but I take a break at different times, and we stop and we say why are we doing this, how are we doing this, what needs to be in place. And we have conversations at times. And I think a learner will go through a degree of an assimilation of knowledge when they have these small little stops and they're asked why they are doing it, where are they doing it. Learners always need to see where each task fits in to the bigger picture. So I try to get them to engage by having these short conversations.

Researcher: Do you think there is something distinctive that works well in the restaurant practical environment?

Participant B: I personally place huge value on customer care. Because when they go into industry, if they can't look their customer in the eye, if they can't engage with them, if they don't know how to smile, it's very difficult, so I try to develop the person. The actual skills, whether or not they're carrying a plate in the right way, whether or not they can carry a tray with wine glasses et-cetera, we can develop and they will learn those skills over a period of time. But having the confidence with at 18, 19 some students don't have, the confidence to look a customer in the eye, to engage with them, to be able to explain what a menu item is, that's the bit that I think we have to place a great emphasis on, that’s the distinctive element of good restaurant service. It's not the number of plates you can carry, it's whether or not you can make the customer feel happy.

Researcher: Where is teaching and learning assessment going in the restaurant classroom for good future development?

Participant B: Again I go back to the importance of personal communication, being able to interact with the customer. We often place great emphasis on practical skills that I question are often used in industry. And I'm not dismissing, and I think that we should keep certain skills, for example, flambé work, gueridon service et-cetera, I think that we should definitely keep that alive. But the vast majority of our graduates will never use those skills. But they will always have to look somebody in the eye, they will always have to engage and greet and seat. So I think we have to remember to score appropriately those interpersonal communication skills.

Researcher: Excellent, thank you very much for your time. I’ll now stop the interview. Have you any questions for me?

Participant B: Nope, that’s perfect. Thank you.

Appendix C

Participant Information Sheet

Title: An examination of the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education in Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland.

Researcher: Patrick Brennan, patrick.brennan@lyit.ie

Supervisor: Dr Lynn Ramsey lynn.ramsey@lyit.ie

Introduction

This research examines the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education in the Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland. The primary focus of the research will be on lecturers in the field of restaurant service education and how they assess their students.

What's involved?

The research design and methodology used in this research is exploratory, in-depth and qualitative in nature. The research will take the form of a multiple case research and focuses on lecturers from the discipline of restaurant service in the Institutes of Technology in Ireland and Universities, on the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service.

Participants will be invited to submit their module descriptors and their assessment strategies before taking part in a thirty minute semi-structured interview. The interviews will take place at an agreed location, time and date or a skype interview will be arranged. The interview will by recorded, transcribed and anonymised.

What does this research hope to achieve?

There is very limited research conducted on the assessment practices (or indeed of the teaching methods) of lecturers in the area of restaurant service in IOTs or Universities in Ireland.

It is envisaged that the project data will inform and generate new insights in the area of assessment practices which will benefit those charged with making assessment an integrated and coherent activity, with learners as the ultimate beneficiaries in third level higher education institutions.

The findings will contribute to national skills policy and practice on teaching and learning.

The research will provide the opportunity to make recommendations which will improve assessment practices. It will also suggest opportunities for future research.

The outcomes of the research will be particularly important to the Institute of Technology Sector and Universities where there are hospitality food & beverage operations modules.

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: An examination of the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education in Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland.

Researcher: Patrick Brennan, patrick.brennan@lyit.ie

This research examines the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education in the Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland. The primary focus of the research will be on lecturers in the field of restaurant service education and how they assess their students.

Declaration:

I -- (participant's name), acknowledge that:

- I have been informed about the research and have had an opportunity to ask questions
- I consent to partake in this research
- My participation is voluntary
- I understand I can withdraw from this research at any time by e-mailing either researcher
- I consent to the publication of the data and results from this research

Participant's signature

Appendix D

Good evening all,

I'm currently examining the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service education in the Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland.

The primary focus of the research will be on lecturers in the field of restaurant service education and how they assess their students. I would be very grateful if you could provide me with your **restaurant module descriptors and assessment strategies** to support me in my research in the first phase please. The first phase of the research will be an analysis of the module descriptors and the assessment strategies, followed by a semi-structured interview in the next few months. I aim to extract information from the module descriptors and the assessment strategies. This will help me in conducting a beneficial interview process in the second phase of the research that I hope you will take part in.

All my research participants will be left anonymous in the findings and conclusion of the research.

I really look forward to your reply and support.

Kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix E

Schedule

The time frame for the research will be conducted from June 2015 to August 2016 as follows:

1. Preliminary research will take place from June 2015 – November 2015

(a) Individual discussions with industry friends and work colleagues
(b) Conduct exploratory investigation at LYIT between June and November 2015. The researcher will then investigate the other hospitality education and training Institutes in Ireland from December 2015 to June 2016, once the ethic department in LYIT has approved the request to complete the research.

(c) Preliminary literature review and research methodology
(d) Identification of possible research questions and objectives

2. Submission of research proposal December 2015.

(a) The Initial proposal reviewed (x2), presented via power point on the 5/12/15.

(b) Edit research proposal after receiving the constructive feedback from the panel and resubmission through Blackboard on 18/12/2015.

3. Preparation and piloting of research instruments January 2015

(a) Survey questionnaire to answer research question
(b) Small pilot research to check suitability of questionnaire

4. Ethical approval for research from LYIT January 2015?

5. Ongoing intensive literature review January 2015 – August 2015

6. Data collection March/April 2016

7. Analysis of data April/May2016

8. Submission of draft dissertation for feedback May 2016

9. Final submission August 2016

Appendix F

Module Descriptors

Institution/ Participant	Module	Learning Outcomes	ECTs Credits	NFQ Level	Assessments	Assessment Mark %	Formative/ Summative	Hours: Theory/Practical
A	**XXXXXX**	6	5	6	Report & presentation/ In-class test/ Continuous-assessment	30/40/30	Both	T=___/P=___ Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 14/13 weeks
A	**XXXXXX**	8	5	8	Report/ Final exam	40/60	Both	T=___/P=___ Weekly = 2 hrs 24 hrs over 14/13 weeks
B	**XXXXXX**	6	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ Final exam	40/60	Both	T= 4 /P= 4 Weekly = 8 hrs 104 hrs over 13 weeks
B	**XXXXXX**	5	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ assignment **or** in-class test/ Final practical exam	20/40/40	Both	T= 3 /P= 4 Weekly = 7 hrs 91 hrs over 13 weeks
C + F	**XXXXXX**	4	5	6	Continuous-assessment	100	Both	T= _ /P= _ Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
C + F	**XXXXXX**	7	5	8	Continuous-assessment: Reflective journal- Assignment 3000 words/practical exam	100	Both	T= _ /P= _ Weekly = 5 hrs 60 hrs over 12 weeks
C + F	**XXXXXX**	5	5	-	Continuous-assessment/ Project/Case study/Reflective -Journal	100	Both	T= _ /P= _ Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 12 weeks
D	**XXXXXX**	6	5	6	Continuous-assessment: Practical in Restaurant & IN Culinary, In class-test (short Q)	35/35/30	Both	T= 2 /P= 6 Weekly = 8 hrs 96 hrs over 12 weeks

Institution/ Participant	Module	Learning Outcomes	ECTs Credits	NFQ Level	Assessments	Assessment Mark %	Formative/ Summative	Hours: Theory/Practical
D	**XXXXXX**	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment: Practical in Restaurant & IN Culinary, In class-test (short Q)	35/35/30	Both	T= 2 /P= 6 Weekly = 8 hrs 96 hrs over 12 weeks
E	**XXXXXX**	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment Practical exams	100	Both	T= /P= 4 Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 12 weeks
E	**XXXXXX**	5	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ Final exam	50/50	Both	T= 3 /P= 3 Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
E	**XXXXXX**	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment Practical	100	Both	T= 3 /P= 3 Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
G	**XXXXXX**		____	___	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	-------
G	**XXXXXX**		-------	------	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	-------
G	**XXXXXX**		-------	-------	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	------

Appendix G

Types of Learning: Learning outcomes	What is required from students?	Examples of Assessment
Thinking critically and making judgments	Development of arguments, reflection, judgment, evaluation	**Essay/Written assignment** **Research report** **Book review**
Solving problems/developing plans	Identify problems, define problems, analyse data, review, design experiments, plan, apply information	**Problem scenario** **Group Work** **Work-based problem** **Analyse a case** **Conference paper (or notes for a conference paper plus annotated bibliography)**
Performing procedures and demonstrating techniques	Take readings, use equipment, follow laboratory procedures, follow protocols, carry out instructions	**Demonstration** **Role Play Practical continuous assessment** **Make a video (write script and produce/make)** **Produce a poster** **Lab report**
Demonstrating knowledge and understanding (can be assessed in conjunction with the above types of learning)	Recall, describe, report, identify, recognise, recount, relate, etc.	**Written examination** **Oral examination** **MCQs** **Essays/Written assignments** **Reports**
Managing/developing yourself	Work co-operatively and, independently, be self-directed, manage time, manage tasks	**Learning journal** **Portfolio/Reflective log-book** **Learning Contracts** **Self-evaluation** **Group projects** **Peer assessment**
Designing, creating, performing	Design, create, perform, produce, etc.	**Design project** **Portfolio/Reflective log-book** **Presentation** **Performance**
Assessing and managing information	Information search and retrieval, investigate, interpreted, review information	**Annotated bibliographies** **Use of bibliographic software** **Library research assignment**
Communicating	Written, oral, visual and technical skills	**Discussions /Debates/Role plays** **Oral presentation**