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Thesis

Taught Postgraduate Education in Tourism and Hospitality in an Irish Institute of Technology: Student, Graduate, Educator and Employer Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This thesis was guided by the research question 'what is the perceived value of a taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality and tourism?' The topic was justified, given the dearth of previous research in this area, and the researcher's positionality as an educator on two taught MSc programmes, in the field of tourism and hospitality, in an institute of technology in the Republic of Ireland.

In order to address this question, various stakeholder voices, comprising 15 current students on the two MSc programmes, 122 graduates, 11 educators and 2 employers were included in the primary research. This thesis included a review of secondary literature on education in the field of tourism and hospitality, an investigation into why graduates completed a taught MSc programme, and an assessment of their experiences during their programme of study and subsequent to graduation. The views and experiences of educators on the MSc programmes were explored, as were those of employers.

A pragmatist theoretical lens and mixed research methods were employed to fulfil the objectives. Generally, student and graduate satisfaction with the programmes was high, though aspects of module delivery attracted suggestions for improvement. Graduates questioned the value attributed to formal education compared to industry experience. However, educators believed that whilst the MSc contributed to the overall professionalism of the tourism and hospitality industries, academic / industry dialogue was limited. Employers were positive about the role of formal education yet, also, emphasised the importance of attitude and interpersonal skills in the people centred industry that is tourism and hospitality. Educators, students and industry can benefit from the findings of this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6: EDUCATOR, GRADUATE & EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS   132

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION 175

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS 196

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The chapter commences by outlining the research question and objectives for this work. The chapter then sets the scene in respect of tourism and hospitality worldwide and in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). A current rationale for this research is introduced and expanded further in the contextual literature review and further in the methodology chapter. A chapter summary is also contained in this introduction to the thesis. The first area described is the research question and the objectives for this research.

Research Question and Objectives

The literature review, research methodology, research methods and data collection were guided by the following research question:

'What is the perceived value of a taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality and tourism?'

In the context of this question, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate the views of key stakeholders with regard to the experience, value and outcomes of a taught postgraduate qualification in the field of tourism and hospitality. These key stakeholders include students of two MSc programmes in an Institute of Technology in the Republic of Ireland, graduates of the aforementioned MSc programmes, educators who teach on the two MSc programmes, and employers in the Irish tourism and hospitality industry.

The research objectives proposed for this thesis are as follows:
- Review secondary research in the area of taught postgraduate qualifications, scope the context of the tourism and hospitality industry and examine literature on the value of higher education in the field of tourism and hospitality.
- Conduct exploratory research with current students to explore their experiences of MSc study.
- Investigate why graduates chose to complete a taught MSc Tourism or MSc Hospitality Management programme.
- Assess the graduate experience of a taught MSc Tourism or MSc Hospitality Management programme.
- Assess the graduate experience in the world of work after obtaining this credential.

- Explore the views of educators with regard to the teaching experience on the MSc Tourism and / or Hospitality Management.
- Examine educator views on the value of a taught postgraduate qualification in the tourism and hospitality industry.
- Examine employer views on the value of a taught postgraduate qualification in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Having identified the research focus of this thesis, the next section will provide a justification for conducting this piece of research.

Rationale for this Research

Over the past 60 years, the tourism sector, of which hospitality is a key part, has been one of the fastest growing and largest sectors, globally. According to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO 2012b) (www.unwto.org), tourism is a sector that is responsible for one in every 12 jobs and 30 per cent of the world's services exports. In 2011, international tourism increased by 4.6% to 982 million international tourist arrivals. In addition to this, international tourism receipts were up 3.8 per cent, adding US\$ one trillion to the world economy. In 2012, one billion tourists travelled worldwide (UNWTO 2012b). In total, 298 million international tourists travelled worldwide in the period January to April 2013, an increase of 12 million on the same time period last year (UNWTO 2013).

In the context of the Republic of Ireland, the hospitality and tourism industry is seen to be a key contributor to the economic recovery of the country in the current challenging financial times (Tourism Renewal Group 2009). It is acknowledged that tourism not only contributes to the economic well-being of the Republic of Ireland but, also, to the social and cultural development of the country. The industry has, similar to other industries, felt the negative impact of the global economic downturn and this has been reflected in visitor numbers and revenue losses (Fáilte Ireland 2012b; BDO 2011; ITIC 2011). 'Zombie hotels' and 'ghost golf courses' have become commonly used terms that depict the level of decline suffered by the industry (Bacon 2009; Hourihane 2010; Reddan 2011). The tourism and hospitality industry, once forgotten from a government and policy perspective, is now an acknowledged part of the backbone of Irish economic recovery. As indicated by the then Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar (2011):

> Tourism makes a vital contribution to employment, economic activity and exports. It brings revenues into every part of the country and provides job opportunities for people across a range of skill levels. Furthermore, tourism can play a vital role in shaping the international perception of Ireland... That is why the Government has placed such importance on tourism as a vehicle for Irish economic recovery both within the Programme for Government and the recent Jobs Initiative.

In the context of this national emphasis on tourism, it is timely to examine one aspect of the educational provision in this sector, which is the taught master's provision. It must also be acknowledged that, while tourism is a labour intensive industry that provides a vast number of employment opportunities and a contributor to economies worldwide, employment in the services industry, such as in tourism and hospitality, has been typified as low skill by both academic research and the media (Baum 2008a). This questions the relevance and acceptance of formal qualifications in this sector in general. This debate with regard to the value of formal education and / or experience has been widely discussed by tourism and hospitality researchers and this will be examined in detail in Chapter 2.

After extensive review of the literature, it is evident that there is a paucity of literature, in Ireland and elsewhere, on taught master's programmes in the field of tourism and hospitality and about the academic or professional destination of hospitality or tourism graduates subsequent to their graduation from a master's programme. This research will contribute to the future development of the two MSc programmes under investigation and inform students, graduates, educators and industry of the career outcomes and value of an MSc credential.

A further rationale for this research is based on the researcher's positionality; she has taught and supervised taught master's students in an Institute of Technology for more than ten years. Specifically, the researcher has delivered human resource management modules at both undergraduate and postgraduate level and, on that basis, is familiar with the challenges faced by the tourism and hospitality industry from a people management perspective. This industry image further fuelled the researcher's interest in the topic, and increased her curiosity to explore what attracted students to pursue a specialist postgraduate qualification linked to an industry that has a less than exemplary approach to the management of people. Rather than rely on anecdotal evidence from peer colleagues and industry, educator and employer voices were formally included in this research to achieve as holistic a view of the topic as possible.

Having identified a rationale for the relevance, and timeliness of the research, the next section outlines how this study is situated in the wider discourse of master's level provision.

Context for this Research

This thesis is set within the backdrop of massification in access to and diversity of participation in higher education and, in particular, increased provision of taught master's programmes (OECD 2013; Knight 1997; Sursock and Smidt 2010).

While this research examines education in tourism and hospitality, and specifically investigates two MSc programmes in the field of tourism and hospitality, the broader context of general education discourse, trends and debates, including the 'Bologna architecture' (OECD 2009, p.213) is acknowledged. The two postgraduate degrees under review are part of the 'graduate cycle' or 'second cycle' (OECD 2009, p.210), and are positioned within the structure of a national qualifications framework at level 9 in the Republic of Ireland. The Bologna process framework identifies three types of master's, and the one of relevance to this study is the 'taught master courses with a strong professional development application, available in full-time, part-time, distance and mixed modes' (Davies 2009, p.12). General categorisations of deepening versus conversion taught master's (Knight 1997) and consecutive / continuation and professional master's (Davies 2009) are also of relevance to this study and are expanded on in Chapter 2.

Furthermore, the 'Bologna tool-kit' (OECD 2009, p.210) components of competence-based learning, life-long learning, employer involvement in master's course design and the concept of employability are other general themes that are utilised to explore this specific area of postgraduate study in tourism and hospitality.

This research is also situated within the broader context of the concept of 'academic drift' or 'academisation' (Harwood 2010, p.413), given the origins of tourism and hospitality as vocationally focussed areas of study (Brotherton and Wood 2008). It should also be acknowledged that this field of study echoes the trends and challenges encountered in other traditionally vocational domains, for example, nursing education. Indeed, the academic versus vocational debate in nursing education in general and, in particular, in respect of the content and outcomes of taught master's programmes, especially the difference of opinion between clinicians and academics (Drennan and Hyde 2009) reflects related disparities highlighted between employers and educators in

the field of tourism and hospitality (Barron 2008; Barrow and Johan 2008). This issue also relates to the liberal versus vocational education debate further discussed in Chapter 2 (Mandelbaum 1980; Airey and Tribe 2000).

Having identified some of the generic discourse that has influenced and informed this study, the next section provides an overview of the chapters contained in this thesis.

Chapter Outlines

The literature review is comprised of two chapters (Chapters 2 and 3).

Chapter 2 outlines the contextual literature that defines the terms tourism and hospitality and sets the scene in respect of the tourism and hospitality industry, and the education provision in this field. There is an apparent dearth of secondary literature on the issue of taught postgraduate qualifications in this field and, therefore, literature on postgraduate qualifications in general is included in this chapter.

Chapter 3 is the second literature review chapter and this provides a conceptual framework for the earlier contextual literature chapter. This chapter draws on education literature and explores the issues of professionalism, competence and tacit knowledge.

The research methodology and methods are discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter sets out the purpose, objectives and context of the research. The research process is outlined, the three research phases and mixed methods justified and described. The validity of the research and ethical considerations are also considered in this chapter.

Chapter 5 presents the findings from phases one and two of the research. Firstly, the data from the fifteen exploratory interviews, conducted with students from the MSc cohorts in the academic year 2007/2008, is presented. Next, the chapter outlines the quantitative data gleaned from a postal questionnaire completed by one hundred and twenty-two graduates of the two MSc programmes.

Chapter 6 delineates the findings from phase three of the research. The qualitative data from eleven educator interviews, ten graduate interviews and two employer interviews is thematically reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter 7 compares and contrasts the three phases of the primary data, and analyses these findings in relation to the earlier contextual and conceptual literature review chapters.

Chapter 8 presents some overall conclusions in respect of the research question and objectives established at the outset of this study. The contribution of this study to the body of knowledge in tourism and hospitality research is explored, and the limitations of the research are acknowledged. This final chapter also proposes some recommendations for further research.

Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter sets the scene for the secondary and primary research that follows. The research question and objectives were identified, and a justification for the research provided. A brief introduction to each of the eight chapters in this thesis was also presented. The next chapter, Chapter 2, describes the contextual literature relevant for this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the secondary research pertaining to the tourism and hospitality industry, tourism and hospitality education, postgraduate education in general and the on-going value of postgraduate qualifications in the context of career development and employability. The chapter examines policy documents, reports and journal articles on this issue in general and, where possible, material specifically pertaining to the hospitality and tourism industry. The review of literature highlighted a dearth of previous research material, worldwide, relating to postgraduate provision in this area. This also adds to the rationale for the completion of this research, in order to bridge this gap in the Irish tourism and hospitality education literature.

It is evident that one writer in particular, Tom Baum from the University of Strathclyde, has written extensively on human resource management and education from a tourism and hospitality perspective. Similarly, David Airey, John Tribe and Conrad Lashley are key contributors to the tourism and hospitality education debate. Much of the literature contained in this chapter is from the past fifteen years and is indicative of the newness of the field and, similarly, the relatively recent investigation of tourism and hospitality education.

Much of the previous research uses the terms 'tourism' and 'hospitality' interchangeably or employs both terms, even if just one appears in the article's title. In that sense, this literature review draws on material that examines both industries. Airey and Tribe (2000, p.278) in a review of hospitality, describe tourism as a 'related area' that is viewed as 'less narrowly vocational' than hospitality. Keiser (1998, p.115) suggests that the words, hospitality and tourism are used in conversation and literature 'broadly, loosely, interchangeably and erroneously'. According to Hemmington (2007, p.1):

> failure to define or understand hospitality as a commercial phenomenon has created a fragmented academic environment and a schizophrenia in the industry that has the potential to limit its development as a global industry.

The terms tourism and hospitality will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter.

This literature review attempts to draw on as broad a base of literature as possible by including studies from the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK),

Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Turkey and Africa. Previous studies examined include both qualitative and quantitative research.

The next section of this chapter provides a clear rationale, as identified in the literature, for this thesis.

Rationale for this Study

The Argument in the Literature

The dearth of research in the area of taught master's degrees was emphasised by Knight (1997, p. 3) who suggested that:

> master's students are not a breed apart. Plainly, there is much to be learned from research into undergraduate teaching and learning. However, there are sufficient differences to make it unwise to assume that good practice for taught master's students can simply be read off research with undergraduates or PhD students, as if we were using the academic equivalent of a miles to kilometres conversion table.

The rationale for this study has been further emphasised by Smith *et al* (2010) who suggest that one of the main advantages of postgraduate study is that it addresses the needs of various stakeholders. This research aims to investigate how the needs of a number of stakeholders including students, graduates, employers and educators are met through the delivery of the two MSc programmes. This reiterates the view of Cho *et al* (2006, p.45) who indicates that:

> despite the increasing significance of hospitality graduate education, little is known about how key stakeholders, such as industry professionals, educators and students perceive hospitality graduate programmes.

Similarly, Stuart *et al* (2008) acknowledged that, while extensive literature exists on all elements of the undergraduate student experience, there is a dearth of literature in relation to taught postgraduate study. Mandelbaum (1980, p.9) emphasised that:

> since no educational system is ever isolated from the other institutions in a society, it appears to me that any attempt to reflect on graduate education apart from the broader context in which it is embedded will lead to empty conclusions.

Therefore, the inclusion of all stakeholders in hospitality and tourism postgraduate education should produce far from empty conclusions.

Weber and Ladkin (2008) outline the various aspects of tourism and hospitality education that have been the focus of previous academic research. These aspects

include the history and future of tourism and hospitality education, the curriculum, student approaches to learning, the industry opinion of formal education and graduate career development. In the main, this research has focused on the undergraduate student experience and credential, creating a gap in knowledge as to the postgraduate perspective on the aforementioned elements.

The next section of this chapter attempts to define the terminology 'tourism' and 'hospitality'.

Setting the Context for this Research

Hospitality and Tourism – Defining the Terms

Baum (2007, p.1384) indicates that there 'is real and ongoing debate with regard to definitional issues in the tourism sector'. Brotherton and Wood (2008, p.1) identify similar concerns in respect of defining hospitality:

> Perhaps the most depressing aspect of terminological and definitional questions over "hospitality", the "hospitality industry" and "hospitality management" is that they have figured in debates in the academic literature for at least 20 years or more without any evidence of closure or general agreement.

Brotherton and Wood (2008) comment that 'normally' the hospitality industry is seen to include hotels, restaurants and other businesses that are involved with the supply of food, drink and accommodation. In Baum's (2007) review of human resource management (HRM) within the tourism sector, he attempts to incorporate all sub-sectors, including accommodation, food service, transport, facilitation and heritage, in addition to different business sizes and locations. Baum (2007) also acknowledges that much of the previous work on HRM in the sector had overly relied on the hospitality sub-sector, in particular hotels and restaurants. He notes that the tourism sector is populated by small firms with a growing influence of larger multinational brands.

Figures from the Irish Hotels Federation (2010) indicate that the tourism industry in Ireland is comprised of approximately 15,000 businesses, in the main micro, small and medium sized. As suggested by Baum (2008b, p.76), in general worldwide:

> geographically, the sector is widely dispersed, an industry located in most communities, and adapted in its facilities and services to reflect location, climate and market focus.

Tribe (1997, p.640) identifies that:

Tourism is essentially an activity engaged in by human beings and the minimum necessary features that need to exist for it to be said to have occurred include the act of travel from one place to another, a particular set of motives for engaging in that travel (excluding commuting for work) and the engagement in activity at the destination.

Airey (2004, p.9) notes a connection between tourism and hospitality:

It is now more than 40 years since tourism first appeared as a distinct area of study. Arguably, its history goes back far longer than this in that the study of some of its component sectors, notably hotel operations and catering, or component activities such as leisure and recreation can trace their origins to before World War II.

The hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism subject benchmark statement for undergraduate programmes in the UK define the terms as follows:

Programmes of study with hospitality in the title will subscribe to the following definition: 'Hospitality is characterised by a core which addresses the management of food, beverage and / or accommodation in a service context' (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008, p.10).

The term 'tourism' refers to the activities and behaviours arising from the movement of people away from their normal home environments for a variety of purposes. The study of tourism draws on a wide range of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks regarding consumption, production and management. As a relatively novel academic area, new ways are being developed to understand the development and management of tourism and its broader contribution to understanding society as a whole (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008, p.13).

Dale and Robinson (2001, p.31) draw attention to the 'interchangeable' use of the terminology 'tourism, leisure and hospitality to describe industries, academic departments and degree programmes'. Whilst Christie Mill (2008, p.104) notes that it is:

common, though incorrect, to use the term *hospitality industry* interchangeably with *tourism* or *tourism industry*.

Many articles sourced for this thesis employ the terminology interchangeably or combine the terms. The two MSc programmes under review make use of the terms separately and the institute of technology in which the programmes are delivered also makes this distinction in respect of undergraduate programme provision and industry sub-sectors.

In Ireland, the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) represents the hotel industry, the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC) is the representative body for the tourism industry, the Restaurant Association is the collective voice of the restaurant industry and the Vintners' Federation of Ireland (VFI) acts on behalf of the Irish pub industry. In education in the UK, there is the Association for Tourism in Higher Education (ATHE) and the Council for Hospitality Management Education (CHME). Worldwide, the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) is the global representative body and in the southern hemisphere, the Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) appears to be an active association in the field. In the Republic of Ireland, in the absence of these forms of associations, there is the annual Tourism and Hospitality Research in Ireland Conference (THRIC). Therefore, it is evident that while there may be overlap in respect of issues, the industry and academy does have individual distinctive representative groups that utilise separate terms.

Academic journals have distinct titles, some relating specifically to tourism, e.g., Annals of Tourism Research, and some use the term hospitality, e.g., International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, some journals utilise both terms, e.g., Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management or Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education. Yet, it is not unusual to find an article titled 'Tourism education: Policy versus practice' (Amoah and Baum 1997) in the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management.

For the purpose of this thesis, guidance is taken from Airey and Baum, both of whom have written widely in the areas of tourism and hospitality, and both of whom identify tourism as a sector of which hospitality is a component. On that basis, both terms will be employed in the course of this thesis, bearing in mind that, with the level of crossover and combinations in terminology employed in some secondary research, it would be nigh impossible to separate out the articles that focus solely on tourism and those that centre on hospitality.

The next section of this chapter scopes the landscape of higher education in Ireland in general, the nature of taught master's programmes and an overview of tourism and hospitality education.

Higher Education in Republic of Ireland

The context for education in ROI, in general, is set by Kelly *et al* (2009, p.1):

> Education matters because it is intrinsically valuable, allowing children
> and young people to develop, intellectually, socially and morally. It also
> matters because, in Ireland, as in many other countries, education is a
> powerful predictor of adult life chances.

As this thesis investigates specifically higher education in the field of tourism and hospitality, it is concerned with the adult career and 'life chances' experienced by those who have studied for a taught master's qualification and, also, the views of educators and industry on the 'life chances' that result from this type of credential.

Ireland continues to have a binary system of higher education that encompasses universities and higher education institutes (HEIs). The system is comprised of 7 Universities, 14 Institutes of Technology, including the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), and 7 Colleges of Education. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland. This authority also has an advisory and funding role for universities, institutes of technology and other designated higher education institutes (www.education.ie).

It is widely acknowledged (Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape 2012) that higher education prospects in Ireland have increased in the past decades and this has benefited the Irish workforce profile in line with international comparisons. Figures quoted in the Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape document indicate that there are 44 providers of undergraduate programmes through the Central Applications Office (CAO) and 27 providers of research programmes at level 9 and / or 10. In line with the Irish Higher Education Authority figures (HEA 2012b), one third of the Irish adult population, between the ages of 25 and 64, has acquired a higher education qualification. 12 per cent of these qualifications are at higher certificate or ordinary degree level and 22 per cent at honours degree or above.

Similar to other countries (Brotherton and Wood 2008), the tourism and hospitality higher education programmes are, in the main, provided by the HEIs. This is in line with the traditional vocational, operational image of hospitality and tourism education (Hsu 2005). Baum (2005, p.34) provides an overview of hospitality and tourism education in the Republic of Ireland. In this overview, Baum acknowledges the role of institutes of technology (ITs) in the provision of 'formal vocational programmes', from craft / skill based programmes through to master's degrees in the Republic of Ireland.

In the university sector, the University of Limerick (UL) is deemed to play a key role in the delivery of tourism programmes. Baum (2005, p.34) also recognises the contribution of a 'quasi-private' college, Shannon College of Hotel Management, to the hospitality education landscape in Ireland.

The role of the Irish state in the provision of training and education in hospitality and tourism is evident in the programmes and initiatives delivered by Fáilte Ireland, ranging from skill-based courses, e.g., Effective Digital Marketing for your Business, through to management development programmes, e.g., High Potential Leadership Programme for Managers in Tourism (www.failteireland.ie).

While Johanson *et al* (2010) indicate that, worldwide, the number of graduate degrees in hospitality and tourism has practically doubled in the past ten years, postgraduate education in tourism and hospitality in Ireland is a relatively new departure. University College Dublin (UCD) provided the first Master's of Business Studies, specialising in tourism, in the Republic of Ireland, from 1993 to the mid-2000s. Dublin Institute of Technology established the MSc in Hospitality Management in 1999 and this was joined the following year by the MSc in Tourism Management.

The total number of students enrolled on taught master's programmes in the Republic of Ireland at 1 March 2012 was 15,999 (7,449 males and 8,550 females) (HEA 2012a). In the category of travel, tourism and leisure, 58 students were enrolled on taught master's programmes (20 males and 38 females); of these students, 41 were studying in an Institute of Technology (IT). In the category of Hotel, Restaurant and Catering, 52 students were enrolled on a taught master's programme (26 male and 26 female); all of these students were studying in an Institute of Technology. These figures provide an indication of the small numbers of students undertaking taught master's programmes in this area and pose a question in respect of demand / need for such offerings.

Given the acknowledged benefits of higher education from both an individual and a macroeconomic perspective, it is easy to understand why students embark upon further studies in order to enhance their employability and, globally, why governments advocate the merits of life-long learning (OECD 2008). As Brown (2003, p.142) suggested, 'credentials are the currency of opportunity'. As identified by Johnes (2006), those with higher education qualifications possess greatly improved employment prospects. Specifically in respect of postgraduate education, it has been identified (Smith *et al* 2010) that those with a postgraduate qualification have enhanced employability and can garner higher incomes than those with only an undergraduate

degree. Garner and Wallace (1997) suggest that postgraduate learning is more than acquiring knowledge. It is about the development of understanding and the learner's sense of agency in their environment. Similar to the UK (Smith *et al* 2010), postgraduate education in Ireland has not been reviewed to the same extent as undergraduate education. Smith *et al* (2010) acknowledged the advantages of postgraduate education from the perspective of many stakeholders including employers. It was suggested that taught postgraduate programmes provided an opportunity to make linkages between academia and industry. This is a line of inquiry that has been further explored in the course of this thesis.

The next section examines the area of postgraduate study and specifically the taught master's programme model.

Postgraduate Study

In this research, postgraduate study is examined from the context of the educational institution, the student and the industry into which the graduate will be subsumed. Knight (1997, p.3) suggests that taught master's students are 'often living careers, and successful ones at that' and, on this basis, they may be 'discerning and frequently demanding students'. Mandelbaum (1980, p.11) suggests that an undergraduate qualification was viewed less as a 'terminal degree' and that undergraduate colleges had become 'prep schools' for graduate schools.

In most OECD (2007) countries, levels of employment and earnings rise in line with educational attainment. Garner and Wallace (1997, p.57) note that postgraduate students acknowledge that:

> even a "meaningless piece of paper" will improve their professional prospects, and go through the motions of learning.

However, Wolf (2004, p.315) propounded that:

> a largely unquestioning consensus proclaims that educational policy is an effective tool for delivering prosperity and increasing rates of economic growth. This consensus rests on far less secure foundations than is commonly supposed.

Skilbeck (2001) acknowledged that many countries, including Ireland, have increased the number of places and support for postgraduate education. In particular, he noted that taught master's programmes are viewed as a lucrative source of university income. Similarly, Knight (1997) identifies that taught master's programmes are a source of much needed funds and create a sense of prestige for an institution.

14

Statistics published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA 2012b) indicated that, after a number of years of increases, postgraduate enrolments declined, overall, by 1.4 per cent between 2009 / 2010 and 2010 / 2011. This data is presented in Table 2.1.

Year	Full-time	Part-time	Total
2006 / 2007	17,789	No data	17,789
2007 / 2008	18,807	10,973	29,780
2008 / 2009	20,700	11,242	31,914
2009 / 2010	22,419	12,801	35,220
2010 / 2011	21,880	12,860	34,740

Table 2.1 - Postgraduate Enrolments in the Republic of Ireland

Source: Higher Education Authority 2012b

The policy story that guides this increased focus on postgraduate education in Ireland includes numerous government reports, in particular the 'Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning' (2002), 'Tomorrow's Skills Towards a National Skills Strategy' (2007), 'The National Workplace Strategy' (2005) and copious numbers of Higher Education Authority and Department of Education and Skills documents. The National Framework of Qualifications (http://www.nfq.ie/) has also attempted to connect labour market requirements and tertiary education provision (OECD 2008). The national framework of qualifications, established in 2003, recognises all training and education from level one to ten. This framework is depicted in Figure 2.1 below. Taught master's degrees are deemed to be a level 9 qualification.
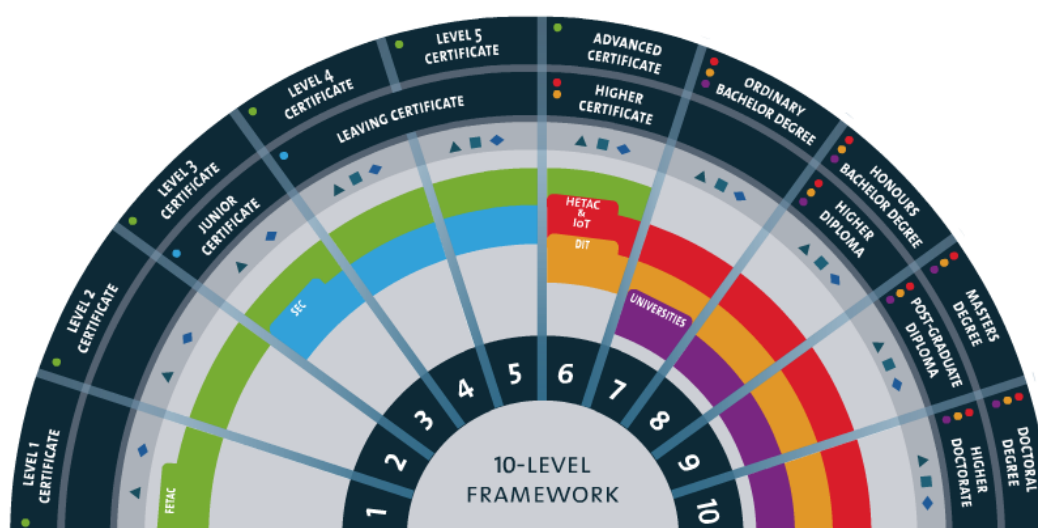
Figure 2.1 - The Republic of Ireland National Framework of Qualifications

Source: www.nfq.ie.

In addition to the categorisation of the levels, this framework provides descriptors in respect of each level. The level 9 descriptor is as follows:

Knowledge – breadth	A systematic understanding of knowledge at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge – kind	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning
Know-how and skill - range	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry
Know-how and skill - selectivity	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques
Competence - context	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill defined contexts
Competence - role	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity
Competence – learning to learn	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development
Competence - insight	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them
Progression & Transfer	Progression to programmes leading to Doctoral Degree, or to another Masters Degree or to a Post-graduate Diploma

Table 2.2 - National Framework of Qualifications Level 9 Descriptor

Source: www.nfq.ie.

Viewing education through a policy lens, O'Donoghue and Maguire (2005, p.439) commented:

> a population of well-educated lifelong learners is a worthy vision for educators, policy makers and employers alike.

These authors reflected that lifelong learning could be considered as a method of amassing social, cultural and economic capital. However, Keep and Mayhew (2004) intimated that postgraduate education is a means by which higher socio-economic groups protect their position in society through the acquisition of a master's credential. Similarly, Wolf (2002) argued that, as bachelor's degrees become commonplace, master's qualifications are a more viable source of advantage in the labour market. This is in line with Tomlinson (2008, p.49), who cautioned that his research with undergraduate students illustrated that students:

> perceive their academic qualifications as having a declining role in shaping their employment outcomes in what is perceived to be a congested and competitive graduate labour market.

Smith *et al* (2010) produced a report for the British Government entitled 'One Step beyond: making the most of postgraduate education' and, in this work, they drew on

many sources and previous studies conducted in the UK with regard to postgraduate study. This report and a report produced by the University of Sussex provide general context on why people embark on postgraduate study, the benefits and what happens subsequent to graduation.

In the Sussex University report, Barber *et al* (2004) conducted extensive quantitative and qualitative research with 200 alumni from postgraduate programmes at the University. The questionnaire used by Barber *et al* and the final report produced provided guidance for the questionnaire distributed for this thesis. Based on Barber *et al*'s (2004) research, respondents had embarked on postgraduate study to pursue an individual interest or to improve specific or general career opportunities. It was apparent in Smith *et al* (2010) and Barber *et al* (2004) that new graduates made the decision to register for a postgraduate qualification but, similarly, those who wanted to advance or change their career chose a postgraduate route. The general findings from Barber *et al's* (2004, p.x) research indicates that the postgraduates enjoyed their programmes of study and, whilst they had high expectations, they appear not to have been disappointed. This finding was also reiterated by Smith *et al* (2010).

On a positive note, the postgraduates surveyed by Barber *et al* (2004) found 'relevant and rewarding' work subsequent to graduation, where they were able to use both their qualification and past experience. However, 35 per cent indicated that employers 'have little understanding of what postgraduate level study offers in terms of skills and knowledge' (Barber *et al*, 2004, p.32). Some of the skills developed in the course of their study that were valued by employers included 'planning and organising, analytical thinking, communication and interpersonal skills' (Barber *et al* 2004, p.xii). However, there was an apparent lack of appreciation of the soft skills developed, for example, 'self motivation, self management, understanding and resilience'. Respondents were realistic in acknowledging the significance of both 'work experience' and 'postgraduate knowledge' in acquiring and doing their jobs (Barber *et al*, 2004, p.42). It was also highlighted that the postgraduate credential was 'useful' rather than 'essential' in securing employment.

Smith *et al* (2010) found that employers expect that postgraduates will have a suite of skills beyond that which they have studied. This included communication, teamwork, adaptability and the ability to apply their skills in the workplace. Commercial awareness and work experience were also valued by employers. Smith *et al* (2010) also indicated that, in the UK, partnerships between HEIs and industry were usefully

addressing industry need with regard to required knowledge and skills. Interestingly, Smith *et al* (2010) suggested that in excess of half of postgraduate research students commence their study with a view to an academic career.

It was indicated by the respondents, in the Barber *et al* (2004) study, that the postgraduate experience had a 'positive impact on their lives' (p.54) and was a source of a 'great sense of personal achievement and confidence' (p.59). Career and financial benefits also ensued; however, 36 per cent identified that their salary hopes had not been realised. A minority of respondents and, in the main, those who studied part-time, remained in the same job subsequent to graduation. Those who studied on a part-time basis reaped higher financial rewards after graduation compared to those who studied full-time. Smith *et al* (2010) noted that, compared to those with only an undergraduate degree, postgraduates had improved salary and employment prospects.

The next section looks at the taught postgraduate master's in greater detail.

Taught Master's Programmes

In the absence of extensive literature on the area of taught master's programmes, chapters from a book edited by Knight (1997) are used to provide a context for this form of delivery. In the context of Irish higher education, a taught master's programme is defined by the national framework of qualifications as:

> The taught Master's Degree is awarded following the completion of an accredited programme of 1 to 2 years duration (60-120 ECTS credits). Entry to a programme leading to a taught Master's Degree is typically for holders of Honours Bachelor Degrees. Also, in some cases, entry to such programmes can be permitted for those with Ordinary Bachelor Degrees or equivalent who have some relevant work experience. Furthermore, in some cases, entry to such programmes is permitted for people with extensive experience in a relevant area (www.nqf.ie).

What is a Taught Master's Programme

As previously stated, there is limited research available on the taught master's model of postgraduate study. Knight (1997, p.1) identifies that 'the terms "coursework master's" and "taught master's" cannot be defined with surgical precision'. This statement alludes to the fact that taught programmes may include a research thesis and research programmes may include taught elements. The increased presence in higher education of the taught master's model was acknowledged by Knight (1997) and, similarly, the professional slant to these programmes was identified. Knight also highlighted the

popularity of part-time study at this level. Knight (1997, p.5) propounds that, in the case of professional master's, if graduates are to be acknowledged as:

> creative forces, as problem solvers and managers, then teaching, learning and the curriculum should give opportunities for such powers to be developed.

On this basis, Knight (2007) suggests a variety of learning methods suited to this level. These include group and teamwork, real-life tasks, reflective learning journals, assessment feedback and a possible alternative to the capstone thesis. This view is in line with the aforementioned policy direction of higher education in Ireland with regard to student innovation and creativity (Department of Education and Skills 2011).

The Challenges of Taught Master's Programmes

Garner and Wallace (1997, p.53) highlight that:

> master's level learning can be scary for students, especially where they follow programmes that break from traditional undergraduate pedagogies by encouraging self-management, self-reliance and the creation of personal meanings.

This becomes increasingly difficult if students do not have effective study habits and / or when they struggle with the English language. Garner and Wallace (1997) suggest that mature students may experience a lack of confidence in their academic ability and be reluctant to contribute in the class environment. To counteract this dearth of confidence, mature students may be prone to over-working, which, in turn, may lead to exhaustion and an inability to learn. Many mature students study on a part-time basis to facilitate the combination of work, study and home life. In itself, part-time study may result in a sense of isolation and impact on the student's motivation to learn. Garner and Wallace (1997) refer to the fact that numerous studies indicate that the average part-time student spends fifteen hours in class or studying and ten hours travelling per week. All of these strains influence the student's approach to learning.

Due to the time pressure and demands of study and life, the master's student may resort to short cuts and rote learning rather than embrace learning and ongoing reflection on the experience. Master's students may also grapple with the relevance of certain modules and the industry / real-life experience or, rather, lack of, on the part of the lecturer. Garner and Wallace (1997, p.57) use quotations from their own research to illustrate this challenge. These include:

> It is evident that some lecturers have never practiced in industry / public service.

> Research methodology is not related to the real world.

> Some subjects are too theoretical, or the syllabus has been used repeatedly for a number of years and does not reflect the realities of current business management practices.

Park and Wells (2010) authored the Higher Education Academy funded, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey. This UK-based survey collates the opinions of taught postgraduate students. According to Park and Wells (2010, p.4) the main two motivators for taught postgraduate study were to enhance 'employment prospects' and to advance respondents' 'current career path'. In general, this research indicated overall good levels of satisfaction with the taught programme experience from the quality of teaching to the level of workload. The respondents rated highly the fact that the taught experience had enhanced their research and transferable skills and developed their confidence for independent learning.

Park (2007, p.25), writing a commentary piece in the Higher Education Academy newsletter, about the focus in postgraduate education to improve graduate employability, notes that, in respect of taught master's:

> No longer are the academy and the world of work viewed differently and treated as separate spheres of activity... (and he suggests a) need for both communities (HE and employers) to find common ground in better understanding each other's needs and offerings.

Having provided an overview of higher education in Ireland and scoped the parameters of a taught master's qualification, the next section of this chapter paints the landscape of the tourism and hospitality sector in Ireland. This context provides a backdrop for tourism and hospitality education and in particular postgraduate education in this field.

Tourism and Hospitality Industries in Ireland

Visitor Numbers and Revenue Figures

Ireland, similar to the rest of the world, has felt the effects of the global economic downturn. In the country in general, there was a 14 per cent decrease in employment between 2007 and 2011 and unemployment increased by 10 percentage points in the same time period and outward emigration returned (Economic and Social Research Institute 2012). The hospitality and tourism industry has likewise been affected by the changing economic sands with declines in visitor numbers and revenue. Table 2.3

below indicates the figures for overseas visitors to Ireland during the period January - October 2009 - 2012. In addition to the changes in visitor numbers, total revenue for the Irish tourism industry increased from €4.3 billion in the year 2000 to €6.5 billion in 2007 (€1.5 billion was attributed to domestic tourism). However, this dropped to €5 billion in 2010 (www.itic.ie).

	2009 (000)	2010 (000)	2011 (000)	2012 (000)	% Change 2012 v. 2011
Britain	2,814	2,347	2,456	2,360	-3.9
North America	875	826	885	903	2
Mainland Europe	2,082	1,769	2,001	2,004	2.1
Other Areas	262	271	311	324	4.3
Total Overseas	**6,033**	**5,213**	**5,653**	**5,631**	**-0.4**

Table 2.3 - Overseas Visitors to Ireland January-October 2009-2012

Source: Fáilte Ireland 2012b.

The Tourism Barometer (2012a) suggested that business confidence had nearly been restored to levels witnessed in 2007. The barometer also indicates that the majority of businesses hoped to maintain employment levels in 2012. The next section examines the issue of employment in the sector.

Employment in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

It has already been stated that the tourism sector is a significant employer worldwide. In accordance with figures from the European Industrial Relations Observatory (2012), the hotels and restaurants sectoral share of total employment in ROI is 6 per cent. Due to the nature of the tourism industry, it provides opportunities for full-time, part-time and seasonal employees with varying skill levels (Landmark 1974). Baum (2007) indicated that, in rural locations in Ireland and the UK, tourism employers employ short-term labour in the form of students looking to improve their language competencies or on a gap year. These fixed-term employees are frequently lower cost and less complicated than recruiting from the local labour pool and receive little if any training (Baum 2007).

According to the most recent statistics available from Fáilte Ireland (2011), the tourism and hospitality industry employed approximately 177,935 people in 2010. This was comprised of 51,693 in pubs, 46,373 in hotels, 38,657 in licensed restaurants, 18,702 in

tourism services and attractions, 14,336 in non-licensed / fast food establishments, 3,937 in bed and breakfasts, 2,426 in self-catering and 1,812 in guesthouses. All elements of the industry had experienced a reduction in staffing numbers compared to 2009 figures, in particular staffing levels in hotels declined by 11 per cent from 52,308 in 2009.

This Fáilte Ireland (2011) data suggested that the tourism and hospitality industry overall employed reasonably equal numbers of males (49 per cent) and females (51 per cent). In her research in the Nordic countries, Hjalager (2003) noted that the service sector in general and, specifically, the tourism industry employed a large number of females. The dominant role of women, in many countries' hospitality programmes and industries, has also been acknowledged by Brownell and Walsh (2008). However, they also indicate that evidence would imply that women do not progress in large numbers to the higher echelons of hospitality businesses. Operations Director at QHotels, Vivien Sirotkin (2012, online) noted that:

> One of the reasons I think women often don't get to the top is because there is still a bit of an old boys' network occasionally – but I do think it is becoming a minority.

It is apparent from the data for the two MSc programmes under review that more females than males have participated in the programmes since their inception.

In the Fáilte Ireland (2011) data, it was also highlighted that 27 per cent of employees were non-Irish nationals, in the main from European Union countries. Baum (2007) and Hearns *et al* (2007) highlighted that diversity of culture in tourism organisations is not a new phenomenon but, in the case of Ireland, this was accelerated by the labour shortages encountered by the sector during the so-called Celtic Tiger years. Boland (2010) identified that, despite rising unemployment, by October 2010 6,621 work permits had been issued to non EU nationals, for jobs that Irish nationals apparently did not want to do. The majority of these jobs were in low pay sectors, including hospitality and catering.

This changing profile of employment in the tourism and hospitality industry is in line with the changing profile of Irish employees in general. Central Statistics Office figures (CSO 4 October 2012), based on the census of population 2011, highlighted that there were 544,357 non-Irish nationals residing in Ireland in April 2011 and that this figure was comprised of 199 different nationalities. These figures illustrate a trend that has continued since 2000, as it is an increase of 124,624 or 30 per cent on the figures

recorded for 2006. 268,180 non-Irish resident nationals were in employment in April 2011 or 15.1 per cent of the total number of workers. Polish and UK nationals accounted for 43.4 per cent of these workers with 185 different nationalities making up the remainder. Based on the Fáilte Ireland (2011) data the total number of non-Irish nationals employed in the tourism sector was 40,055 and the majority of them worked in food service (84 per cent) and culinary (51 per cent) areas, 8 per cent were employed in management positions and 6 per cent at supervisory levels. Hearns *et al* (2007) acknowledge that, in the context of an increasingly culturally diverse profile of workers in all elements of hospitality, there is a subsequent need for the management of this diversity to be addressed in the hospitality curriculum.

In line with this increasingly culturally diverse nature of the Irish tourism workforce, the number of non-Irish national students on both MSc programmes also increased. Specifically, Chinese, Polish, Italian, French and Russian students have studied on the MSc programmes. This trend corresponds with that of postgraduate tourism programmes in the United Kingdom, where non-EU students are in the majority (Botterill & Gale 2005). In a similar vein, Smith *et al* (2010, p.24) indicated that in the UK in general, in the region of 50 per cent of 'master's qualifiers are international students', in particular the numbers coming from China had quadrupled between 2000 - 2001 and 2007 - 2008.

China and India have been identified by Barrows and Johan (2008) as countries eager to grow their hospitality management education provision in line with industry expansion. In this vein, in January 2013, an Irish Institute of Technology announced collaborative plans for the development of a hospitality and tourism college on the Chinese island of Hainan (Coonan 2012). Botterill and Gale (2005) indicated that, due to a reduction in demand from UK nationals for postgraduate programmes, those institutes offering taught tourism degrees sought students in the developing world markets.

Having scoped the tourism and hospitality industry in general, the next section will examine the people management practices evident within the industry. The image of the industry as an employer influences the attractiveness of the industry to graduates and impacts on the career paths of those who work in the sector.

Managing People in Hospitality and Tourism

A number of writers (Baum 2007; Kusluvan and Kusluvan 2000; Christensen Hughes and Rog 2008; Leslie and Richardson 1999; Lam *et al* 2002; Scott and Revis 2008;

Walsh and Taylor 2007; Davidson *et al* 2010; D'Annunzio-Green 2008; Fáilte Ireland 2005; Solnet and Hood 2008) emphasise the importance of well-educated, trained and motivated human resources or 'talent' for any organisation operating in the services sector. This is increasingly vital for the tourism and hospitality industry, where it is impossible to differentiate the service from the server. The academic literature (Davidson *et al* 2011; Scott and Revis 2008; Baum 2007) on people management in tourism and hospitality identifies human resources as a source of competitive advantage and highlights that the industry requires employees with the appropriate attitude and competencies to deliver the service level expected by the customer or guest. The image of the industry as an employer influences the industry's capability to attract and retain a high calibre of motivated and committed employees (Barron 2008). Fáilte Ireland (2005, p.10) indicated that:

> the story of successful tourism enterprises is one that is largely about people - how they are recruited, how they are managed, how they are trained and educated, how they are valued and rewarded, and how they are supported through a process of continuous learning and career development.

Baum (2007) identified that larger businesses have adopted a more professional, proactive and strategic approach to human resource management, including the effective devolution of people management responsibility to line management, yet the same cannot be said of small companies.

Barron (2008, p.730), a frequent contributor to the topic of human resource management and education in hospitality and tourism, paints an unambiguous picture of some of the realities of the industry. Barron notes that hospitality is a 'key element' of the tourism industry:

> The hospitality industry has always found it hard to attract suitably motivated, trained and qualified employees that are able to deliver the service promises that organisations make to their current and potential customers. The hospitality industry has a poor reputation as a source of permanent employment, offering low pay, anti-social working hours, menial work, and limited opportunities for career progression.

Whilst various research down through the years has alluded to the people management challenges within the industry, Wood (1997, p.205) is very forthright in his assessment of this research, and notes that 'each new study of employment in the industry tends to 'rediscover' the wretched situation' of employees. Brotherton and Wood (2008, p.3) also highlight the 'pejorative societal stereotyping' of some jobs in the service sector

including jobs in hospitality. This is re-emphasised by Brotherton and Wood's reproduction of the following joke:

> How do you open a conversation with a graduate in hospitality management who you meet socially? (Answer: A Big Mac, fries and a strawberry shake, please).

Needless to say, such an image of the hospitality industry creates challenges in respect of hospitality education and people management within hospitality businesses.

Littlejohn and Watson (2004, p.412) paint a landscape of a sector populated by small businesses and owner manager businesses:

> These often possess a culture of long hours and hard physical and mental work.

This image of hospitality and tourism as an employer is further reinforced by the work of Wood (1997) and Lucas (2004) who have both produced textbooks on human resource management and employee relations in the industry and, in that sense, provide a window on the industry for those studying on tourism and hospitality programmes. Baum (2007) made the argument that little has changed in the past twenty years in the working conditions of those in the tourism sector. Similarly, Baum (2007) identified that where change has taken place, it has been determined by geographic location and company size. Low levels of trade unionisation in the sector have resulted in little collective challenge to the less than desirable working conditions (Baum 2007; Lucas 2004; EIRO 2012).

In the context of the Irish tourism and hospitality industry, various reports produced by CERT (1999) and Fáilte Ireland (2005; 2011) have highlighted the impact of these challenges from a recruitment and retention perspective. The Tourism Careers Promotion Group (2004) suggested that, for future success in human resource planning, the industry needed to examine its image, market the industry's career opportunities and improve human resource practices in hospitality and tourism businesses, in order to improve employee retention. These factors were further highlighted by the Human Resource Development report (Fáilte Ireland 2005).

Visitor attitudes surveys (e.g. Fáilte Ireland 2010b) regularly highlight that the reasons why tourists visit Ireland include the beautiful scenery and the friendliness of the people, hence identifying the on-going important role of employees in the tourism industry. The Report of the Tourism Renewal Group (2009, p.vii) emphasised the importance of people as part of Irish tourism's plan for recovery 2010-2013.

Specifically, it outlined 'recovery action 3: sustain investment in tourism's assets – people' and the measures identified to achieve this included

> help tourism enterprises to retain staff, help workers to renew and strengthen their skills, use tourism's potential to keep people in the labour market, ensure diversity of skills and labour are available, make tourism more attractive as a career for life.

Entry-level positions to the sector are relatively easy to acquire and, as described by Marchante *et al* (2007, p.300), the industry may 'play an instrumental role as a refuge occupation or a stepping stone to another career and / or sector'. The short-term nature of some jobs in the industry is reiterated by Lashley (2011, p.23) who notes why numerous hospitality employers recruit hospitality students:

> Opportunities to develop long-term relationships with student employees are not being developed, and represent something of a lost opportunity.

Even in the context of today's career trends towards boundaryless careers (Ladkin 2002), labour turnover in tourism is still high. According to Fáilte Ireland (2005), turnover for permanent staff is reported to be in and around 25 per cent and 50 per cent of those who leave a specific tourism sub-sector exit the industry completely. This preponderance of staff turnover is reiterated by O'Leary and Deegan (2005) and Killeen (2002), who cite hours of work, levels of pay, work-life balance issues and limited opportunities for development as contributors to this exodus from the industry. In Ireland, in general, it is indicated that training costs are 1 per cent of total labour costs and, in the hotel and restaurant sector, this is even lower at 0.4 per cent (Higgins 2007). Powers and Riegel (1993, p.302) cautioned that:

> unless the industry presents opportunities for advancement and development for workers, the hospitality work force will continue to be characterised by transience.

Yet, these human resource management challenges are not unique to Ireland. Hjalager (2003) identified a similarly high level of turnover in tourism in Nordic countries and that employees with specialised qualifications in the area are likely to exit the industry within a number of years. This is in line with the work of Deery and Shaw (1997) and McMahon and Quinn (1995), who suggested the existence of a turnover culture in the industry. This retention challenge is applicable to graduates of hospitality and tourism management programmes and managers within the industry. Cleveland *et al* (2007, p.293) propounded that:

hotel management poses a number of challenges for people's lives off the job, which may underlie the high turnover in the industry.

Cleveland *et al's* (2007, p.293) research was based on focus groups and semi-structured interviews with new entrants, hotel managers and their spouses. This work highlighted the stress and burnout aspects of work in the industry, specifically identifying the role of 'long, irregular and unpredictable' hours. It was also suggested that the long hours of operational jobs contributed to career success within the industry, compared to the more structured hours of support roles. Given this well documented staff turnover in the hospitality industry, Chuang *et al* (2007) argued that hospitality managers need to understand undergraduate students and their career expectations. This rationale could also be applied to postgraduate students and their career expectations.

While the role of people in tourism and hospitality is widely acknowledged, numerous writers, including Baum (2007, p.1394), provide a candid view of the treatment of employees in the tourism industry down through the centuries. He concludes that:

> much of the industry operates on the basis of a labour economics model that depends upon high turnover, low pay, poor conditions and minimal investment in training.

This and other quotations presented in this chapter paint a picture that begs the question as to why anyone would want to acquire any qualification, never mind a master's degree, specific to such an industry. On this basis, the next section explores the area of tourism and hospitality education.

Tourism and Hospitality Higher Education

Third Level Provision of Tourism and Hospitality Programmes

The number of tourism programmes in higher education has increased in the past thirty years and this has been encouraged by the fast growth of the tourism industry worldwide and the acknowledgement by governments of the value of tourism for both local and national economies (Dale and Robinson 2001; Cooper 2002). Maggi and Padurean (2009, p.56) note that:

> The formation of middle and higher management personnel is increasingly important for economic activities exposed to worldwide competition – and the tourism industry is no exception. Investment in human capital determines to a significant extent the competitiveness and growth of national industries and hence their position in the concentration / dispersion process inherent in globalisation.

Both tourism (Tribe 1997, p.653) and hospitality (Brotherton and Wood 2008) have been subject to scrutiny as to whether they qualify as a discipline, a subject or a field of study. Tribe's (1997) rigorous review of whether or not tourism is a discipline makes for a convincing case that it is not a discipline but 'two distinct fields', the business of tourism and the non-business aspects of tourism. However, Tribe (1997, p.656) adopted an upbeat perspective on this status definition of tourism:

> The search for tourism as a discipline should be abandoned. It is a sign of nostalgia (hankering after an overly idealised concept) and insecurity (lack of academic self-confidence) and would involve casting adrift important parts of tourism studies in the quest for conceptual coherence and logical consistency. Tourism studies seems likely to remain in a pre-paradigmatic phase (Kuhn 1962) but this should not be seen as a problem. Rather tourism studies should recognise and celebrate its diversity.

This thesis takes guidance from Tribe's well-respected research and, on that basis, accepts that tourism is not a discipline but two distinct fields. As it has already been agreed that hospitality is a sub-sector of tourism, then it seems acceptable to recognise hospitality as a field also rather than a discipline.

O'Connor (2002) identified that the first degree in hotel and catering was provided in Ireland in 1972, fifty years on from a similar development in Cornell University and eight years after the University of Surrey. The School of Hotel Administration of Cornell University, established in 1922, and the hotel management school at Lausanne in Switzerland, founded in 1893, remain two of the most widely recognised providers of hospitality education (Brotherton and Wood 2008). The relative newness of the graduate degree in tourism / hospitality is recognised by Keiser (2000), who commented that in excess of 50 per cent of graduate programmes have only been in operation since 1980. In the UK, in the 1960s, there were only three university-based hotel management schools, Strathclyde University, Surrey University and Cardiff University. In the following years, other hospitality degree programmes were established in the then polytechnics sector. A similar pattern of degree programme development was evident in Australia and New Zealand (Brotherton and Wood 2008). Globally, hospitality education provision has been split between private and public providers at university level, vocational college or higher education institute level.

Barrows and Johan (2008) identified graduate education as one of the most significant advancements in hospitality education in the past ten years. In their view (Barrows and Johan 2008, p.159), graduate hospitality education is a gateway for careers in:

research and consulting, education or advanced positions in the hospitality industry.

By 2008, there were over 40 tourism / hospitality related master's courses in the UK (Jackson 2008) and, in the USA, it was predicted that the number of master's programmes in the hospitality area would increase to 73 by 2010 (Cho *et al* 2006). Stuart (2002, p.6) indicates that, in the context of the UK in the 1990s, while tourism was considered 'still a relatively new phenomenon', postgraduate tourism programme had preceded undergraduate programmes. Tourism, similar to other new 'subjects' such as media, communications and theatre studies, was viewed as a different option compared to the 'traditional, yet popular, disciplines such as Geography, English and History' (Stuart 2002, p.5). Powers and Riegel (1993, p.299) noted that:

> hospitality education competes with all other academic programs but probably especially closely with business administration.

O'Connor (2002) highlighted that, initially, all of the advancements in European hospitality management education occurred outside of the university sector, due to the newness of this field as an area of academic study. 'Pure and simple snobbery' has been identified by Brotherton and Wood (2008, p.10) as a justification why hospitality education has not featured significantly in the university sector. As previously mentioned, while this remains the case in respect of undergraduate tourism and hospitality education in Ireland, there have been some attempts by the universities to provide taught postgraduate tourism qualifications, specifically University College Dublin (UCD) and the University of Limerick (UL) have provided taught master's programmes, in addition to an Institute of Technology.

Given the aforementioned employee turnover levels, one may question the attractiveness of a career in hospitality or tourism and, in the first instance, the attractiveness of a formal undergraduate qualification in the field, let alone a postgraduate qualification. Brotherton and Wood (2008, p.9) put this question into perspective:

> Middle-class students who are the principal beneficiaries of higher education in most advanced societies, do not necessarily see the hospitality industry as offering the social status, working conditions or rewards commensurate with their class position, making recruitment to hospitality courses somewhat volatile.

However, the transferable skills developed through hospitality programmes, which may be utilised in other more attractive industries, was acknowledged by Brotherton and

Wood (2008, p.14) as an advantage, yet they propound that hospitality management education as a distinctive field of study is 'in trouble'. Powers and Riegel, back in 1993, indicated that some commentators questioned the continued existence of hospitality education for another generation. Yet, as identified by O'Leary and Deegan (2005) and Weber and Ladkin (2008), the development of tourism and hospitality in higher education is verified by the number of programmes, students studying in the field, academics and researchers and research output in the area. The source of Power and Riegel's concern was the ability of hospitality education to remain up to date and meet the needs of students and employers.

An alternative view was provided by Hjalager (2003), who surveyed 159 students on a Service Management Master's programme in Sweden. She suggested that third level education in tourism has increased due to the belief that tourism companies require qualified staff. Nolan *et al* (2010) reiterated the importance of tourism and hospitality education in the matching of expectations between both students and industry in respect of the competencies required in the workplace.

Having provided a general background on tourism and hospitality education the next part of this chapter will look at the focus of tourism and hospitality education and the curriculum.

The Focus of Tourism and Hospitality Education

According to Littlejohn and Watson (2004, p.409):

> hospitality and tourism management education has played to very different conditions over the past 30 years.

Conditions highlighted included the economy, the role of higher education and students and their career aspirations. Similarly, Tribe *et al* (2003) have acknowledged that there has been much written on the focus, structure and content of tourism and hospitality programmes in higher education. Hsu (2005, p.xiii) notes that, as the hospitality and tourism industry becomes 'more sophisticated and specialised', the demand for 'professionally trained managers and front line employees' increases. In response to these changes, Hsu suggests that 'the traditional apprenticeships and vocational programs' are no longer relevant to industry needs. Based on these needs, the academy introduced 'curricula based on science and management principles'. Baum (2007, 2008a) questions the balance between technical skills, emotional intelligence and cultural cache required by the tourism industry and that developed by academic

programmes. It is important to qualify that the majority of this research is centred on the undergraduate model of tourism and hospitality education and, similar to other aspects of postgraduate study in general, the focus and content of tourism and hospitality postgraduate programmes has received scant attention. Morrison and O'Mahony (2003, p.43) surmise that 'contemporary hospitality management education faces a number of significant tensions, contradictions and debates'. This section of the literature review examines the key themes that have evolved with regard to undergraduate education.

Mandelbaum (1980) discussed in depth the issue of education and professional training in general. In his view (1980, p.14):

> liberal education, as opposed to goal-oriented vocational or professional training, is the type of education assumed to equip individuals for roles of leadership in society.

This stance could potentially create a heated debate in the field of tourism and hospitality education. Morrison and O'Mahony (2003, p.38), writing in the context of two decades of debate and research on the topic, propound that:

> internationally, there has been a strengthening movement supporting the liberation of hospitality higher education from its vocational base.

Many writers, including Petrova and Mason (2004), label tourism degrees as vocational, which enhance employability, and a similar categorisation is allotted to hospitality degrees. Airey and Tribe (2000, p.285) discussed the 'lack of philosophical' perspective in tourism education. This was reiterated by Morrison and O'Mahony (2003, p.38), who identified the 'strong vocational ethos permeating the curriculum', yet suggested the need for a balance 'with that of the liberal and reflective'. Lashley (2007, p.216) conveyed that:

> fundamentally, hospitality must be established on a sound social science base. The current preoccupation with management and relevance to industry is an intellectual cul-de-sac.

Petrova and Mason (2004, p.99) describe this as 'the training versus education debate'.

Stuart (2002), who completed her doctoral thesis on the evolution of tourism as a field in higher education, would appear to be a good authority on this area. In this context, her journal article in 2002 details the qualitative findings from research with 9 institutions providing tourism programmes and 27 staff who taught and researched in the area. Stuart (2002, p.14) acknowledges that her research:

reveals a curriculum which has two faces; that which is present in documentation and promotional material, and that which is actually being delivered by the Tourism academic community.

That which is being taught by the tourism academics appeared to be focused on purging the curriculum of the vocational aspects that were deemed to be disadvantageous to the field's 'respectability in the wider academic community' (Stuart 2002, p.13).

Much research, including Raybould and Wilkins (2005) and Chathoth and Sharma (2007), tracked the debate concerning the skills required by hospitality managers and acknowledged the increased focus on corporate and strategic skills and the decreased emphasis on operational and technical skills within hospitality education. Work conducted by the Higher Education Academy (2007, p. 3) in the UK explored case histories of those working in the hospitality and leisure fields. This narrative-based research identified that graduates acknowledged the significance of skills achieved in the course of their studies and non-graduates indicated that their career routes to a similar skill-set was 'different rather than more or less relevant'.

According to Brotherton and Wood (2008), empirical research over the years would suggest that hospitality graduates do not benefit with regard to career development in any significant way when compared with non-graduates. Despite this debate on the focus of tourism and hospitality education, it remains the case that the number of people working in the sector in ROI, who hold a third level qualification, is low; for example, the most recent census (Central Statistics Office 2011) indicated that 1,102 employees in leisure, travel and related service occupations held a postgraduate diploma or degree. Similarly, 1,351 held an honours degree / professional qualification or both and 2,619 held an ordinary degree / professional qualification or both. In all cases, the majority of these degree holders were female.

Baum (2007) added to this discourse by acknowledging a decrease in the applicability of and demand for technical courses in tourism and a noted change on the part of the expectations of tourism employers who now look for generic skills such as communication, emotional intelligence and improved use of technology.

A review of tourism education's 40-year history in the UK was presented by Airey (2008). Given Airey's prominence as a researcher and writer in the area of tourism and hospitality education, and his extensive academic career, he is well placed to comment on the development and focus of tourism education.

Airey (2008) established four stages of tourism education and research. The *industrial stage* depicts the programmes of study in the 1960s and 1970s. These programmes had vocational centred aims and content and drew on business studies and economics. Employment opportunities subsequent to graduation was an important aspect of these early programmes. Airey draws on the terminology utilised by Tribe (1997, p.652) 'extradisciplinarity' to describe the type of knowledge produced outside of the academy, such as from government, industry and research institutes and which formed the basis of knowledge at the *industrial stage*. The influence of the industrial stage is still very apparent in modern day programmes which include work placements, field trips and industry based case studies.

The next stage described by Airey (2008) is the *fragmented stage,* which charts the fragmented nature of the tourism curriculum. Airey (online) comments on the influence that staff from other disciplines exerted on the fledgling tourism curriculum at this stage. The vocational versus 'liberal and reflective' debate had also commenced.

The *benchmarking stage,* which came to the fore in 2000, saw the establishment of subject benchmark information that encompassed hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism. Airey (2008) notes that while the business and management focus was still evident in tourism curricula at this time the benchmark also acknowledged the broader context of tourism. This was reflected in some module titles reproduced by Airey from undergraduate and postgraduate UK based programmes; these included 'Tourism, Culture and Society' and 'Sustainable tourism'.

The final stage of tourism development proposed by Airey is the *mature stage?* Airey is realistic in acknowledging that tourism still is without a theoretical framework as a programme of study, preparation for employment is still an instrumental aspect of education in the field and its foundations are still firmly based on knowledge gleaned from other disciplines. Yet, he comments (online):

> There may now be a new stage developing; one in which the concerns of tourism are less about justifying or questioning its existence and more about wider debates more akin to the social sciences in general. Tourism may be moving into a mature stage.

To continue to move in this direction, Airey advises that tourism in academia should enhance the quality and quantity of its research and continue to cultivate tourism teaching practices.

Having set the scene in respect of the focus of tourism and hospitality education, the next section of this chapter will examine issues in relation to tourism and hospitality curriculum.

Tourist and Hospitality Curriculum

> Uncertainty about the curriculum has given tourism education an enduring subject for debate almost from its very beginnings (Airey, 2008, online).

The diverse nature of tourism programmes, according to Baum (2005, p.29), could be described as an advantage, as this permits contextualisation of offerings to the needs of industry 'at a local level or in terms of the specialist sub-sectors that they aspire to support'. The lack of success nationally and internationally to put in place a structure for the 'harmonisation of training and qualifications' was also noted by Baum (2005). This lack of harmonisation is very apparent in the Republic of Ireland, as individual colleges and their quality assurance processes have autonomy to validate tourism and hospitality curricula for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Tourism and hospitality education in the Republic of Ireland exists in the context of the national qualifications framework outlined earlier in this chapter.

However, in the context of the UK, the subject benchmark statements for hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008) is relevant only for the 'bachelor's degree with honours' and, as indicated by Botterill and Gale (2005); this does not extend to postgraduate provision. In this context, the structures for education in the areas of tourism and hospitality in the Republic of Ireland appear to be much less developed that those of the UK.

Botterill and Tribe (2000, p.1) announced as a 'landmark occasion' the launch of 'an official tourism curriculum' grounded in the 'realms of HE officialdom', with the introduction of the hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism benchmark in 2000. Botterill and Tribe (2000, p.4) suggest that, as tourism degree programmes are 'pre-paradigmatic' and there is not an accepted paradigm and obvious core curriculum, programme tutors and teaching teams can exert significant influence on the curriculum content. In addition to this, imprecise career paths for graduates lead Botterill and Tribe (2000, p.4) to suggest that there is 'room for a whole variety of curriculum configurations'.

Airey and Tribe (2000, p.286) draw on Tribe's (1999) matrix of curriculum space, which has been used to identify where on the vocational and liberal continuum a tourism or hospitality programme lies. The vocational end of this diagram focuses on employability and the liberal end 'freedom of thought about tourism' (Tribe 2002, p.2). The stances in this diagram are reflection or action. This figure is presented below as figure 2.2:

Stance / Ends	Reflection	Action
Liberal	Reflective liberal	Liberal action
Vocational	Reflective vocational	Vocational action

Figure 2.2 - The Use of Curriculum Space

Source: Tribe (1999) as cited in Airey and Tribe (2000)

And, in relation to hospitality education, Lashley (2007, p.223) concludes that:

> The somewhat prosaic syllabus dominated by the 'tyranny of relevance' no longer meets the needs of managers destined to work in an industry where change is endemic.

Lashley (2007, p.219) discusses the reaction to his and Morrison's book 'In Search of Hospitality: Theoretical Perspectives and Debates' published in 2000 and notes that, in the case of numerous hospitality academics worldwide, the book was akin to having 'a light bulb switched on'. These individuals appreciate:

> the value of developing a theoretical underpinning to the field which moves away from mere applied management studies.

Lashley identifies the importance for hospitality education of the concept developed by Schön (1983) of 'reflective practitioners', mentioned in the next chapter on conceptual literature and, beyond that, Tribe's (2000, p.1) idea of 'philosophical practitioners':

> These would be graduates who deliver efficient and effective tourism services whilst at the same discharging the role of stewardship for the development of the wider tourism world in which these services are delivered.

In the case of those who are in favour of pursuing a more 'traditional' model of education, linked to the industry needs and relevance, they were less enthusiastic about the concepts contained in Lashley and Morrison's book.

The hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism benchmark statements for tourism and hospitality indicate the curriculum content for tourism and hospitality degree programmes (see Appendix J).

The modules delivered on the MSc Tourism and MSc Hospitality in the time period under review are presented below in tables 2.4 and 2.5:

Year	Semester	Modules
1	1	Strategic Tourism Marketing, Strategic Services Management, Tourism Information Systems, Tourism Policy and Planning, People Management, Research Methods.
1	2	Accounting and Finance for Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Law, Research Methods, Option 1, Option 2.
1	3	Dissertation.

Table 2.4 - MSc Tourism Management Modules (Full-Time)

Source: Master of Science (Tourism Management) Document B, Programme Document (2008).

Year	Semester	Modules
1	1	Hospitality Financial Management, Property Asset Management, Hospitality Information Systems, Strategic HRM for Hospitality Managers, Strategic Hospitality & Tourism Marketing Management, Research Methods for Master's Thesis.
1	2	Management for Hospitality Operations, Strategic Management-Concepts and Practices, Research Methods for Master's Thesis, Option 1, Option 2, Option 3.
1	3	Dissertation.

Table 2.5 - MSc Hospitality Management Modules (Full-Time)

Source: Master of Science (Hospitality Management) Document B, Programme Document (2008).

In the case of part-time delivery, these modules are delivered over six semesters.

According to Brotherton and Wood (2008), common core subjects on undergraduate hospitality programmes include strategic management, operations management, financial and real estate or property management, organisational studies and human resource management, marketing and service quality, information technology, accommodation and facilities management and food and beverage management. Baum (2005) asserts the attraction of international travel from the perspective of the student

selecting hospitality and tourism programmes. In that sense, internationalisation needs to be addressed in the curricula delivered on such programmes.

In this context, Baum (2005) notes aspects that feature in curricula, including a foreign language, international business modules, e.g., international human resource management, modules that incorporate global comparison relevant to tourism, e.g., law, diversity and multi-cultural management and the role of multinational enterprises in tourism. In the view of Busby and Gibson (2010, p.4), a significant number of British university programmes of study in hospitality and tourism include a work placement or internship, and it is this aspect of the course that offers 'a vocational dimension to what can be a predominantly academic curriculum'. Barrows and Johan (2008), similar to Baum (2000), further acknowledged that online and distance delivery of tourism and hospitality programmes had increased.

Having described some of the theoretical debates concerning hospitality and tourism curricula and the curricula content, the next section explores some of the competencies developed as a result of tourism and hospitality education and the competencies required by tourism and hospitality employers.

Competencies – Industry and Education Perspectives

Given the quantity of tourism and hospitality research that has been conducted on the area of competencies, it would be impossible, in the confines of this research, to examine all of it. What is described below attempts to provide a synopsis of the main issues.   The conceptual literature chapter explores the themes of competence, competency and competencies. From a review of the tourism and hospitality literature, the terminology 'competencies' appears to be the more commonly employed.

Barrows and Johan (2008, p.154) noted an increased importance on:

> A competency-based approach to education. A growing number of tourism and hospitality university courses have taken up the challenge to prepare students by developing and enhancing the management competencies skills needed to operate successfully.

Barrows and Johan (2008, p.154) also acknowledged the dilemma of skill development in college, particularly those such as interpersonal skills which 'need to be practised in the field'. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) report (2001) discovered that the hospitality companies surveyed utilised competency profiles for their managers against which to assess performance. Writers from countries as diverse

as Zimbabwe, Ireland, Greece and Australia (Chimutingiza *et al* 2012; Nolan *et al* 2010; Ladkin 2002; Christou 2002) have written about the type and relevance of competencies developed through formal tourism and hospitality education.

Baum (1990) replicates in the UK a competencies study that was conducted by Tas (1988) in the USA. The focus of this study was the industry expectations of education, and findings from both studies were utilised for curriculum development. Both studies identified the importance of what Baum (1990, p.2) described as 'traditional skills of hotel keeping' including 'guest care, employee relations, professionalism and communication'. It is interesting to see some of these competencies reappear in a much more recent survey completed by Nolan *et al* (2010) in the Republic of Ireland, with 41 employer respondents and 33 graduate respondents. Nolan *et al* (2010) suggest that customer service and the maintenance of professional ethics and standards competencies are rated highly by employers and graduates alike. Employers emphasised the importance of teamwork and cost control and graduates highlighted the importance of people management areas, such as the management of poor performance amongst employees and a focus on training needs identification. A knowledge of building facilities and menu development were identified by both as areas of least significance. In general, operational, practical, technical skills were not emphasised by the study but some interviewees alluded to the relevance of operational experience as a contributor to graduate career progression in the industry.

This research built on the earlier work of Brophy and Kiely (2002), who identified competencies relevant for middle level managers in three star hotels in the Republic of Ireland, based on qualitative research with 42 three star hotels. The competencies identified by Brophy and Kiely (2002) include teamwork, leading for results, effective communication, customer service, planning and organizing, problem solving, financial awareness, enthusiasm and strategic thinking. Similar to Nolan (2010), Cecil *et al* (2010) acknowledges that much research has been conducted on the competencies required in the field of hospitality but, notes that there has been a dearth of attention in the area of competency evaluation and assessment of competencies acquired in higher education.

Cecil *et al* (2010) summaries the work of Christou (2002), Annaraud (2006), Dopson and Nelson (2002), Fjelstual (2007) and Gursoy and Swanger (2005), who investigated core competencies important in the hospitality curriculum. These articles examined countries including Greece, the United States and Russia. Across the range of these

articles, the types of competencies identified by employers, academics and graduates included the management of customer service difficulties, professionalism, good interpersonal skills, leadership, cost control, financial management, communication skills, business management and ethics. The empirical research conducted by Cecil *et al* (2010) identified similar competencies highlighted by students, employers and educators with communication skills ranked important by all stakeholders.

Some of the competencies identified by the HEFCE report (2001) and deemed important for the hospitality industry by managers working in the industry, included people management skills, business acumen, commercial awareness, communication skills, and both tactical and strategic problem solving; transferable skills and the ability to deal with change and uncertainty were also noted as important.

For their research, with responses from 371 industry managers and 211 undergraduate students, Raybould and Wilkins (2006, p.6) drew on Sandwith's framework, but also used a generic skills framework. They define generic skills to include 'core skills', 'key competencies' or 'employability skills':

> Oral Communication, Written Communication, Problem-Solving, Conceptual and Analytical, Information Management, Teamwork and Leadership, Interpersonal Skills, Adaptability and Learning, Self-Management.

Raybould and Wilkins (2006) noted that managers and students identified interpersonal, problem-solving, self-management, teamwork and leadership as most significant and skills in the domains of information management and conceptual and analytical domains as less important.

This section of the chapter introduced the research that has previously been conducted on tourism and hospitality education, identified some of the debate around the focus of this education and provided an overview of curricula and competencies. The next section will look at the linkages between tourism and hospitality education and various stakeholders including employers, students / graduates and educators.

Various Stakeholders' Perspectives on Tourism and Hospitality Education

The Industry Stakeholder

On the issue of education in general, Garner and Wallace (1997, p.59) suggest that:

> there is a conflict between the university view of learning and that of the workplace.

This is discussed in further detail in the conceptual literature review chapter. The difference of opinion between educators and employers has also been highlighted by Barron (2008). Barron (2008, p.731) notes that much debate and research in recent years has centred on the matter of developing graduates with 'skills, knowledge and attitudes' for industry careers. However, Barron (2008) acknowledges that research evidence would suggest a divergence of opinion between the 'skills, knowledge and attitudes' deemed to be important by educators and those expected by industry, the main theme emerging being the educators' over-emphasis on academic and theoretical elements to the detriment of more practical skills.

Barrow and Johan (2008, p.155) in their descriptive book chapter, caution that the establishment of a good relationship with industry is central to the success of a programme. They go as far as to say that:

> an ever present concern in hospitality management education is the degree of "fit" between the curriculum and student development on the one hand and industry needs on the other.

A number of suggestions are offered as to how to involve industry, including providing advice to programme administrators, participation on boards and committees, guest lectures, involvement in student recruitment and financial assistance. Similarly, Solnet *et al* (2007, p.66) highlight that 'tourism-related fields such as hospitality' are applied in nature and require that educators, students and syllabi develop and profit from a partnership with industry. However, Stuart (2002) noted the limited involvement of industry in the development, design and delivery of tourism programmes in the UK, other than once off participation at programme validation stage and sporadic industry guest lectures, rather than cohesive and meaningful input. She deemed this to be as a result of reticence on the part of academic staff to include industry.

Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996) draw on a number of secondary studies from the USA in the 1990s, which examined some of the challenges between industry, educators and students, and built their own model of challenges for hospitality master's programmes. The topics highlighted by Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996) include the alleged mis-information on the part of programme providers of career progression into 'corporate' positions subsequent to graduation, the balance between functional and general skills and which is most important for industry.

Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996) conducted postal surveys with 106 corporate hotel executives, from varied educational backgrounds (mainly business and accounting), and

130 master's students, 46 per cent of whom were from a hospitality undergraduate background. The hotel executives expressed a preference for recruiting hospitality master's graduates for 'operations-related' roles, but favoured MBA graduates for finance, human resource and marketing positions. Only 20 of the hotel executives held a master's qualification and, in general, they had limited knowledge of hospitality master's programmes. Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996, p.45) found that students seemed to have unrealistic career expectations of attaining 'corporate-level positions immediately upon graduation', whereas the executives had commenced their careers in operations. Other research completed in the USA by Lefever and Withiam (1998) indicated that hospitality employers were critical of graduates' lack of realism in respect of the industry, their poor financial awareness, analytical, problem solving and communication skills.

In a similar vein, Johanson *et al* (2010, p.2) alluded to the 'tension' that has become evident in the academic research between industry experts and hospitality educators with regard to the relevance of education programmes and formal competency development to the industry. This 'tension' is well documented in the secondary research and, in the context of Ireland, O'Leary and Deegan (2005) acknowledged an ongoing debate between student, industry and academic views on the tourism / hospitality curriculum content and the value of a tourism qualification. The dissonance between employer and educator views on the value of hospitality and tourism education may result in an under appreciation of formal education and human resources.

Similarly, Raybould and Wilkins (2005), researching undergraduate hospitality education in Australia, identified the mismatched expectations of hospitality graduates and employers' perceptions of those graduates. This sentiment is reiterated by Nolan *et al* (2010) who also discovered a gap between what industry needs and what educators provide. Weber and Ladkin (2008, p.449) propound that the involvement of tourism and hospitality academics in the preparation of students for industry or academic life is 'critical'. However, Littlejohn and Watson (2004) acknowledged the need for higher education and industry to work in partnership for the development of graduate managers. This would involve the acceptance by employers that lifelong learning is an imperative that merits the support of industry. Nolan *et al* (2010) also suggest a greater role for industry in the design, development and delivery of hospitality and tourism education. In fact, Kay and Russette (2000, p.52) note that, as far back as the 1920s, when the first four year hospitality management programme was developed by Cornell

41

University, industry advice had been garnered in respect of 'the essential competencies that graduates need for professional success' in America.

As recently as 2012, Chimutingiza *et al* have investigated the balance between industry, educator and student views on hospitality and tourism education in Zimbabwe. Studies have been conducted over the years in various countries exploring the essential and desirable competencies for hospitality graduates. This includes work in the USA in the late 1980s and 1990s, including works by Tas (1988), Tas *et al* (1996) and Sandwith (1993). These studies spanned the views of employers, students, graduates and educators and identified the importance of interpersonal and leadership competencies.

Petrova and Mason (2004) summarised some of the documented perceptions held by UK employers in relation to tourism degrees, concluding that a lack of consistency among the tourism programmes on offer and the confusion that this has caused has hampered graduate employability. It appears that UK research suggests that tourism employers are uncertain as to whether graduates met industry needs. Petrova and Mason (2004, p.102) discovered, from their ten exploratory interviews, that tourism employers acknowledged the 'commitment, dedication and interest' in the industry of tourism graduates and recognised their 'all round knowledge of the industry'. Whilst interesting research, many of the respondents did not have direct experience of working with tourism graduates and formed their views on the chasm between the academic world of tourism and the tourism industry from other experiences.

The issue of graduate identity in small hospitality firms is debated by Jameson and Holden (2000). These authors support the analysis of Holmes (1999) that neither employers' expectations of what a graduate should be or graduates' perceptions of what graduate employment entails are separately established. Instead, these two sets of expectations become interrelated and are influenced by each other. Jameson and Holden (2000) conducted a number of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with graduates and managers in six small hospitality companies in the UK. On the basis of this qualitative research, they discovered that employers suggested that they 'were not bothered' and 'don't mind' whether a candidate is a graduate or not (Jameson and Holden 2000, p. 269). In turn, this would imply that being a graduate in such a work setting is of little significance.

According to Jackson (2008, online):

> The tourism and hospitality industries have not always responded well to
> tourism and hospitality education, even at degree level, let alone for

postgraduates. In the past, you were expected to work your way up from operations, and industry experience commanded a higher premium than qualifications.

The issue of industry's openness to graduate recruitment is also explored in the Irish literature. Nolan *et al* (2010) imply that small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) do not generally attempt to attract or select graduates and question the value and contribution of a formal qualification. This entire issue is a source of concern, given the tourism and hospitality industry in Ireland is characterised by a significant percentage of SMEs (Nolan *et al* 2010; IHF 2010). One of the graduate respondents in Nolan *et al's* (2010) research indicated that:

> I don't find my degree hugely beneficial in terms of salary or anything... they (employers) can get someone else in off the street to do the exact same thing... it's just knowledge that you build up over time in a business that makes you valuable to them (employers) (G#1).

If this reluctance to employ graduates is true, it creates barriers for those with primary degrees, let alone graduates from master's programmes. Employers surveyed by Nolan *et al* (2010) indicated discontent with the people management, finance and interpersonal competencies acquired by graduates during their time in education. Connolly and McGing (2006), from their research in three, four and five star Dublin hotels, discovered that practical skills and experience were valued over analytical skills and these were seen as essential for supervisory or management roles in the hotel industry, rather than a degree. This research was based on a total of 40 completed postal questionnaires, where 68 per cent of respondents were of the view that degree courses did not meet industry needs. It was indicated that human resource management, communication, working in a team, problem-solving, decision-making and practical skills were greatly appreciated by industry, whilst analytical skills were less attractive. 97 per cent of respondents identified that a degree in hospitality was 'not a recruitment requirement for a management or supervisory position'. However, 100 per cent of respondents acknowledged that 'experience was necessary for a management or supervisory position' (Connolly and McGing, 2006, p.54).

Hjalager (2003, p.34) warns that, while third level tourism qualifications provide numerous opportunities, this needs to be viewed with caution 'given the instability and development imperatives in the sector, there are good reasons to warn against taking specialisation too far'. She suggested that, from the outset, students should be made aware that a 'preprogrammed tourism career' does not exist. Hjalager is of the view

that educators and industry should provide generalist knowledge that will enhance students' overall career opportunities.

Dale and Robinson (2001) comment that tourism employers frequently select graduates from non-tourism programmes, e.g., business studies, who possess the general skills demanded of a tourism job. On the other hand, they convey the opinion that non-tourism employers may be unsure as to what constitutes a tourism degree and, in that sense, are reluctant to recruit tourism graduates.

The terminology 'the tyranny of relevance' first introduced by Airey and Tribe (2000) was further assessed by Lashley (2004, p.68) and he notes that 'slavish concern for industry relevance' is not in the long-term interest of industry or graduates.

Whilst much of the aforementioned research identifies the concerns expressed by industry in respect of relevance of education to their needs, a report produced by the HEFCE in 2001 identifies some positive elements of this relationship in relation to the hospitality industry. Some of the findings identified that qualifications, both undergraduate and postgraduate, are recognised as important for progression past some points of management and this seemed particularly relevant in larger companies. The evidence also suggests that the industry favours hospitality graduates over graduates from other disciplines due to their 'understanding of the way the industry works', they have 'passion and commitment' and are more likely to 'stay the course' (HEFCE, 2001, p.5). The research did identify that the education background of respondent managers impacted on their view of graduates and their value to their organisations. There was an apparent difference of views between managers who had progressed through the ranks and those who were graduates themselves.

With regard to areas for improvement, the HEFCE report (2001, p.6) noted that, in some cases, graduate managers were not allocated work in line with their skill levels and this impacted on staff turnover. Similarly, some hospitality companies sought graduates from the traditional controlled 'hotel school regime', whilst others looked for graduates who could think 'outside of the box'. Other areas for concern that were noted included that graduate salaries did not always reflect the demands of the job and that the structure sometimes impacted on the career progression of females with dependent children.

Research conducted in Scotland by Harper *et al* (2005) suggested that formal qualifications were an imperative aspect of a hotel manager's career development. In

the Irish context, O'Leary and Deegan (2005) discovered that, at senior management level in tourism jobs, there is a higher proportion of those with a degree level award employed. In a similar vein, Garavan *et al* (2003, p.268) created a picture of a relatively young, male, well-educated hotel manager who 'invested in significant levels of postgraduate education'. Overall, Garavan *et al* (2003) emphasised that education contributes to career opportunities.

In addition to the divide between the academy and industry in respect of education, Airey (2008, online) observes that this may also extend to research:

> The close relationship between physical scientists or engineers or even between sociologists, economists and psychologists and their worlds of practice in the exchange of knowledge or in research funding is rarely replicated in tourism.

Weir and O'Donoghue (2005, p.433) combined the employability and research elements in the following quotation:

> a healthy tertiary education sector requires to increase its research endeavour and to increase the number of students qualifying at the postgraduate level, but those increases are of little value without industry and commerce capitalising on the research output and offering meaningful employment to graduates and postgraduates.

Whilst this quotation is a general comment in respect of all aspects of higher education in Ireland, it holds particular resonance for Irish tourism and hospitality education and the Irish tourism and hospitality industry, given the aforementioned differences of opinion in respect of the value of tourism education.

This section has assessed some of the pieces of research that have looked at the industry's role and perspective with regard to formal education in the area of tourism and hospitality. The next section will explore secondary research with regard to tourism and hospitality educators.

The Educator Stakeholder

Whilst research has been conducted on curriculum development, programme delivery and teaching methods, little research has focussed on the role of tourism and hospitality educators. This may seem unusual given Barrows and Johan (2008, p.148) identify that hospitality education is available 'on almost every continent', with countries such as USA, Switzerland and the UK possessing a long tradition of such education provision. Barron (2008, p.730) acknowledges the 'pivotal' role of educators in the future of the

industry, as they are involved in the training and development of hospitality and tourism managers of the future. Yet, Hemmington (2007, p.7) suggests that:

> as orphans of the academic world, hospitality academics have perhaps jumped too readily into the world of services management, with little consideration for the true relevance and implications of this perspective for the concept of hospitality.

From another perspective, Botterill and Gale (2005, p.477) reiterate a well-established concern, that of the 'struggle for tourism studies to gain any status in the wider academy'.

Brotherton and Wood (2008, p.3) create a less than desirable backdrop for the hospitality industry and the hospitality academy, and question the:

> assumption that there is something unique about the hospitality industry that requires a special response in terms of adaptive management models, and more importantly, dedicated educational provision and (more bizarrely) unique research methodologies.

While Weber and Ladkin (2008) indicated that the hospitality and tourism academics they surveyed identified the importance of research in their roles, Brotherton and Wood (2008) suggest that the aforementioned 'assumption' has had an adverse impact on hospitality research in particular and resulted in 'positivistic, quantitative' (p.4) studies and, frequently, these quantitative studies lack 'methodological sophistication' (p.5) and result in research 'a great deal of which *is* of poor quality' (p.7).

The level of qualification of hospitality educators and researchers was also brought into question by Brotherton and Wood (2008). They noted that USA hotel school staff seldom held a qualification higher than a master's and that impacted the quality of research conducted. These authors (2005, p.5) are also less than complementary about hospitality research journals and suggest that they:

> act as a repository of diverse theory-light papers that demonstrate little of any shared sense of intellectual coherence.

Lewis, as far back as 1982, discussed issues about hospitality educators and hospitality curricula that continue to be part of the current research discourse. Lewis (1982, p.12) noted that:

> Faculties teach time-tested subjects with which they are comfortable... In addition, many hospitality educators are out of touch with the business world and are unaware of its evolving needs.

Lewis did, however, note that the hospitality industry also needed to be more forward thinking. Botterill and Gale (2005, p.476) convey another concern with regard to educators, which is the pace of growth in the number of tourism students at postgraduate and doctoral level in the UK, and broach the issue of achieving 'quality and standards of the awards'. They also note that:

> Academic staff unfamiliar with Master's level work may find it difficult to 'pitch' their teaching, learning and assessment approaches at the correct level.

In a different vein, the issue of the pertinence of the careers of hospitality and tourism educators was researched by Weber and Ladkin (2008). Their findings, from an internet survey completed by 342 hospitality and tourism educators around the world, contribute to the debate on the relevance of hospitality and tourism education for the industry. Weber and Ladkin (2008) discovered that while 80 per cent of respondents possessed industry work experience, recent entrants to the ranks of academia had only work experience of brief duration and lacked exposure to senior levels of management. Whilst the majority of respondents in Weber and Ladkin's (2008) work had acquired a doctorate qualification (235), in 80 per cent of these cases, the doctorate degree was in an area other than hospitality or tourism.

Though Stuart's work (2002, p.9) investigates undergraduate provision in tourism, her findings are nonetheless insightful with regard to the under-researched voice of the tourism academic. From her research with 27 tourism academics, she indicates that the inclusion of 'inappropriate' teaching staff on tourism programmes has stymied the veracity and quality of the field's advancement. This concern seems to stem from non-tourism specialists delivering generic modules on tourism programmes without sufficient application to the specialist field. Stuart (2002, p.11) also questions the unity of the tourism academic community and suggests that this lack of synergy amongst academic staff results in a focus on individual module design to the detriment of programme development and a 'cohesive curriculum' and 'a collective, cohesive community'.

This is not totally dissimilar to Hsu's (2005, p.xiii) rationale for compiling a book on the issue of 'Global Tourism Higher Education, Past, Present and Future', based on discussions with hospitality and tourism academics at conferences, where it became apparent that:

> Many felt isolated, unsure of the route taken, at a crossroads, and uneasy about the explosive and seemingly disorganised development of tourism education in their country.

Stuart (2002, p.13) also broaches the academic relationship with the tourism industry and found that:

> Some lecturers were even beginning to argue that an education *about* Tourism could actually be a better preparation for employment in the tourism industry than an education *for* Tourism.

This highlights the previously mentioned debate regarding the balance between knowledge and industry focussed practical skills provided by tourism programmes. The vocational versus the academic divide is clearly evident in Stuart's (2002, p.12) synopsis of her discussions with tourism academics:

> Whereas respectability for Tourism as an academic subject has been viewed by lecturers interviewed as an issue over which they feel they have little influence or control, their decision to focus on the academic aspects of Tourism, and to distance themselves from courses which have clear vocational links, is to an extent, evidence of the considerable impact they have exerted over the subject's perceived respectability.

The concept of developing a 'reflective practitioner' and a 'philosophical practitioner' has already been referenced in the context of hospitality and tourism curricula. Lashley (2004, p.66) observes that, in order to achieve either, hospitality educators need to shake off the shackles of providing programmes relevant to industry needs and instil in students a 'strong spirit of enquiry' a dedication to life-long learning and cultivate 'students' intellectual abilities' (p.68).

This section has provided an outline of the limited amount of research conducted in respect of tourism and hospitality educators. Areas for improvement and concerns have been identified.

The next section examines the secondary research related to tourism and hospitality students and graduates.

The Student and Graduate Stakeholder

Barrows and Johan (2008) consider the reasons why students pursue hospitality degrees in higher education. Some of the motives noted include family background, family members' jobs, summer work in the industry, potential earnings and access to reputable programmes. Barrows and Johan (2008) also identify that most prospective students expect that a hospitality qualification will provide them with industry specific

theoretical and practical experience, an industry network and good job prospects. However, they acknowledge that, subsequent to study, graduates may opt not to work in hospitality after all. The issue of formal education and industry experience is also alluded to by Barrows and Johan (2008, p.148). Indeed, they appear to have a very simplistic view of an otherwise quite challenging debate:

> It is generally accepted that students are able to learn more during a fixed period in school (typically three or four years) than is possible if they were to spend the same fixed period working in industry. With that said, it is also generally accepted that success in the industry usually comes from a background that combines both work experience and formal education.

Bedingfield (2005, p.201) acknowledges that graduates are joining employment with 'an increasingly consumerist approach and with high expectations of their new employer'. A mismatch of expectations between graduate and employer is identified as the 'most likely' reason for graduate turnover. Little research exists about the views held by postgraduate students about their tourism and hospitality education or the tourism and hospitality industry.

Some of the undergraduate research (Jenkins 2001) suggests that internship students sometimes have negative experiences during their industry internships and that this impacts upon their attitude to a career in the industry upon graduation. Research conducted by O'Mahony *et al* (2001) examining the views of 143 students studying hospitality management, showed that positive experiences of the industry through observation, part-time work, media reports and consultation with family or friends working in the industry had impacted upon their choice of third level programme. However, it should also be noted that this research highlighted the fact that in excess of half of those surveyed made the decision to attend college before selecting a programme or career. This led O'Mahony *et al* (2001) to question the level of pre-college knowledge of the hospitality industry held by these students before they embarked upon their studies.

On the other hand, Hjalager (2003) indicated that Swedish students were motivated to study for a Service Management Master's programme for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector as they had previous experience of working in the sector. They selected this course of study as they liked working with people, the degree could be used across many industries and it provided opportunities for international careers. With regard to employment, these students were looking for a good, collaborative, stable atmosphere at

work and they put less emphasis on the career opportunities, flexible hours, pay and benefits. A fifth of the students held aspirations to become entrepreneurs in the future.

Fáilte Ireland (2010a) funded research that included the views of 63 tourism degree graduates and 80 hospitality degree graduates. This piece of research is unusual in that it specifically differentiated between tourism and hospitality graduates. These graduates were selected from three groups of students who acquired their undergraduate qualification between 2004 and 2006. Encouragingly, 84 per cent of these graduates were in employment at the time of the study. Unsurprising, given previous research, only 47 per cent of hospitality graduates were working in the hospitality industry and a much lower figure of 27 per cent of tourism degree holders were in tourism employment. The sector most popular for those who did not continue to work in hospitality or tourism was the finance sector. 67 per cent of hospitality graduates held management positions, whilst similar positions were held by only 27 per cent of tourism graduates.

Hospitality graduates proffered the issue of pay and conditions (77 per cent) as to why they had left the hospitality sector. The most popular reason (33 per cent) cited by tourism graduates for leaving the sector was the decision to select another career direction, preceded by difficulties in securing a job in tourism (27 per cent), financial reasons (18 per cent) and prospects available in other sectors (18 per cent). 15 per cent of the tourism graduates surveyed never commenced employment in the sector. 33 per cent of hospitality graduates indicated that their specialist credential was 'essential', with another 30 per cent confirming that it was 'relevant'. In the case of tourism, only 19 per cent identified that the qualification was 'essential', with 48 per cent agreeing that the tourism credential was 'not relevant'. Turnover from the sector and movement to different sectors is possible because of the transferable nature of skills applicable to the broader tourism sector (Baum 2008b).

Littlejohn and Watson (2004) reported on an industry and academic roundtable discussion and it was emphasised that a positive outlook about the prospects and opportunities available is necessary as many negative stories abound in respect of work-life in the industry. Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) conducted quantitative research with third and fourth year students studying in publicly owned tourism and hospitality schools in Turkey who had industry internship experience. One of their key findings suggested that in excess of half of the 397 questionnaire respondents had elected to study tourism and hotel management without adequate information about working

conditions or career prospects within the industry. It was evident that reluctance to pursue a career in the industry was based on the negative aspects of work-life, including stressful work, little family-friendly initiatives, long hours, poor remuneration, insecure seasonal work, low-status jobs, unfair promotions, undesirable management style and low-skilled peer colleagues.

This research concurs with the work of Jenkins (2001) and others but, as is acknowledged by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000), it differs to the work of Ross (1994) and Murphy (1985), who propound that industry work experience nurtures more positive expectations about a career in hospitality or tourism. The research of Nolan *et al* (2010) suggested that many graduates have impractical expectations of the jobs that they will acquire in the industry upon graduation. This, in turn, may result in a drain of talent from the industry, as graduate expectations are poorly managed and not achieved in the course of their work-life. This also concurs with the aforementioned work of Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996). In respect of skills, graduates felt that their hospitality and tourism education experience left them lacking with regard to people management and other soft skills (Nolan *et al* 2010).

Benckendorff *et al* (2009) in their conceptual paper on the student experience, note that four factors that impact on the student experience can be categorised as (1) institutional dimensions, (2) student dimensions, (3) sector-wide dimensions and (4) external dimensions. Specifically, in respect of institutional dimensions, the importance of institutions encouraging 'social learning environments' to support the creation of 'learning communities', where 'small cohesive groups of students' progress through a programme as a cohort, was noted (Benckendorff, 2009, p.87).

Other research relating to tourism and hospitality students examines learning styles and the challenges of teaching and working with Generation Y. The learning styles of hospitality management undergraduate students have been researched by Lashley (1999) and he reached the conclusion that these students are activists. This would suggest that they like working and interacting with other people and favour variety and unpredictability. Whilst this can all be positive in a hospitality environment, the disadvantages of this learning style includes a tendency not to plan, poor time-keeping and prioritising and an inclination to rush into things, all of which can impact on achievement of goals and overall performance in academia and the workplace. Lashley (2000, p.62) advocates that educators need to encourage hospitality students to 'reflect

and theorise'. Barron (2008, p.731) notes that 'generation Y', those born between 1979 and 1994:

> possess a particular set of attitudes and characteristics that hospitality educators and the hospitality and tourism industry are struggling to cope with.

It is not only educators that should have cognisance of Generation Y needs, as Barron *et al* (2007) identify that Generation Y employees in hospitality are seeking a balance between career development and lifestyle. Solnet and Hood (2008) put forward some propositions in respect of what Generation Y employees seek from their hospitality employers. Generation Y human resources look for a workplace where they feel involved and cared for, where they can achieve self-actualisation, reap intrinsic benefits from their work, receive training and development, but also have fun. Given the aforementioned people management research in tourism and hospitality, some of these expectations of Generation Y employees subsequent to education may not be fulfilled in the current culture in tourism and hospitality workplaces. However, Solnet and Hood (2008) identify where tourism and hospitality could exceed Generation Y expectations is in the area of varied work and careers and opportunities for travel.

There is a plethora of research that has examined the issue of career development in hospitality and tourism and explored the staff turnover levels from the industry and the mismatch of expectations between educators, graduates and employers. Some of this research has been presented previously in this literature review and, in this section, a snapshot of some of the career-related studies is provided.

Ladkin and different co-authors (Ladkin 2000; Ladkin and Juwaheer 2000; Akrivos, Ladkin and Reklitis 2007) have researched careers in a number of different countries, such as Greece, Mauritius, UK and Australia. The work identifies the importance of vocational education for career progression of hotel managers and the role of food and beverage experience in career development. Ayres (2006, p.16) conducted qualitative research with 23 employees (12 senior managers and 11 middle managers) from 12 organisations in Eastern Australia and she found that education is 'increasingly important' for those eager to advance their career in tourism. However, the respondents did note the significance of 'generalised skills and knowledge, rather than a narrow specialisation' (p.25). The majority of the respondents noted the role of luck in their career advancement.

Similarly, Harper *et al* (2005) conducted a quantitative study with 54 qualified and unqualified general managers in Scotland. With the omission of time spent in college, qualified managers advanced to a general manager position in nine years and two months and unqualified managers achieved this role in 11 years and ten months. Harper *et al* (2005, p.61) notes that formal qualifications improves the opportunity to move between companies and was a 'fast track' to general management level. Similarly, formal qualifications were deemed important in the development of, for example, 'functional' skills, such as sales and marketing and strategic management. Yet, there remained a doubt about the success of formal education in the development of 'personal skills'.

Chapter Summary

This literature draws on a broad base of information and previous research in an attempt to create a picture of tourism and hospitality in general and specifically from an educational perspective.

There are a number of limitations acknowledged with regard to this literature. In particular, the focus of this thesis is on two taught postgraduate programmes in the Republic of Ireland, yet there is a dearth of material in general in hospitality and tourism on postgraduate education and, in the Republic of Ireland, there is a paucity of research on any form of hospitality and tourism education research.

Firstly, this resulted in a reliance on secondary research and conceptual papers on hospitality and tourism research elsewhere but in particular, an environment close to the Republic of Ireland, the UK. Secondly, given the scarcity of research material on postgraduate education in hospitality and tourism, research on the undergraduate industry / education, the vocational versus the reflective or philosophical practitioner debates and undergraduate curricula issues were employed.

This contextual chapter of literature has painted a picture of the tourism sector and one of its sub-sectors, hospitality. Some of the challenges highlighted in this picture include the role of formal education in this sector and the management and development of people in tourism and hospitality organisations. In respect of education, the debate about the role and relevance of a vocational versus a liberal base in the curriculum continues to exist.

The issue of preparing graduates to work in industry, yet industry's doubts about the relevance of undergraduate and postgraduate study to their needs, is also still very much

apparent. The concerns of educators as to their status in the academy is also a factor identified in this picture, and how their objectives in programme delivery differs from what industry expects.

While some improvements have been recorded with regard to the value of formal education in industry careers, there are still significant concerns as to the overall approach to the management and development of people in this dynamic, diverse and economically important, growing, industry that is tourism and hospitality.

The literature contained in this chapter informed the research tools utilised at the data collection stage and provided a framework for the presentation of data themes in the findings chapter. The next literature chapter presents a conceptual backdrop for this thesis.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to create a conceptual framework for the contextual literature previously presented.

Airey and Tribe (2000, p.288) acknowledged that the development and dissemination of 'academic research' and knowledge occurs 'over generations of scholars'. This, they suggested, explained why areas of study such as hospitality depend on research and knowledge from 'outside the academic community', often rooted in industry (Airey and Tribe 2000, p.288). Brotherton and Wood (2008) similarly caution about the theory-light research and papers presented in respect of many aspects of hospitality and tourism and, in that sense, it has proven challenging to identify a strong theoretical basis in the field-specific literature. Consequently, education literature has been reviewed and employed to fill the gaps evident in the hospitality and tourism specific empirical research.

The main focus of the education literature presented below encapsulates the concepts of competence and tacit knowledge but, before this material is explored, it is necessary to justify the use of literature on the topic of 'professional' education and competence in the context of hospitality and tourism education. The human capital hypothesis, advocated by Becker (1983) and McNabb (1987), and employed by Semeijn *et al* (2005) in the medical field, asserts that human beings attain skills or competences in the course of their education, which are then applicable in their future employment. This hypothesis is investigated in the context of hospitality and tourism and the discussion of the concepts of competence and tacit knowledge facilitates this process. As much of the key literature on the area of competence is derived from research with 'professions', at the outset it is necessary to explore whether the fields of hospitality and tourism could be considered in this framework.

Professions, Professional Education and Hospitality and Tourism

Much of the literature on competence and competencies discusses the issue of professions and professional education and learning. In the context of hospitality and tourism education and competencies, the question arises as to whether hospitality and tourism qualify as true professions. Given the aforementioned negative image surrounding jobs in the industry, 'McJobs' (Brotherton and Wood, 2008, p.3) and the

'mickey mouse' nature of hospitality education (Brotherton and Wood, 2008, p.11), one could quickly respond that no, hospitality and tourism are most definitely not traditional professions.

However, Eraut (1994, p.1) suggests that 'the professions are a group of occupations the boundary of which is ill–defined'. He also describes (p.6) some of the types of preparation that 'professions' may experience, including an 'internship' of possibly up to five years, study at a 'professional college', a 'qualifying examination', attendance at a higher education college, resulting in a recognised academic qualification and the accumulation of 'evidence of practical competence'. After much review of literature, and acknowledgement of ambiguity surrounding 'when is a job a profession?', Cheetham and Chivers (2005, p.13) proposed the following definition of a 'profession':

> An occupation based upon specialised study, training or experience, the purpose of which is to apply skilled service or advice to others, or to provide technical, managerial or administrative services to, or within, organisations in return for a fee or salary.

While Brotherton and Wood (2008, p.30) deliberate that 'hospitality is still a comparatively young subject and, at times, seems as if it will never reach maturity', there is no such question about the maturity of the original occupations considered as professions, including law, medicine, the church, architecture, commissioned service in the armed forces and, possibly, teaching. Engineering, accountancy, banking, business and management specialist and knowledge workers were some of the other job types that swelled the professional ranks, post the Industrial Revolution (Cheetham and Chivers 2005). Some early factors that contributed to an occupation qualifying as a profession included the possession of land or the eating of dinners at Inns of Court. Nowadays, it is apparent that professions have requirements with regard to entry and academic education, professional education and continuous professional development. Professions have professional associations and codes of ethics and conduct (Cheetham and Chivers 2005).

Wood (1997, p.199) notes that the hospitality industry has been associated with 'paraphernalia of education and certification'. Yet, he cautions that 'to dignify this as evidence of professionalisation is, at its kindest, misguided'. However, when hospitality and tourism graduates are considered in the context of the occupational qualification characteristics, as outlined by Eraut (1994) and Cheetham and Chivers (2005), it is apparent that hospitality and tourism graduates meet some of the

requirements and that, therefore, the research relevant to professions can be applied to the hospitality and tourism milieu. This is demonstrated in the following section.

Undergraduate hospitality and tourism education, in the main, comprises an internship period of up to a year in duration. The private college provision of hospitality and tourism education is specialised and could, perhaps, be considered to be a 'professional college', yet the mainstream hospitality and tourism education takes place in non-specialist academic higher education universities and institutes. There are not any professional 'qualifying examinations', but hospitality and tourism graduates hold a recognised academic qualification. Barrows and Johan (2008, p.155) allude to the relationship between hospitality education and the hospitality industry and suggest that this is a characteristic familiar to 'professional education'. Airey and Tribe (2000, p.278) identified the impact that the establishment of the Hotel and Catering Institute (HCI), in the UK in 1949, had on 'professionalism' in the hospitality industry. The HCI, through the provision of programme and 'professional examinations', introduced standards in the industry (Airey and Tribe 2000, p.278). There are similar hospitality and tourism professional associations around the world and, whilst they do not yet have a role in determining codes of ethics and conduct, they advocate continuous professional development (CPD) in the field. For example, the Irish Hospitality Institute (IHI) states that it is a:

> professional voluntary non-profit organisation founded in 1966 for managers in the hotel and tourism hospitality sector in Ireland. The main focus is the professional interests and needs of managers within the Irish tourism hospitality industry (www.ihi.ie).

Professions, Learning and Postgraduate Qualifications

Professions have embraced the concept of 'off-the-job learning' by way of continuing professional education and continuing professional development (Eraut 1994, p.10). Eraut (1994, p.9) specifically discusses the rationale as to why professionals pursue 'post-qualification courses at postgraduate level'. He identifies three scenarios where such postgraduate study may occur. Firstly, there are professionals who aspire to embark on a specialism or pursue a cutting edge programme of study to enhance their knowledge. Secondly, there are those who have become or intend to become managers and who require a management credential, be it specialised or generic. Thirdly, professional educators embark on postgraduate study to help them prepare the 'new generation'.

Eraut (1994) comments that postgraduate courses may accentuate new knowledge, which may, in turn, diminish the previous experience of the practitioners. Eraut (2008, p.6) notes that:

> the most significant change in career terms is the award of a qualification, because this very public rite of passage symbolises generic competence in a profession, and is backed by the use of apparently clear and specific criteria for assessment.

Eraut is complementary of recently qualified professionals, as they have experience across many learning trajectories.

Similar to Eraut, Chivers (2007, p.640) comments on the merits or otherwise of further study for professionals:

> Why do professionals attend these long study programmes leading to qualifications when the research evidence suggests that until recent years most professionals have based their professional development on informal, usually on-the-job, learning methods? Firstly, there are professions, older and newer, which have not previously required specified qualifications. They still may not do so, but if a relevant qualification now exists professionals in these fields may feel under pressure to gain the qualification. Additionally, professionals in any field may see it as desirable to gain further qualifications to enable them to work in new, interesting or lucrative specialisms. They may regard the gaining of further qualifications as desirable in terms of career advancement. This has typically been the case for professionals moving into management roles and undertaking management diploma or Masters.

Chivers (2007) asserts that experienced professionals will be motivated to complete the course, achieve respectable grades and make an impact on lecturers, fellow students and their employers.

It is clear from the above that the concept of 'professions' is relevant to hospitality and tourism. Accordingly, the next section explores the theoretical framework of competence.

Concepts of Competence

The title for this section comes from one of the leading writers in the area of competence, Eraut (1998). As much of the contextual literature on hospitality and tourism mentions or alludes to competency and competencies, this section will conceptualise this material. Firstly, some background context is provided and this is followed by definitions, models, and criticisms of the concept of competence.

The Context of Competence

The origins of competence-based education have been well documented; Davies (1976) describes the forerunner to the competency terminology, 'the objectives movement in education'. Davies (1976) and Neumann (1979) cite various authors from Cicero to Mager (1962) as having contributed to the development of the modern day competence approach. Eraut (1994) notes that competence can be linked back to the professional qualifying exams introduced by professional associations to reassure the public in the nineteenth century. Tuxworth (1989, p.15) indicates that competency-based education is rooted in teacher education in the USA, although it was not without its detractors. On the other hand, in the UK:

> There was patchy and desultory interest in CBET (competency based movement in education and training) until the early 1980s, when the basis of a firmer training policy was laid by a series of white papers (Tuxworth 1989, p.15).

Jessup (1992) highlighted the economic need that drove the UK competence agenda to create a situation where continued learning throughout the course of a person's working life became the norm. This policy initiative focused on making use of the country's human resources in order to compete on the world economic stage. It also aimed to align vocational and academic qualifications with a view to improve engagement between these two forms of education. Eraut (1998, p.130) suggests that a national system of qualifications, such as the British National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), opens up the discussion about the connection between 'academic qualifications, professional qualifications and concepts of competence' and the 'gap between being qualified and being competent'. In respect of competency–based training, Eraut (1998, p.131) alludes to the fact that qualifications may be determined at 'national level' but competence should be defined at 'local level'.

Defining Competence, Competencies, Competency

Norris (1991, p.331) suggests that:

> Everyone is talking about competence. It is an El Dorado of a word with a wealth of meanings and the appropriate connotations for utilitarian times. The language of competence–based approaches to education and training is compelling in its common-sense and rhetorical force. Words like 'competence' and 'standards' are good words, modern words; everybody is for standards and everyone is against incompetence.

Norris (1991) uses the example of Tyler's doctorate thesis, from 1927, to illustrate that there is nothing innovative about competency–based approaches to education and training. Yet, from a review of the literature, there is no commonly used definition or consistency of term, with writers employing the terms competence, competencies, competency and competent.

Eraut (1998, p.133) draws on the work of Spencer and Spencer (1993) and provides a list of the 20 most common competencies:

Achievement and action Achievement orientation Concern for order, quality and accuracy Initiative Information seeking	Helping and human services Interpersonal understanding Customer service orientation
Impact and influence Impact and influence Organisational awareness Relationship building	Managerial Developing others Directiveness / assertiveness and use of positional power Teamwork and cooperation Team leadership
Cognitive Analytical thinking Conceptual thinking Technical / professional / managerial expertise	Personal effectiveness Self-control Self-confidence Flexibility Organisational commitment

Table 3.1 - The 20 most common competencies

Boyatzis (2008, p.7), another well recognised writer on the topic of competence, builds on the work of Bray *et al* (1974), Boyatzis (1982), Kotter (1982), Luthans *et al* (1988), Howard and Bray (1988), Campbell *et al* (1970), Spencer and Spencer (1993), Goleman (1998), Goleman *et al* (2002) to produce three 'clusters' of competencies that distinguish between 'outstanding' and 'average' performers. These competencies are:

1. Cognitive competencies, such as systems thinking and pattern recognition;
2. Emotional intelligence competencies, including self-awareness and self-management competencies, such as emotional self-awareness and emotional self-control; and
3. Social intelligence competencies, including social awareness and relationship management competencies, such as empathy and teamwork.

As previously stated, while many authors, as listed above, have written on the topics of competence, competencies, competency and competent, few actually define the terms. Collins (1983, p.174), in an article that initiated significant negative response from the academic community, employs the Oxford English Dictionary definition from 1970 that indicates that 'competence' and 'competency' can be employed 'interchangeably'.

Collins (1983) opts to use the term 'competency', as he suggests that it is the more frequently found term in education. Eraut (1998, p.134), whose work is firmly grounded in education, provides the following definitions of competency and competence:

> Competency is an underlying characteristic, but also a combination of attributes. Competence, however, integrates attributes with performance. This implies that a performance context rather than an education context is needed for such an integration to take place, thus emphasising the closeness of competence to performance rather than its separation.

On the other hand, Boyatzis (2008, p.6) whose work is more focussed on competency-based human resource management, defines competency as:

> A competency is defined as a capability or ability. It is a set of related but different sets of behavior organized around an underlying construct, which we call the "intent". The behaviors are alternate manifestations of the intent, as appropriate in various situations or times.

Cheetham and Chivers (2005, p.54), who have completed extensive reviews of previous research on professional competence, suggest that a definition of the general term 'competence' is context contingent and may mean different things in different situations. They propose the following general definition:

> Effective overall performance within an occupation, which may range from the basic level of proficiency through to the highest levels of excellence.

Chivers (2007, p.644) makes reference to the work of Entwistle (1997) and asserts that deep, and not surface, learning will result in the 'embedding' of 'professional competences'.

Brown and McCartney (1996, p.3) note the difference in terminology employed in the USA, 'competency' and the UK, 'competence'; they describe this as 'yet another example of Churchill's comment that America and Britain are two countries divided by a common language'. Brown and McCartney (1996, p.6) propose the use of the term 'capatence'. This amalgamates the meaning of competence 'that someone can show me now how something is done, because he or she has been taught, and has learned, to do it in the past' with their definition of capability (p.7) 'potential in the future', thereby combining the best of both concepts.

Having explored definitions of competence and even 'capatence', the next section provides an overview of some models of competence.

Models of Competence

Boyatzis' work in 1982, similar to McClelland's research in 1972, examined the concept of competence from a human resource management perspective. This work falls into Cheetham and Chivers' (2005) 'personal competence model', described later in Appendix K. The contingency theory of competency developed by Boyatzis (2008, p.6) is reproduced below in figure 3.1. This model propounds that the highest level of performance is thought to take place when a person's 'capability or talent' is in line with the demands of the job and the company's circumstance. This model is widely referenced, in both education and management literature, and it is based on research conducted with 2000 employees in 41 diverse jobs in 12 companies across a range of sectors. The views of job incumbents and their managers were sought, by way of critical incident interview, in respect of the characteristics of pre-selected 'superior', 'average' and 'poor' performers.

Cheetham and Chivers (2005) provide a critique of Boyatzis' popular model. Some of the criticisms levied at the approach include the pre-selection of interviewees based on ratings or recommendations that categorised them as 'superior', 'average' and 'poor', the contention that role holders views' of their behaviours may be subjective and the supposition that the possession of certain personal competencies will produce successful results on the job.
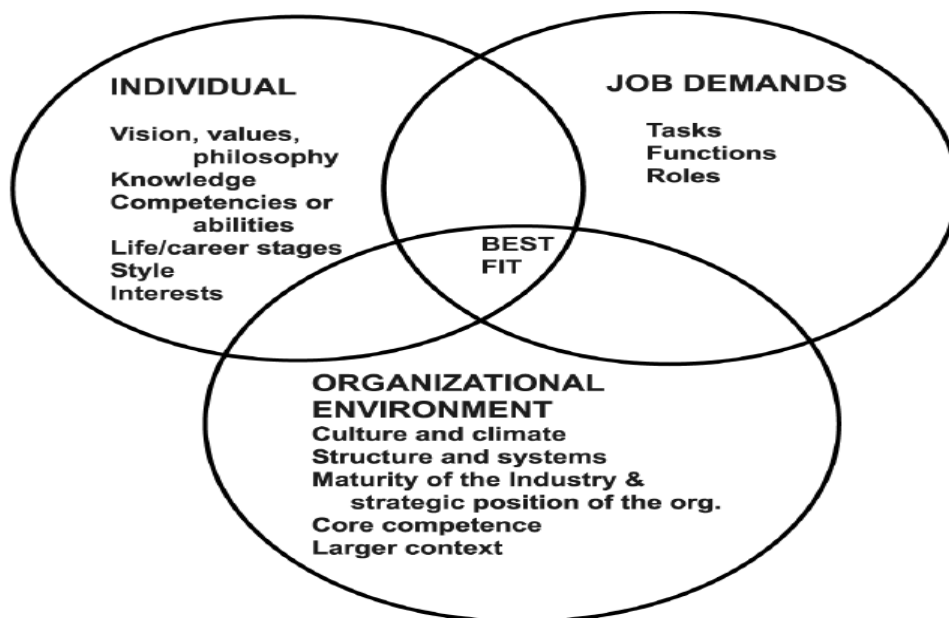
Figure 3.1 - Boyatzis' Theory of Action and Job Performance: Best Fit

Four separate approaches to competences are identified by Cheetham and Chivers (2005, p.55) and are relevant to professional occupations. These approaches are the technical-rational approach, the reflective practitioner approach or knowing-in-action, the functional competence approach and the personal competence approach, and these are described in detail in Appendix K.

Cheetham and Chivers (2005, p.70) and Eraut (1994) allude to a further layer of 'higher level competencies', described as meta-competencies. Cheetham and Chivers also discuss the importance of emotional intelligence in the context of meta-competence and personal competence. In fact, Cheetham and Chivers (2005) use their rigorous review of previous competence models as a basis for the development of their own detailed model, presented below in figure 3.2.

Revised model of professional competence
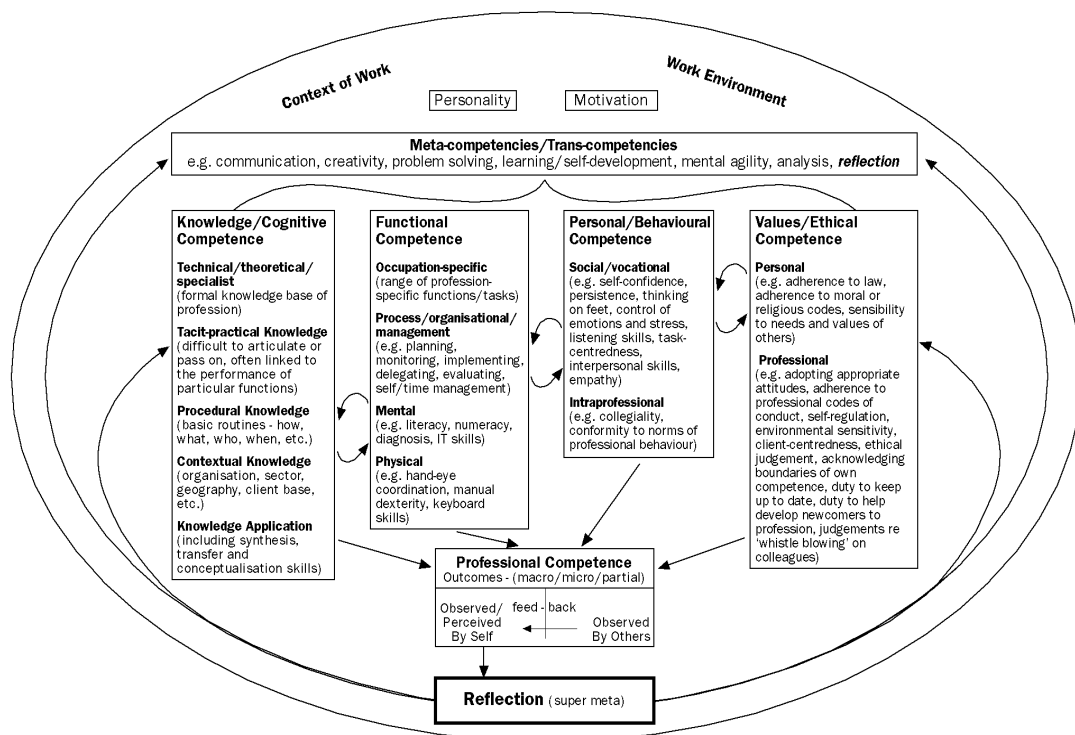
Figure 3.2 - Cheetham and Chivers Revised Model of Professional Competence

Benner's (1982) research involving nurses, a profession not dissimilar to hospitality and tourism in respect of the evolution from a vocational to a formal education structure, is a widely quoted example of the implementation of the Dreyfus model (1980). This model assesses the attainment and development of a skill, as an individual progresses through five levels of proficiency, (1) novice, (2) advanced beginner, (3) competent, (4) proficient and (5) expert.

Blank (1982) notes that, regardless of variation in terminology, competency–based training is developed, assessed and altered with the overall object of achievement of results. Jessup (1991, p.25) discusses the concern among educationalists that the involvement of those from industry in the determination of competence results in 'a narrow concept of competence'. However, Eraut (1998, p. 129) comments that, as it is employers who manage 'professional work' and delineate the jobs and roles held by employees, they will want to determine the competence relevant to their organisation's needs:

> They are not free, however, to design a work system *ab initio*, because they have to take into account the capabilities of their current and possible future employees, as developed by education, training and experience.

Eraut (1998, p.132) indicates that there has been a well-recognised convention of defining professional competence with regard to 'formal knowledge and its practical use', now that writers are highlighting the significance of 'informal and tacit knowledge for effective job performance'. Eraut (1998, p.132) acknowledges that a certain level of formal knowledge may be required but that not all of this knowledge is gleaned from a qualification; outside of this 'threshold' additional situated, tacit knowledge is acquired by way of experience. Given this assertion, it is necessary to delve deeper into this concept of tacit knowledge as it, in addition to the competence literature, may well hold an insight into the dissonance between educator, graduate and employer expectations in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Before examining the issue of tacit knowledge, the next section will identify the main criticisms levied at the concept of competence.

Competence – The Criticisms

While everyone may be 'against incompetence' (Norris 1991, p.331), everyone is certainly not for competency-based approaches. The following are some of the commentators that have contributed to the competency debate. Collins (1983, P.175) argues against the relevance of competency–based adult education:

> Establishing major categories, sub-categories, content areas, levels of competency, and so on, as guidelines for competent performance involves us further in excessive reductionism... Efforts to define all aspects of competent performance are doomed to failure. Something always eludes the definer. However all-embracing the systems of competency-based adult education may appear, there will always be important dimensions left out.

Some of the specific criticisms levied by Collins (1983, p.178) at this idea of competency–based education, include the contention that such systems add to 'centralisation' and 'bureaucratization' and, also, that when rules are established external to the 'interactional context' learners and educators become separated. Collins (1983, p.180) suggested that competency–based approaches 'bear the stamp of the industrial–commercial nexus' and, hence, a focus on efficiency and outputs. Where competency statements are in line with the 'subjectively meaningful experience' of learners, it just happens by chance.

Eraut (1998, p.127) suggests that some critics of the use of the term 'competence' have labelled it 'behaviourist, positivist and modernist'. Back in 1991, Jessup (p.27) intimated that the then 'new' importance assigned to competence and performance 'is often believed to be at the expense of knowledge and understanding'. While not critical of the competence approach, Bathmaker and Stoker (1999, p.58) discuss the merits of competence-based programmes that go beyond the idea of executing a task and encompass themes such as 'control and empowerment'.

In the UK, Hyland is one of the most vocal critics of the use of competence-based approaches to education by way of the NCVQ system. Hyland (1993, p.5) asserts that there is:

> nothing intrinsically wrong with having learning outcomes in higher education, as long as these do not foreclose options or overtly pre-determine content and methodology.

On the other hand, in the same conference paper (p.1), he proclaims that:

> The NCVQ framework is, however, ill-equipped to deal with education and training beyond the level of basic skills, and is largely irrelevant to the sort of learning that goes on in higher education.

It is apparent that Hyland's fervour with regard to the NCVQ system did not relent with time, as in 2006 (p.1) he presented another conference paper that described the developments in vocational education and training in the UK and Europe as akin to:

> Neo-behaviourist reductionism, which replaces rich conceptions of knowledge, understanding and vocational practice with narrowly prescriptive skills and competences.

Hyland (2006) acknowledges the factors that have contributed to this situation, including the 'pervasive and relentless' impact of competency-based education on all aspects of state education and the 'commercialism' surrounding the promotion of vocational credentials.

Hyland (2006) advocates the value of work-based learning in redressing the reductionist approach inherent in the competence model.

In their paper on policy development and execution in education, Bore and Wright (2009, p.252) discuss the British government's plan to turn teaching into 'a master's level profession'. They advocate policy creation that has cognisance of 'local and contextual dimensions' (p.250) and a progression away from the confines and restrictions of the concept of 'competence' to the utilisation of the idea of 'capability' (p.252). Bore and Wright (2009) share the reservations portrayed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) in respect of competence and propound that:

> Education for capability will necessitate an understanding of the complexities of inter-agency working, the features of problems which should be identified as wicked, trans-disciplinary perspectives and reticulist skills and knowledge (Bore and Wright 2009, p.252).

A master's level programme that embraces 'capability' would produce teachers equipped to face the complexity and unpredictability of their roles.

The next section examines the relevance of tacit knowledge in the context of this thesis.

Propositional and Procedural Knowledge – The Relevance to Hospitality and Tourism

In this section of the literature review, the conceptual basis for the different types of knowledge that exist and that have been developed in education and the workplace are delineated. Polyani (1969) has written extensively on the topic of knowledge, as has Eraut (1994, 2000, 2008, 2009). Propositional knowledge, described by Eraut (2000) as codified knowledge or public knowledge, is the explicit knowledge found in academia and academic fora. Personal knowledge, on the other hand, may be explicit or tacit and comprises:

> codified knowledge in its personalised form, together with procedural knowledge and process knowledge, experiential knowledge and impressions in episodic memory (Eraut 2000, p.114).

Eraut (2000, p.114) holds the view that most learning does not occur in 'formal' settings and explores the difference between 'formal' and 'non-formal' learning. He identifies a number of characteristics that define formal learning:

- A prescribed learning framework

- An organised learning event or package

- The presence of a designated teacher or trainer

- The award of a qualification or credit

- The external specification of outcomes

Similarly, Chivers (2007, p.640) asserts that:

> While few today would challenge the need for young people wishing to enter a profession to study at higher education level, the debate about the benefits or otherwise of formal study programmes for those professionals already established in the workplace continues. Recent research has placed a strong focus on the further development of professionals via informal learning methods.

Eraut (2009) propounds that learning is shaped by the circumstance and the location in which it happens. In this context, Eraut (2009, p.1) examines the diverse 'knowledge cultures of higher education and the workplace'. 'Codified academic knowledge' (p.1), according to Eraut (2009), is the overriding form of knowledge associated with the education situation. In the same vein, non-academic, codified, company specific knowledge is located in most workplaces.

In his view, employee performance in the work environment is the result of a combination of distinct types of knowledge and skill. It is unlikely that the 'analytical / deliberate' (Eraut 2009, p.1) method favoured by higher education is a realistic option for employees, given the usual time constraints encountered in any workplace. Therefore, he claims, this results in the use of tacit knowledge.

Eraut (2009) provides conceptual guidance in respect of knowledge transfer. The definition of transfer coined by Eraut (2009, p.10) is:

> the learning process involved when a person learns to use previously acquired knowledge / skills / competence / expertise in a new situation.

The ease or difficulty of this transfer is contingent on how similar or different the situations may be. Due to a disparity of background, culture and approaches to learning, Eraut (2009) is of the view that transferring material learnt from an education environment to a workplace is especially challenging. Therefore, he questions the transferability of material, such as theory, delivered in an academic setting.

Yet, he suggests that an awareness of theories communicated in an education environment may draw employees' attention to the consequence of certain situations in a workplace. Moreover, Eraut (2009, p.11) conveys that professional education research intimates that 'most aspiring professionals come to value practical experience

more highly than academic courses'. He also identifies that there is a significant divergence of opinion on the relevance of the vast amount of knowledge delivered by an erudite academic, and that which can be realistically utilised, in a frenetic work scenario, by a busy employee.

Eraut (2008, p.14) draws on the work of Salomon and Perkins (1998) and employs the terminology of 'forward reaching and backward reaching kinds of transfer'. Forward reaching transfer occurs in the educational setting, where students are presented with knowledge that should assist them in their work lives. Unfortunately, this does not always translate into reality, as it is influenced by 'the forward transfer discourse of higher education and the backward transfer approach expected in the workplace' (Eraut 2008, p.14).

In current times, Eraut (2008) asserts that occupational qualifications are not viewed as lasting for ones' lifetime yet, similarly, they are deemed to last longer than a few years post-graduation. Therefore, knowledge is required to be applicable in different places and types of employment. He is of the opinion that knowledge viewed as extraneous may not be readily applicable, but the scenario may be such that the employee has not learned to use this knowledge in a new work context.

Eraut (2009, p.15) employs the iceberg analogy to illustrate the further learning required to transfer theoretical knowledge acquired in an academic environment into an actual work situation. The acquisition of codified knowledge for academic assessment purposes is identified as the visible aspect of the iceberg:

> The further learning required to convert that codified knowledge into personal knowledge that is ready for use in a range of possible situations can be represented by that part of the iceberg which is hidden below the surface. Some books shed a little light in some areas, but the terrain is mainly obscure. Knowing how to use theoretical knowledge is largely tacit knowledge.

This lack of focus, both in academia and in the workplace, on this learning transfer, translates into reduced influence of education in the workplace and detracts from the quality of work due to the under use of valuable knowledge.

The importance of people and interpersonal interaction between these people has also been identified by Eraut (2008, p.9) as a key feature of any place of employment or community. However, he counsels that 'much knowledge of other people is tacit'. Understanding a situation is deemed by Eraut (2008) to be a vital element of professional work, yet almost certainly the most complex. Eraut (2008) recognises that

tacit knowledge not only plays a role in interactions and situations within a workplace, but it contributes to relations with clients, customers, suppliers and any other stakeholders:

> This kind of know–how is acquired though experience and remains largely in the form of tacit knowledge, excluded from formal specifications for qualifications yet necessary for performance on the job (Eraut 1998, p.131).

Brown *et al* (1989) and Eraut (1994) emphasise that learning is an unremitting and life-long practice. Similarly, Brown *et al* (1989, p.32) highlight the importance of developing understanding of knowledge by sustained use in a work setting. They discuss this in the context of:

> the breach between learning and use, which is captured by the folk categories "know what" and "know how", may well be a product of the structure and practices of our education system.

This emphasises that, in formal education settings, students learn about different theories, concepts and practices or 'acquire a tool' and, indeed, achieve success by passing formal examinations but, in reality, this may have scant impact on their functioning outside of the formal education environment. Cognisance of the culture of the workplace community is acknowledged by Brown *et al* (1989) as an important factor in the effective use of knowledge beyond formal education:

> Activity, concept and culture are interdependent. ...Thus, in a significant way, learning is, we believe, a process of enculturation (Brown *et al* 1989, p.33).

This is a concept that is further developed in the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), who employ the term 'communities of practice' to elucidate the engagement, interaction and learning that occurs amongst groups in the workplace . This is also in line with Eraut's (2008) opinion that learners need to learn how to transfer learning and become aware of the subtleties of tacit knowledge within the workplace. Polanyi, a foremost contributor to the concept of tacit knowledge, (1969, p.126) illustrates this point:

> The structural kinship of the arts of knowing and doing is, indeed, such that they are rarely exercised in isolation; we usually meet a blend of the two.

Brown *et al* (1989, p.34) differentiates between 'authentic activity' and 'hybrid', 'ersatz', 'school' based activity. They suggest that students need to experience a field's theoretical elements in situations of authentic activity. This could be assisted by teachers incorporating 'authentic domain activity as a major part of teaching'. Brown *et*

al (1989, p.40) assert that this may 'dismiss George Bernard Shaw's scurrilous criticism of teachers, "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches".'

The next section summarises the themes discussed above.

Chapter Summary

The first chapter of the literature review outlined empirical research conducted in respect of taught master's programmes and set the context in respect of the hospitality and tourism industry. This chapter aimed to create a theoretical framework for the aforementioned empirical secondary research.

Some of the key themes that had emerged from the first chapter were the questionable status of hospitality and tourism education and employment and the dissonance between educator, student and employer views of the importance of qualifications versus experience. This chapter has defined what a profession is, and has argued that hospitality and tourism, while not a traditional profession, can still be considered in the context of research conducted with the professions.

This chapter has, also, provided an overview of the competence, competency, competencies literature and while, in the main, the education research favours the term 'competence', and the previous secondary data on the hospitality and tourism industry employed the phrase competencies, there is, once again, merit in applying the concepts of competence and competency-based education in hospitality and tourism. This conceptual literature can be utilised to tease out the expectations and experiences of employers, graduates and educators with respect to formal qualifications in the field. The competency-based approach and criticisms thereof can also be employed to examine value of the level 9 competencies identified within the Irish national qualifications framework and the value of the modules that comprise a level 9 taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality and tourism.

The literature on tacit knowledge provides a framework to examine graduates' experiences in the world of work, subsequent to graduation, and employers' views on the applicability of a level 9 qualification in the cut and thrust of the hospitality and tourism workplace.

Overall Literature Review Summary and Linkages to Empirical Research

This section links the contextual and conceptual literature chapters to the empirical research. The research tools designed to collect the empirical data for this thesis were

shaped by many themes presented in the contextual and conceptual literature review chapters; the key themes are discussed below.

The contextual scene setting in Chapter 2 involved the assemblage of images of the tourism and hospitality industries as an employer. This background literature on human resource management (Baum 2007; Barron 2008; Wood 1997; Cleveland 1997) influenced a number of the questions on the graduate questionnaire, in particular around the issue of combining full-time work and part-time study, the respondents' previous experiences of work life in tourism and hospitality, and how Generation Y grappled with the challenges of working in the hospitality and tourism area.

This contextual image of the industry also influenced the design of the graduate, employer and educator interview protocols. The challenges of working in the industry were used as a basis to explore the rationale for why students and graduates embarked on postgraduate study, and to assess their experiences of people management in the industry pre- and post-graduation. In particular, the issues of work-life balance, pay, hours of work and opportunities for development were discussed with graduates and employers, due to the extent and fervour of the contextual literature in respect of the image of the industry as an employer.

The style of the graduate questionnaire was guided by previous contextual qualitative and quantitative studies conducted with graduates of master's programmes and employers (Barber *et al* 2004; Smith *et al* 2010; Park and Wells 2010). In particular, these pieces of secondary research guided questions as to why graduates had embarked upon master's study, their hopes and aspirations, their satisfaction with the experience, and what they did subsequent to graduation. Conceptual literature (Eraut 1994; Chivers 2007) also influenced the sections of the questionnaire and graduate interview protocol that queried respondents' rationale for postgraduate study.

A further theme identified in the contextual literature delineated the debate on the value placed on education versus experience in tourism and hospitality (Ramakrishna and Nebel 1996; Jameson and Holden 2000; Petrova and Mason 2004; Johanson et al 2010; O'Leary and Deegan 2005; Connolly and McGing 2006). Due to the perceived questionable value placed on undergraduate education by the industry, let alone postgraduate education (Jackson 2008), this theme influenced a number of questions in the graduate questionnaire and, also, featured in all of the interview protocols.

Given the dearth of literature on tourism and hospitality education, at either undergraduate or postgraduate level in the Republic of Ireland, the contextual literature drew on secondary research from elsewhere in the world and, specifically, the Republic of Ireland's nearest neighbour, the United Kingdom. The literature searches with regard to taught postgraduate education in tourism and hospitality gleaned such a poor return that it reinforced the importance of this thesis' research in adding further empirical data to this heretofore under-researched topic.

Given the lack of conceptual literature in the area of competencies and tacit knowledge in tourism and hospitality, the conceptual literature, explored in Chapter 3, drew on general education conceptual literature. One of the conceptual themes delineated in Chapter 3 centred on propositional and tacit knowledge (Eraut 1994, 2000, 2008, 2009) and this, subsequently, influenced the direction of the graduate and employer interview protocols. In particular, given the aforementioned importance of people in tourism and hospitality, the conceptual chapter's assertion that much knowledge about people is tacit (Eraut 2008) was an imperative theme in the graduate and employer interviews.

The competencies theme identified in Chapter 2 (Barrows and Johan 2008; Cecil *et al* 2010; Raybould and Wilkins 2006) and Chapter 3 (Eraut 1998; Boyatzis 2008) was another issue that was explored at the empirical data collection stage. For example, the master's level descriptor, from the national framework of qualifications, was incorporated into the graduate questionnaire question on the knowledge, skill and competencies acquired by completing the MSc.

The conceptual chapter's discussion of the importance of authentic activity (Brown *et al* 1989), combined with the contextual chapter's review of the role of class dynamic and the creation of 'social learning environments' (Benckendorff, 2009, p.87), guided the discussions with graduates with regards to their postgraduate learning experience. In a similar vein, a number of authors (Garner and Wallace 1997; Stuart 2002; Brotherton and Wood 2008; Lewis 1982) discussed the challenges of credibility and relevance faced by career academics delivering modules on master's programmes, and this theme greatly influenced the interview protocols designed for graduates, educators and employers.

Another theme explored with both educators and employers was the issue of industry linkages and partnerships with academia (Smith *et al* 2010; Park 2007) and Lashley's (2007) notion of an intellectual cul-de-sac.

Having identified the key themes that moulded the design of the research tools, the next chapter, research methodology and methods, provides an overview of how and why the research for this thesis was completed.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter identifies the purpose and objectives of this study and discusses the research methodology and methods that have been employed in the course of this research. This chapter is compiled with an acute awareness that:

> methodology and methods is an extremely important part of any research account since it is on the match between methodology and methods and research focus / topic / questions that the credibility of any findings, conclusions and claims depends (Wellington *et al* 2005, p.96).

The secondary data has been presented in Chapters 2 and 3. For the collection of primary data, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research tools was utilised. This included a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. This chapter examines the objectives and rationale for this study and the research process that was followed in order to achieve the research objectives. The next section outlines the research question and rationale for this work.

The Research Question and Rationale for the Research

The challenges of positioning this research in respect of epistemology and a theoretical perspective will be discussed later in this chapter. However, in line with Crotty (1998, p.13):

> not too many of us embark on a piece of social research with epistemology as our starting point. ... We typically start with a real life issue that needs to be addressed, a problem that needs to be solved, a question that needs to be answered.

Similarly, Gorard and Taylor (2004) counsel that:

> When we act pragmatically in our non-research lives we do not usually invoke a paradigm as our starting point (Gorard and Taylor 2004, p.149).

For this research project, the research question is 'what is the perceived value of a taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality and tourism?' As has been discussed in the literature review, this question must be considered in the context of the dearth of previous research conducted in the area of postgraduate qualifications in tourism and hospitality (Botterill and Gale 2005; Stuart *et al* 2008; Drennan 2008; Cho *et al* 2006). This research attempts to fill this knowledge gap in respect of the Republic of Ireland. In addition to this, the research seeks to ascertain, given the industry's history and

image as discussed in the literature review, why students enrol in specialist MSc programmes, why colleges develop these programmes and how employers view these programmes. The rationale for this work is further strengthened by the changes in demand for the programmes under review and the renewed importance placed on tourism and hospitality in the economic recovery of ROI.

Having identified the broad research question for this thesis, the next section outlines in greater detail the research objectives.

Purpose and Objectives of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of key stakeholders with regard to the value and outcomes of a taught postgraduate qualification in tourism and hospitality. The key stakeholders included in this research are students and graduates of the two case study MSc programmes, educators who teach on the MSc programmes, and employers in the tourism and hospitality industry. As identified in the literature review, Mandelbaum (1980, p.9) acknowledged that:

> … any attempt to reflect on graduate education apart from the broader context in which it is embedded will lead to empty conclusions.

It is on this basis that as many stakeholders as possible were included in this study as depicted in the following figure:
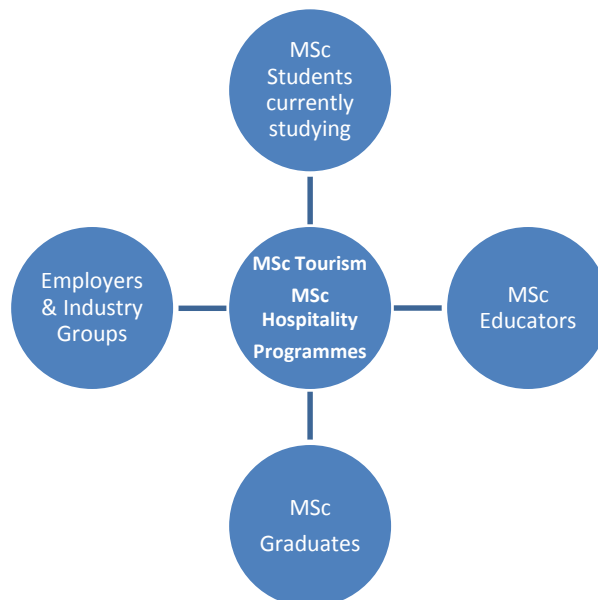
Figure 4.1 - The Stakeholders

The research objectives were formed based on a combination of an initial review of the literature in the field of tourism and hospitality and ten years' experience of module

delivery and thesis supervision on both of the MSc programmes. The research objectives are detailed in Chapter 1, pages 1 and 2. Having identified the purpose and objectives of this research, the next section will provide an overview of the general background to the study.

Background to the Research

The literature review has already established the context in respect of the tourism and hospitality industry and education in the field. Therefore, a rationale for the research has already been drawn from the secondary literature. This section provides the context and rationale in relation to the two MSc programmes under review in this thesis.

The two case study programmes are level 9, taught MSc programmes in the field of hospitality and tourism offered at an Institute of Technology in the Republic of Ireland. These programmes are delivered over two semesters on a full-time basis and over four semesters on a part-time basis. Both programmes include a thesis component.

It would appear from the Higher Education Authority (2012a) data outlined in the literature review that the majority of students pursuing a master's qualification in tourism or hospitality do so at an Institute of Technology. The MSc Hospitality Management commenced in 1998 with seven full-time students, the MSc Tourism Management was offered in 1999. The registration for both programmes from 1999 to 2010 has been compiled from the student registration database and is displayed in tables 4.1 and 4.2. The part-time figures for each year include those who were in their first year and, also, those who were in their second year of studying on a part-time basis.

Year	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
F/T	2	3	10	16	6	13	8	13	6	9	7
P/T	18	9	9	13	15	15	15	12	11	7	14
Total	**20**	**12**	**19**	**29**	**21**	**28**	**23**	**25**	**17**	**16**	**21**

Table 4.1 - MSc Hospitality Management – Student Registration

Year	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
F/T	5	9	8	14	11	14	11	11	10	11	14
P/T	9	15	14	11	9	11	10	9	10	13	16
Total	**14**	**24**	**22**	**25**	**20**	**25**	**21**	**20**	**20**	**24**	**30**

Table 4.2 - MSc Tourism Management – Student Registration

The numbers graduating from the two programmes are as follows:

Year	Programme	Part-Time	Full-Time
2000	Tourism	2	3
2000	Hospitality	9	2
2001	Tourism	9	7
2001	Hospitality	4	3
2002	Tourism	5	7
2002	Hospitality	5	6
2003	Tourism	7	13
2003	Hospitality	5	17
2004	Tourism	3	9
2004	Hospitality	5	3
2005	Tourism	5	12
2005	Hospitality	7	11
2006	Tourism	4	11
2006	Hospitality	5	6
2007	Tourism	4	7
2007	Hospitality	6	10
2008	Tourism	7	8
2008	Hospitality	9	6
2009	Tourism	6	8
2009	Hospitality	2	5
2010	Tourism	7	10
2010	Hospitality	2	4
Total		118	168

Table 4.3 - Graduation Statistics (Year, Part-Time, Full-Time)

It was not possible to calculate student graduation as a percentage of student registration in order to identify the rate of attrition from the programmes, as the part-time data available combined those who were in the first year of their studies with those in the second year of their studies and it was not possible to separate out the two. In any case, from the researcher's own experience, it would appear that retention was not an issue in the years under consideration. However, towards the end of this time period (2000 – 2010), it became evident from programme team meetings that recruitment for both programmes had become more challenging, in particular as the national market became exhausted.

One of the main differences between these programmes is that the MSc Hospitality Management admission requirements include:

> employment experience in the hospitality industry (Document B Programme Document 2008, p.10).

whereas the MSc Tourism Management only specifies that:

experience in a related area is desirable (Document B Course Document 2008, p.13).

In this sense, the hospitality MSc has been described as a deepening programme whereas the tourism MSc is viewed as a transition / conversion qualification.

The programmes reflect what is described by Thorne (1997, p.24) as 'distinct types of taught master's programme'. Thorne (1997) had suggested three types - specialist master's, conversion master's and broadening professional programmes. Specialist programmes build on particular undergraduate knowledge, conversion programmes introduce the participant to new field of study or professional area and broadening programmes are generally post experience and assume no previous formal study in the area. In the context of the two programmes under review, it is apparent that the MSc Tourism fits into the conversion category and the MSc Hospitality straddles both the specialist and broadening typology.

Since the programmes' inception, a small number (approximately twenty teaching staff) has been consistently involved in the delivery of modules on the two programmes. Some of these staff were instrumental in the initial establishment of the MSc programmes. The School (within the Institute of Technology) which provides the programmes maintains a good working relationship with tourism and hospitality employers and tourism and hospitality representative groups, and the five-yearly programmatic reviews have included formal contact and liaison with industry. In that sense, industry has been made aware of the nature of the MSc offerings.

Other than the programmatic reviews required by the Institute's quality assurance policies, no academic research has been conducted on these programmes. The staff who teach on the programmes, as well as a small number of industry employers, have had opportunities to voice opinions as part of the programmatic review process. As part of the Institute of Technology's quality assurance procedures, students on all programmes are given the opportunity to provide written, anonymous feedback on each individual module at the end of semester. Individual lecturers are required to collate this feedback and include it on another quality form that is submitted to the programme chair at the end of the academic year. From the researcher's experience, student and lecturer questionnaire fatigue frequently results in few forms being submitted to the programme chair and little feedback gleaned from year to year. Other than in the programme review phase and in the annual quality monitoring forms, student, graduate, educator and employer voices have not been heard with regard to their views on the two MSc

programmes. This is the first occasion that all these voices have contributed to academic research focused on the two taught programmes.

In 2012, due to the extent of concerns amongst staff with regard to the decline in numbers of applicants for each programme, the decision was made, for the first time, to merge the class groups for some core and optional modules. The reduction in demand for both programmes has also been compounded in the past year by the withdrawal of financial support for full-time postgraduate study in the Republic of Ireland (www.postgradireland.com).

Having identified the background to the primary research, the following section will examine in detail how the research process was conducted.

The Research Process

A Pragmatic World View

This research adopted a pragmatist theoretical lens, and employed a mixed methods approach to data collection. Being a novice researcher, guidance for the use of this world view and research approach was taken from the work of a number of writers on this topic, primarily Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), Gorard and Taylor (2004), Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), Bryman (2006), Creswell (2011) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011). These writers have explored the newness, relevance and practicalities of adopting a pragmatist stance and utilising mixed methods research.

Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.16) promote pragmatism as a lens through which to view mixed methods research. Pragmatism advocates the combination of methods in whatever form with the main objective of 'answering important research questions' and to 'better understand real-world phenomena' (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.17). The decision to employ a pragmatist 'world view' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p.39) and a mixed methods approach was very much on a needs basis, determined by the focus of the aforementioned research question and objectives. As suggested by Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.17), pragmatism is a 'practical outcome-oriented method of inquiry'. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.40) identify the characteristics of pragmatism as 'problem centred', 'pluralistic' and 'real-world practice oriented'. Mixed methods has also been described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.13) as a 'practical' approach that assists with the

resolution of problems and 'understanding the world', through the use of both numbers and narratives.

The characteristics of a pragmatist philosophy were outlined by Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.18). Many of these characteristics hold true to the ontological perspective of this researcher (her education background is the area of business and human resource management), and in the past 13 years she has worked in education in the applied field of tourism and hospitality. Many of the characteristics of pragmatism proposed by Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) were viewed as an effective theoretical lens through which to address the research question and objectives for this thesis.

These characteristics included the search for a 'middle ground between philosophical dogmatisms', a rejection of 'traditional dualisms' and 'reductionism', a recognition of the 'natural or physical world', an acknowledgement of the importance of 'the inner world of human experience', support for 'fallibilism', 'eclecticism and pluralism', 'practical empiricalism', sees 'truth, meaning, and knowledge as tentative and as changing over time', a preference for 'action' over 'philosophising', embraces a 'value-oriented approach to research', approves of 'practical theory' and regards 'human inquiry' as similar to 'experimental and scientific inquiry'.

The researcher had conducted some general human resource management research and tourism and hospitality education research previously but, in the main, these projects had been joint ventures with peer colleagues. In that sense, at the outset of this thesis, the researcher fitted the profile of a novice researcher. Gorard and Taylor (2004, p.149) warn against novice researchers becoming 'imprisoned' in a purist paradigm mindset. They elaborate (Gorard and Taylor 2004, p.149) this argument to suggest that new researchers feel obliged to adopt a 'positivist or realist' philosophy if statistics are employed in the course of their research.

This is likened to a 'scientist in a white coat' (Gorard and Taylor 2004, p.146) world view, whereas researchers who reject the use of numbers are categorised as 'interpretivist, holistic and alternative' or a 'warm cuddly sort of person' (Gorard and Taylor 2004, p.149 & p.146). However, Gorard and Taylor (2004, p.151) suggest that the idea of paradigms based on quantitative or qualitative research is overstated. The supposed differences exist 'in spite of good evidence, not because of it'.

It would be naive to accept the relevance of pragmatist mindset without an acknowledgement of its shortcomings. This, too, is explored by Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.19). In their view, 'basic research' may be sidelined by the more 'immediate and practical' outcomes of applied research. 'Incremental change' is associated more with pragmatism rather than 'fundamental' change. Researchers grounded in a pragmatist mindset may not address the issue of for whom the 'pragmatic solution' is helpful. Indeed, another criticism of pragmatism is that a definition of 'usefulness or workability' may not always be forthcoming by the researcher. These shortcomings were borne in mind in the course of this thesis.

From the outset, this work was not focussed on initiating any form of 'fundamental' change, but on enhancing the Republic of Ireland's tourism and hospitality education community's understanding of the role and value of postgraduate education. It was hoped that this research would contribute to postgraduate programme development in the future.

This section discussed the world view that influenced the development of this thesis topic; the next section assesses the rationale for employing mixed methods as a vehicle to address the research question and objectives of this research.

Mixed Methods

Mixed methods has been described by Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.17) as:

> The class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study.

Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.14) provide a strong and relevant rationale for the use of a mixed methods approach. These authors advocate this approach as:

> A key feature of mixed methods research is its methodological pluralism or eclecticism, which frequently results in superior research (compared to mono-method research).

These authors further describe this method as the adoption of a 'non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position' (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.15) that draws on a mixture of elements that provides researchers with the 'best chance' of addressing their research question. It was for this reason alone that a combination of methods was employed for the purpose of this thesis. The view was held that a combination of questionnaire and interview, a mixture of 'statistics and stories'

(Creswell 2011, p.272) would provide both the general and in-depth detail required to answer the research question.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) propose a definition of the core characteristics of mixed methods research. These characteristics are very much applicable to the research for this thesis. For the purpose of primary data collection for this thesis, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed. The instruments used for this data collection were grounded in the research question and objectives for this thesis. The data was collected over an extended time period, in three phases and, to some extent, crossed over between the 'concurrent' and 'sequential' models identified by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.5). A basic, and incomplete, analysis of the quantitative data had been conducted prior to the commencement of the qualitative interviews; the full analysis of both questionnaires and interview data occurred in roughly the same time period.

This is a single study with a number of components and phases. In advance of commencing this research, a design and plan were established to manage the various component parts. Whilst quantitative data was collected in respect of graduates, this was employed to create a baseline of information that was subsequently built upon by qualitative interviews with graduates, educators and employers.

A number of different analogies have been employed to describe the mixed methods approach. These include the description by Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.15) that mixed methods 'sits in a new third chair' with qualitative research to its left and quantitative research on its right. From a philosophical perspective, mixed methods are described as a 'third wave' or 'third research movement' beyond the traditional two paradigms.

Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.15):

> contend that epistemological and paradigmatic ecumenicalism is within reach in the research paradigm of mixed methods research.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.8) surmise that:

> Qualitative research and quantitative research provide different pictures, or perspectives, and each has its limitations.

However, it is acknowledged by Creswell (2011, p.280) that the question of whether mixed methods provides a 'better understanding of a research question than either quantitative or qualitative research alone' remains unanswered. For this thesis, the

merits and drawbacks of both qualitative and quantitative research were assessed and the decision was made to adopt a mixed methods approach in an attempt to maximise the benefits of both methods and reduce their weaknesses so as to satisfactorily address the research question and objectives.

As suggested by Fontana and Frey (2005, p.722):

> humans are complex, and their lives are ever changing. The more methods we use to study them, the better our chances will be to gain some understanding of how they construct their lives and the stories they tell us about them.

Bryman (2006, p.106) proposes that the researcher 'offsets' the disadvantages of two research methods and builds on their advantages. A further reason for the use of mixed methods is that of 'completeness' (Bryman 2006, p.106), in that a more wide-ranging description of the area under investigation can be achieved. As identified by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.12), the 'direct voices' of respondents are not present in quantitative research nor is their 'context' fully comprehensible and the role of the researcher is not brought to the foreground of the research. Qualitative research addresses these shortcomings of a quantitative approach.

However, qualitative research creates barriers in relation to generalising findings and the 'personal interpretations' of the researcher may introduce subjectivity to the process. By the inclusion of both types of research in this thesis, it was intended to offset the respective disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative research. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data appreciates objective and subjective information and facilitates the use of deductive and inductive thinking. The research for this thesis employed a 'fixed mixed methods design' as, from the outset of the research process, the use of qualitative and quantitative methods had been planned (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011, p.54).

As suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the research question for this thesis was influenced by the researcher's experience of having taught on the MSc Tourism Management and MSc Hospitality Management for ten years. In addition, the researcher's specialist field of human resource management created an acute awareness of the dissonance between educator and industry expectations in tourism and hospitality, and the negative image of the industry as an employer. In addition to drawing on Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011, p.54) 'fixed mixed methods design', this research was also influenced by Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) convergent parallel

design framework; however, this framework was not slavishly adhered to. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) advocate this approach for researchers new to mixed methods research, and that was the case in this research. Convergent parallel design suggests that both strands of data are collected during the same phase of the research and the two types of results are combined at the interpretation stage.

In the opinion of the researcher, the research for this thesis benefited from many of the strengths of a mixed methods approach (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, p.21). The individual interviews conducted with the graduates, educators and employers added depth, 'insights', 'understanding' and aspects of life histories and real time stories that could never have been captured by the graduate questionnaire alone. The graduate questionnaire provided context and a general background that was further explored in the in-depth interviews with both graduates and employers. The two modes of data collection facilitated the mining of questionnaire data in the subsequent educator, graduate and employer interviews and the corroboration of findings in the analysis section of the thesis.

All of these aforementioned strengths of mixed methods are in line with the terminology employed by Bryman (2006, p.106) in respect of the rationale for selecting mixed methods. The qualitative research was employed to provide 'illustration', 'explanation' or 'context' for, and 'enhancement' of, the quantitative research. The qualitative exploratory research assisted the 'instrument development' of the quantitative research.

The weaknesses of mixed methods research as identified by Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) also became evident in the research for this thesis. It proved difficult, time consuming and expensive for this part-time researcher to conduct this research. The acquisition of up-to-date postal addresses for graduates took an inordinate amount of time; the design and distribution of the questionnaire also took a number of months and involved not insignificant postal costs. The researcher had no previous experience of using IBM SPSS Statistics and relied on textbooks and online tutorials to learn the package. In some cases, after the initial email contact with the graduate, several weeks elapsed before a suitable interview date and time was agreed.

As no previous research had been conducted with graduates of the MSc Tourism and MSc Hospitality Management programmes, there was not any baseline data with regard to why they had undertaken postgraduate study and what they did subsequent to graduation. In the opinion of the researcher, quantitative or qualitative methods alone

would not have provided a rich picture of the graduates' views on the value of a postgraduate qualification.

In order to capture as realistic and rich a picture possible of why these graduates embarked upon study, how they viewed this postgraduate education experience, what path they pursued post-graduation and how employers responded to their qualification, both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases are presented independently in the findings chapter and are subsequently integrated in the analysis chapter.

This mixed methods research attempted to capture a 'diversity of views' (Bryman 2006, p.106) of the participants through the use of quantitative and qualitative tools. However, as suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p.65), there is a somewhat 'qualitative priority' in this research. Whilst the quantitative data was resource intensive to collect and analyse, it paints the secondary background that is enlivened and enriched by the qualitative interview data.

This section identified the rationale for the use of mixed methods; the next part of this chapter examines the research phases and the methods employed in each phase.

Research Phases and Methods Employed

Surveys and interviews have been described as 'the heartland of social research' (Tight 2003, p.192) and 'the mainstays of social science and higher education research' (Tight 2003, p.194). This section provides an overview of the research phases, a justification for the use of questionnaires and interviews and an overview of the design and implementation of these methods.

Table 4.4, below, illustrates the various stakeholders and stages involved in this pragmatic, mixed methods, research project. Ethical issues related to all phases of this research are addressed later in this chapter.

Phase	Type of Research	Who & How
One	*Qualitative:* Exploratory Research	Student Interviews
Two	*Quantitative:* Survey Research	Graduate Questionnaire
Three	*Qualitative:* In-depth Interviews	Educator, Graduate, Employer Interviews

Table 4.4 - Research Phases

Phase One: Exploratory Research

As recommended by Fontana and Frey (2005, p.704), exploratory interviews are devised to develop an awareness of a subject. Phase one of the research created preliminary data that solidified this as a thesis topic. Exploratory research took place during the second academic semester in 2008, and involved exploratory interviews. 15 MSc students volunteered and were interviewed for this exploratory research. These interviewees were comprised of nine MSc hospitality students, six MSc tourism students, of whom eight were full-time and seven part-time students. Six of the interviewees were male and nine were female students; ten of the students were between 23 and 29 years of age, three in their early thirties and two in their early forties.

These exploratory semi-structured interviews took, on average, 30-40 minutes and focussed on the topics contained in Appendix A. This semi-structured interview format was compiled based on initial literature searches and the experiences and observations of the researcher as an educator. Summary transcripts were developed after listening to the interviews a number of times; this facilitated the identification of themes and commonality across the interviews and informed the graduate questionnaire design and, also, the graduate interview protocol (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011).

Phase Two: Survey Research - Questionnaire

Questionnaire Design and Distribution

The second phase of this research took the form of surveys or questionnaires (see Appendix B) for the graduates of the two MSc programmes. The use of questionnaires permits the inclusion of larger numbers in the research and a breath of knowledge of the respondents views of the topic under examination (Creswell 2012). For this thesis, questionnaires facilitated the establishment of a basic picture of the profile of master's graduates and is in line with previous survey research (O'Leary and Deegan 2005; Connolly and McGing 2006; Fáilte Ireland 2010a; Garavan *et al* 2003) conducted in the tourism and hospitality industry:

> One of the benefits of an alumni survey is the opportunity it provides to elicit graduates' evaluation of their education through the lens of their experience (Delaney 1997, p.253).

Delaney (1997, p.244) further notes that their experience since graduation puts the graduate in a position to compare how the 'knowledge and skills' developed in the world of academia correlate with the 'knowledge and skills' relevant for the workplace.

The two slightly different questionnaires, depending on mode of study, were designed based on previous such studies (Barber *et al* 2004; Archer & Davison 2008), the topics highlighted in the literature reviewed, in addition to the insights gleaned from the exploratory research conducted with the 07 / 08 MSc cohort.

In addition to ethical approval, discussed later in this chapter, Head of School approval was also received for this research and postal addresses were acquired from the student registration records. The Head of School saw this research as a valuable opportunity to investigate the two MSc programmes and ascertain the career destinations of alumni. The registration records also provided information on whether the student had studied on a part or full-time basis. Unfortunately, in some cases, contact addresses were, potentially, nine years out of date or the address provided was a home address elsewhere in the world outside of Republic of Ireland.

At the outset, it was planned to utilise one standard questionnaire for graduates who had studied on a full-time or part-time basis. This initial draft questionnaire was piloted with five individuals who had completed an MSc programme, but not the programmes under investigation. As a result of this pilot, it became apparent that the questionnaire was far too long, if only a single, all-encompassing questionnaire was circulated to both those who studied on a full and part-time basis. The pilot participants indicated that the physical length of the questionnaire, in excess of ten pages, was visually off-putting. As not all sections had to be completed by all respondents, the pilot participants suggested that the number of times respondents were directed to skip to the next section, several pages ahead, became tiresome. On the basis of this feedback, the decision was made to distribute separate questionnaires, depending on the mode of study, the main difference being that those who studied on a part-time basis were questioned about how they combined work and part time study.

Due to a registration system upgrade, addresses and mode of study information were not available for the first years that both programmes were in existence. Postal addresses were sourced for a number of the first cohort of both programmes, as many of these individuals were members of the Irish Hospitality Institute (IHI), of which the researcher was also a member and, therefore, contact details were openly available in the IHI annual diary.

The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter (Appendix C) in which it was suggested that an electronic version of the questionnaire could be emailed to participants if they deemed it a more convenient mode of completion. This process was

facilitated by the provision of the researcher's email address in the covering letter. In the main, questionnaires were returned by post but, in some cases, where the graduate no longer resided at the postal address, friends and / or family had made the graduate aware of the postal correspondence and the graduate contacted the researcher by email and completed an electronic version of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Analysis

286 graduates, spanning the years 2000 to 2010, were considered for inclusion in this study. The 2008 cohort was excluded from the questionnaire distribution list, as 15 of this cohort had voluntarily participated in the exploratory research and all had been told that their goodwill would not be called upon again in the course of this research. Not all 286 graduates could be contacted by post, as some were international students who had returned home and postal addresses were not available. Also, the 2000 and 2001 cohorts' addresses had been recorded in an obsolete registration database. In total, 198 questionnaires were distributed between April and October 2010; this meant that 35 graduates could not be contacted due to unavailability of postal addresses.

In total, 122 completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 62 per cent. One completed questionnaire returned by email could not be opened and five questionnaires were marked 'return to sender'. The response rate for this thesis is in line with other research conducted in Ireland in respect of the tourism and hospitality sector. Nolan *et al* (2010) achieved a response rate of 58 per cent; they received 74 returned surveys. Similarly, Connolly and McGing (2006) received 40 responses and an overall response rate of 56 per cent. Creswell (2012) noted that a response rate of 50 per cent or higher is indicative of quantitative studies in leading educational journals.

The questionnaires were coded and the responses were inputted into SPSS. Basic reports were run to manipulate this data. Qualitative comments from open-ended questions were extracted and recorded in a Microsoft Word file; this was a time consuming process. In line with Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.11):

> although many qualitative researchers in the postpositivist tradition use statistical measures, methods, and documents as a way of locating a group of subjects within a larger population, they seldom report their findings in terms of the kinds of complex statistical measures or methods to which quantitative researchers are drawn.

Complex statistical data was not sought from the completed questionnaires, as the main purpose of this research tool was to provide baseline data that could be further examined

in the course of the subsequent in-depth graduate interviews. As noted by Gorard and Taylor (2004, p.41):

> Simple quantitative work can supply the 'what' and 'how many', while basic qualitative work can illustrate 'how' and 'why'.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to volunteer to participate in an interview. These volunteers provided the platform for phase three of the research. While questionnaires provide breadth to a study, the data acquired by way of questionnaires lacks depth of investigation (Verma and Mallick 1999) and, for the purpose of this research, depth was acquired by way of one to one interviews. The next section outlines the use of these in-depth interviews.

Phase Three: Interviews

This section describes why one-to-one interviews were employed, who was interviewed and what open-ended questions they were asked. To establish as holistic a picture as possible, in-depth interviews were conducted with volunteers from three sets of stakeholders (educators, graduates, industry). This was an attempt to acquire a diversity of views, experiences and 'rich descriptions' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p.12).

The researcher was at all times acutely aware of a comment by Oakley (2003, p.243):

> interviewing is rather like a marriage. Everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets.

In an attempt to counteract the issues highlighted by Oakley (2003), protocols were developed and piloted for each interview format and every attempt was made to develop rapport and trust with all interviewees. At the same time, it was also acknowledged that 'perfection' in respect of interviewing is 'actually unattainable' (Oakley 2003, p.255). In all cases, the interviewees agreed to the use of a digital recorder, which meant that the researcher was not distracted with note-taking during the course of the interviews. This aided the interviewer's ability to listen and engage with the interviewee. It proved to be advantageous at the transcript analysis stage, also. All transcripts were read a number of times and a basic grid established to identify common themes for each set of interviews. The interviewee views were presented in line with these themes. The three different sets of interviews conducted are described in the following sections.

The Educators

Pre-interview selection notes were devised in respect of the educator interviews, these notes are similar to those presented later in this chapter in respect of the graduates. The educator selection notes are not included in this thesis in order to protect the identity of the interviewees, given the population of tourism and hospitality educators in ROI is much smaller and more easily identifiable than the graduates are. The educators were given assurances that their identities would remain anonymous.

Out of a possible 19 educators who delivered modules on the two MSc programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 (excluding the researcher), 15 were contacted by email (see Appendix D) towards the end of June 2011. This 15 represented a purposive sample of module areas, genders and length of involvement with the programmes. The end of June was chosen for initiating contact, in an attempt to gain a higher response rate, as teaching and exam boards had been concluded and staff were about to embark on the summer break.

11 educators responded and participated in the interviews. These comprised five males and six females. The respondents' areas of expertise covered both qualitative and quantitative modules and all had experience of teaching on one or both of the MSc programmes. Some of the interviewees had taught on the programmes since their inception, some had been instrumental in the development of the programmes and held roles in programme management, some were new to teaching on the programmes. Two educators who had not been involved in teaching on the programmes in the past two years, but held an active role in thesis supervision, were also included in the research.

In this sense, the group of educators interviewed represented a mix of backgrounds, subject areas and involvement with the MSc programmes on a teaching, supervision and programme management basis. The educator interview format is outlined in Appendix E. This format was developed based on the research contained in the literature review and the researcher's own experiences and observations.

The educator's interview protocol was piloted with three educators who were not involved in either of the two master's programmes. Similar to the graduate interviews, in the main, educator interviews lasted one hour, even though a fifty minute interview had been requested. Full transcripts were typed up and transcript analysis was completed in line with the format devised for the graduate interviews.

The Graduates

The focus of the graduate interviews was to gain a greater insight into the life histories and real time stories of individuals who had made the decision to embrace formal postgraduate education in the field of tourism and hospitality.

Of the 122 graduates who completed the questionnaire, 67 respondents volunteered to be interviewed. The researcher was touched by the positive response to the questionnaire in general, the number of respondents who agreed to be interviewed and the kind notes written at the end of many of the completed questionnaires. Detailed notes were made in respect of sample selection. The following table illustrates some of the factors that were examined in the selection of graduates to invite to interview:

Category	Options	Number
Mode of study **Selection:** A mix of part-time and full-time.	Full-time Part-time	33 34
Gender **Selection:** Interview a mix of male and female.	Female Male	46 female (23 who studied full-time, 23 who studied part-time) 21 male (10 who studied full-time 11 who studied part-time)
Age **Selection:** Interview respondents in the 26-45 age range but also get a under 25 and over 46 input.	20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 50+	1 10 16 14 14 5 7
Where they are now? **Selection:** A mix of industry and education.	Industry /Semi state / own business Education	47 20
When they graduated **Selection:** Will attempt to get a cross section of years.	2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009	4 4 7 8 8 15 4 8 part of exploratory research 9
Current Location - Ireland or abroad **Selection:** Will attempt to get a mix of Dublin and rest of Ireland based respondents. Will try to include some international but will have to look into recording phone conversations.	Ireland (A mix of counties, travel implications or phone interviews) Abroad (difficulties with phone interviews)	The majority of volunteers are Dublin based but some are located in different parts of the country - Athlone, Meath, Limerick, Clare, Waterford, Kildare, Galway. One USA, Two China, One Italy, One London, One Scotland, One Northern Ireland.
Those who have pursued Further Study **Selection:** Will speak to one of those completing a doctorate.	Doctorate CPD / human resource development type of activity	One completed and four pursuing doctorates. Some, but not huge, pursuit of other types of qualifications (in house and external accredited, e.g. PG in learning and teaching, HR, wine and spirits, subsequent to MSc.
Country of Origin **Selection:** Again, is dependent on their current location but would like to get a mix of backgrounds.		Two Chinese One Italian Two American / dual citizenship One Thai One Polish One Pakistani Two French All others Irish

Table 4.5 - Selection of Graduates to be Interviewed

Eventually, selection was influenced by the fact that more hospitality graduates than tourism graduates volunteered to be interviewed. In addition, among the full-time respondents, there was a large response rate from those who had graduated in 2005. The decision was also made not to select any respondents who were currently working outside of the ROI, as the main focus of this thesis is on the Irish hospitality and tourism industry and Irish tourism and hospitality education.

In advance of each graduate interview, the questionnaire completed by the graduate was reviewed to ensure that any issues specifically identified by the graduate were addressed in the course of the interview. This meant that there was some variance in the actual issues covered in the interviews. Ten graduate interviews were conducted from July to September 2011. The graduate interview protocol is contained in Appendix F. The graduate interview duration was, on average, one hour, again longer than the fifty minutes requested. Full transcripts were completed for each interview and these transcripts were analysed in detail to identify commonalities and differences between graduate responses. Data sheets highlighting interview themes were devised to collate this analysis.

A table outlining the profile of the graduates who participated in the interviews is outlined in the findings chapter. All graduate names were changed to protect their identity.

The Employers / Industry Experts

The final set of interviews completed in phase three of this research was conducted in the summer of 2013. Originally, it was planned to interview a similar number of employers in line with both graduate and educator interviews. However, by the summer of 2013, the researcher had fully analysed the graduate questionnaires and graduate and educator interviews and it became abundantly clear that the mixed methods approach had produced a huge amount of data. The decision was made in consultation with the researcher's supervisor to limit the number of employer interviews. An interview protocol was established based on issues evident in the literature review and it incorporated topics highlighted in the educator and graduate data. The questions were piloted with two employers, who were not from the tourism or hospitality industry. Slight changes and reordering of the questions was made on the basis of the pilot, in order to make it more user friendly to a non-academic audience. The employer interview protocol is provided in Appendix G.

Desk research was conducted on those individuals who held positions in the tourism and hospitality representative groups in the Republic of Ireland. Two expert informants were identified, and all information about these two individuals that was available in the public domain was reviewed. It became apparent from this review, that the mix of education, experience and the current position held in industry of these individuals

would provide a useful insight into how industry viewed a taught MSc in the area of tourism or hospitality.

Both of these key informants are male. Initial contact was made by email, the researcher was introduced, the research purpose was outlined and confidentiality and anonymity guaranteed, and both willingly and enthusiastically agreed to participate in the research. A brief overview of the research was emailed to both interviewees in advance of the interviews. In each case, the interview was digitally recorded and lasted one hour. The atmosphere in the interviews was, initially, not as relaxed as that of the graduate or educator interviews, as neither of the employers was known to the researcher. This meant more time was invested at the outset and throughout the interview establishing rapport with the interviewees.

In addition, it was evident that, unlike the graduates and educators, the employers were less familiar with the idea of thesis research and they were conscious of whether or not the material they communicated was actually of any benefit to the researcher's work.

The feedback received from both interviewees was quite similar and, on that basis, the decision was made not to continue to seek further employer interviews. The interviews were transcribed in full, read and reread, and analysed manually by identifying key themes in advance of writing up the employer findings. The employer interviewee profiles are included in the findings chapter. Similarly to the graduates and educators, fictitious names were assigned to both employers.

This part of the chapter has provided an overview of the research phases and methods employed, the next section will discuss validity, ethical issues and limitations of the research.

Validity and Ethical Issues

Validity of the Research

Bryman (2006, p.105) notes from his extensive review of mixed methods journal articles that one rationale for the combination of methods is for the purpose of 'triangulation or greater validity' to achieve corroboration of findings. A further reason for the use of mixed methods was to enhance the 'credibility' or 'integrity' of the research findings. It is the accounts and stories of students, graduates, educators and employers that formed the core of this research. This use of the crystallisation process or the diversity of participant voices added depth and richness to the study.

Gorard and Taylor (2004, p.7) comment that mixed methods have led to the improvement of education research as 'research claims are stronger' when based on more than one method. In the context of the work of both Bryman (2006) and Gorard and Taylor (2004), the case is made that the validity of the research is enhanced by the use of mixed methods. Gorard and Taylor (2004, p.39) note that qualitative and quantitative research have discrete 'indicators of quality'. The indicators for quantitative research include simplicity, justified conclusions and bias. In respect of qualitative research, transparency of data gathering, analysis and coherent links between the findings and conclusions is deemed to be imperative. Other aspects of the research that aimed to improve validity included the use of exploratory research to inform the other phases of the research, the careful inputting and checking of data in SPSS to prevent errors, and the development of full transcripts for interviews in order to gain the best possible representation of what was discussed and reduce errors and bias. All research instruments were piloted in advance of use to improve their quality and validity.

Ethical Considerations in this Thesis

In line with Creswell (2012), mixed methods research needs to have cognisance of ethical considerations in respect of both quantitative and qualitative research. Creswell's (2012) summary of these considerations proves insightful:

> Quantitative issues relate to obtaining permissions, protecting anonymity of respondents, not disrupting sites, and communicating the purpose of the study. In qualitative research, these issues relate to conveying the purpose of the study, avoiding deceptive practices, respecting vulnerable populations, being aware of potential power issues in data collection, respecting indigenous cultures, not disclosing sensitive information, and masking the identities of participants (Creswell 2012, p.553).

This section examines ethical issues for all phases of the research and specifically ethical issues related to the positionality of the researcher.

The Positionality of the Researcher

The acknowledged (Denzin and Lincoln 2005) ethical and political challenges faced by a researcher were evident in this research, as the researcher has worked as an educator on both of the MSc programmes. While this level of involvement embedded the researcher as a participant and observer in the research process, it also created the ethical and political challenges of interviewing peer colleagues and past and current

students. Every effort was made to protect students, graduates and fellow educators in the course of the research. Ethical approval for this research was originally obtained from the University of Sheffield's School of Education Ethics Review Panel in 2008. Because of some changes to the original research plan, updated ethical approval was acquired in 2009.

All interviewees were supplied with an information sheet, outlining the nature of the research, and given the opportunity to read this in advance of the commencement of their interview. 'Voluntary informed consent' (British Educational Research Association [BERA] 2011, p.5) was central to the involvement of all participants in each stage of this research. Similarly, the researcher acknowledged the 'right to withdraw' (BERA 2011, p.6) and the 'privacy' of the participants (BERA 2011, p.7). When the interviewee had read the aforementioned information sheet, they were then given a consent form based on the University of Sheffield, School of Education format (see Appendix I).

The next section outlines the ethical issues considered for each phase of the research.

Current Cohort

The researcher was conscious of her 'dual role' (BERA 2011, p.5) with regard to the students who participated in this research. In respect of the then-current students interviewed, permission to contact this 2008 cohort of MSc tourism and hospitality students was sought from the head of school and programme tutors. This permission was granted and an email was sent to the general class email list. It was entirely up to the student to respond voluntarily to this email.

The researcher had taught this cohort in the first semester of 2007 / 2008 but, by the second semester, the researcher no longer had any direct contact with these students and had completed the grading of this group's assessments and exams. In that sense, the students could not have been led to believe that their decision to be involved or not in the research could advantage or disadvantage them in their treatment or grades in their human resource management module. At the stage of initial contact and during the interview, the researcher was aware of possible issues of a lecturer / student power role. It was made clear to the students that the research in hand was totally separate to the researcher's role as a lecturer.

Graduates - Questionnaires

Graduates include those who completed the questionnaire and those who participated in a subsequent interview. Initially, it was planned to distribute a postal questionnaire and ethical approval for this was received from the University of Sheffield in 2008. Subsequent to this, the researcher became concerned that the postal addresses would yield a low response rate, given that some addresses were potentially nine years out of date. On this basis, it appeared that an online survey distributed by email would prove more successful. Email addresses were gathered for the graduates; however, ethical approval was declined by the University of Sheffield for this mode of data collection. The researcher reverted to the original plan and distributed postal questionnaires to graduates of the MSc tourism and hospitality programmes. In respect of those who completed the postal questionnaire, they independently decided to participate in this research. Those graduates who did not wish to complete the questionnaire simply did not return it. The covering letter that accompanied the questionnaire outlined the research purpose and explained the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided. When inputted into SPSS, the completed questionnaires were each given an identifier number to protect the identity of the respondents. It is the intention to destroy the hard copy questionnaires on successful completion of the thesis.

Interviews – Graduates, Educators and Employers

In all cases, the traditional ethical considerations were adhered to (Fontana and Frey 2005); informed consent was achieved through the use of information sheets (Appendix H) and consent forms (Appendix I). The right to privacy was addressed by anonymising the interview data and providing code names for all respondents. Digital voice recordings and electronic files were securely stored, password protected and maintained only for the duration of the research. A further complication arose in respect of ethical issues as, in the case of graduates and educators, all interviewees were known to the researcher. It became evident from the graduate interviews that the previous lecturer / student relationship definitely no longer existed and the graduates were forthright in their discussions. This may have been assisted by the fact that the researcher adopted a facilitator role in lectures rather than lecturing and, in that sense, good rapport usually existed in the classroom. The graduates were more than happy to talk openly about their experiences and views.

The educators are the researcher's peer colleagues so, again, a 'dual role' (BERA 2011) existed. All of the interviewees, bar one, are on the same lecturing grade as the researcher and, therefore, power issues did not occur. The individual who is at a more senior level had only recently acquired this position. Some of the educators who volunteered to be interviewed had completed doctorates and understood the importance of acquiring meaningful and candid data. The level of familiarity with the educators did not, in the opinion of the researcher, hinder the research process. It did not appear that the interviewees provided only information that they wanted the researcher to hear (Creswell 2012).

Research Limitations

The use of postal addresses for graduates proved to be a limitation of the study as, in a number of cases, it was apparent from the outset that the addresses were out of date. All interviews were conducted in Dublin, as the researcher did not have the time or resources to travel to meet graduates or employers in other locations in the country, having said that two of the graduate interviewees work and live outside of Dublin, but the interviews coincided with work trips to Dublin. The researcher would initially have hoped to interview more than two employers, but the reality of the thesis completion and word count also had to be considered.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the why, what, when, who and how of this research. It examined why the research was deemed relevant and timely. The research question and research objectives were presented, and the researcher's world view outlined. The phases of the research were delineated and the participants who were involved in each stage of the research were described. How the research was conducted was explained and the ethical issues highlighted.

The researcher regularly supervises undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations, so she was acutely aware of being as transparent as possible with regard to all phases of the research.

In respect of the questionnaire data, the researcher was methodical to ensure the data was entered correctly and mined to make a useful contribution to the graduate picture.

With regard to the interview data analysis, she was anxious to present the data in a format that was true to that which had actually occurred in the interactions with educators, graduates and employers.

Having provided an overview of the purpose and objectives of this research and discussed the research methodology and methods employed for this thesis, the next chapter presents an insight into the primary data collected.

CHAPTER 5: EXPLORATORY AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

Introduction

This chapter is the first of two findings chapters. The chapter describes the findings from phases one and two of the research. It presents the findings from the exploratory interviews that were conducted with 15 students from the 2007 / 2008 MSc cohort, and provides an overview of the data gleaned from the 122 questionnaires completed by MSc graduates. Findings from phase three of the research, including the educator, graduate and employer interviews, are outlined in the next chapter.

The first part of this chapter describes the findings from the exploratory research, which provided a backdrop for, and informed the subsequent questionnaire and interview protocol design.

Phase One: Exploratory Research

Student Interviews

The data gathered through the exploratory interviews was analysed by way of thematic analysis. These themes were derived from a combination of the literature reviewed at the outset of this research, and the interview protocol that guided the exploratory interviews. The interview protocol itself was designed based on initial literature searches. The main themes identified were motivators for embarking on the master's programme, career / employability expectations, the highs and lows of master's study and the enablers and inhibitors experienced by the students during their studies.

To start with, the student interviewees are profiled and an overview of their academic and employment background provided. Care was exercised not to provide too much profile information as this was a relatively small group of individuals who were pursuing an MSc in 2007 / 2008 and the priority at all times was to maintain their anonymity.

Exploratory Interviewee Profile

All interviewees were allocated fictitious names to protect their identities. Nine of the students (Max, Bert, Zoe, Fred, Walter, Ruby, Malachy, Zara, Barbara) were participants on the MSc Hospitality Management programme. Six of the interviewees

(Siofra, Ava, Ellie, Poppy, Harry, Maud) were studying on the MSc Tourism Management programme.

Eight of the interviewees were studying on a full-time basis and seven on a part-time basis. From a gender perspective, the interviewees consisted of six male students and nine female students.

In respect of age, ten of the interviewees were between 23 and 29 years of age. Three interviewees were in their early thirties and two were in their early forties. While this was a relatively young group of interviewees, all the students were still in the mature student category of 23 years and above. Having established a general interviewee profile, the next section examines their academic and employment background.

Interviewees' Academic and Employment Background

Five of the nine MSc Hospitality Management students held an undergraduate qualification in the area of hospitality or tourism; it is the norm that participants on the hospitality master's programme have a background in hospitality as this is viewed as a deepening programme. On the other hand, the MSc Tourism Management programme is described as a conversion master's and this was reiterated by the profile of tourism interviewees, only one of whom had an undergraduate qualification in tourism. The rest of the interviewees came from a variety of academic backgrounds including business, languages and arts degrees.

All of the interviewees had worked in the tourism and hospitality industry, either on a part-time or full-time basis. The range of jobs held by the hospitality interviewees ranged from general management, department management and duty management positions to interviewees who worked on a part-time basis at events and in the bar industry. On the tourism programme, students held tour guiding / tourist information jobs and jobs outside of general tourism operations. The next section assesses the motivators that prompted these students to embark on a taught MSc programme of study.

Interviewees' Motivation for Taught Postgraduate Study

The majority of the interviewees held the view that an MSc qualification would improve their career prospects and earning potential. Harry felt that the master's would:

> *improve my employability, give me security and improve my professionalism* (Harry).

Fred perceived that it would:

> *open doors for me, an accelerant in my career* (Fred).

Ava was of the view that the master's would provide her with:

> *a career back up* or *the skillset to start my own business* (Ava).

It became apparent from three interviewees, who had progressed directly from their undergraduate studies, that they liked studying and a master's degree was an automatic step. For example, Ellie suggested that:

> *I didn't feel ready to go to work yet* (Ellie).

None of the interviewees were overly negative about their previous experiences in the hospitality industry. Yet, six of the full-time participants were somewhat disheartened by the nature of the hours, work-life balance and the career development opportunities within the industry and viewed the master's as a gateway into teaching at some point in the future. They held the view that the terms and conditions, and hours in third level teaching are superior to that available at the coalface of industry operations. This motivator is not surprising, given that, in the early years of the programmes, a number of participants had come from, or gained employment in, an academic work environment.

On the other hand, the majority of the part-time students interviewed were determined to remain in the industry and considered the master's programme from a career development perspective. This view appeared to have been held because their primary degrees were not in hospitality or they perceived the master's qualification would provide an opportunity to move up the management ladder or to a different type of hotel.

Having established the motivators for postgraduate study, the next section outlines the rationale for pursuing a specific qualification in tourism or hospitality.

Motivation for Postgraduate Study in Tourism or Hospitality

It was implied in the literature review (Powers and Riegel 1993) that hospitality and tourism education competes most closely with business programmes. With this in mind, interviewees were asked why they had chosen a specialised master's programme as opposed to a general business qualification. In the main, the interviewees identified that they had not, to any great extent, investigated other types of master's. In a small number of cases, interviewees identified that they had spoken to others, friends,

colleagues or educators who had completed the qualification and they were guided by their advice. The majority of the interviewees considered that there was value in the reputation of the master's that they had chosen.

Only Max had previously studied in the institute which delivered the master's programme and that had influenced his decision to return. Harry identified that he had:

> *the experience but not the qualification* (Harry).

Ruby suggested that '*on paper*' she was '*weak*'. These were indicative statements from those interviewees who did not have an undergraduate in tourism or hospitality, yet they already worked in the industry or wanted to work in it. From a different perspective, Poppy did not have a background in tourism, and indicated that she had chosen tourism because she:

> *wanted to study something practical, I cannot see myself in a strict business, I am an adventurous person* (Poppy).

Zara commented that:

> *my dream was always to work in hospitality and I hope the reality will not be different to the dream* (Zara).

The cost, duration, location and format of the programme were other reasons for the programme choice. Ellie described the two-day time commitment as '*my kind of master's*' compared to other programmes spread out over the entire week. Max identified the fee of €10,000 associated with other postgraduate programmes compared to the, then, €4,000 for the tourism or hospitality programme as an influencing factor.

The majority of the interviewees had only positive comments to make about working in the industry. This, too, had influenced them in their choice of a specialised, as opposed to general, postgraduate programme. Fred commented that hospitality is a:

> *dynamic interactive industry and I get great pleasure out of making people happy* (Fred).

Ava conveyed that:

> *my passion is in tourism, tourism is what I want to do and to continue to work in* (Ava).

Another theme identified from the literature related to the factors that assisted or hindered students' engagement with postgraduate study. The respondents' views on this theme are explored in the next section.

The Enablers and Inhibitors

All interviewees spoke of the support received from family and friends in respect of their decision to embark upon MSc study. In the case of younger, full-time participants, it was frequently identified that they were in receipt of financial support from their families. In all these cases, this was supplemented by part-time work, normally in the hospitality or tourism industry.

The camaraderie amongst the class members was also identified as an important aspect of the interviewees' support network. It appeared that the social and cultural capital of the interviewees supported their entry to postgraduate education.

Max, Siofra and Ruby identified that their employers encouraged and supported them to embark on postgraduate study. In these three cases, out of the seven part-time students, employers provided both financial and study leave support for the participants. Ruby explained that she appreciated that she was very lucky and that she:

> *is the exception in my class, as the others do not have the same supports*
> (Ruby).

This limited evidence of fee or study leave support was not a surprise, given the approach to people management in the industry outlined in the literature review.

The main inhibitors identified were the time pressures of work and study, and the financial drawbacks of studying on a full-time basis. Barbara was contemplating leaving the industry due to the difficulties of combining work and study, yet she would continue with the master's degree. Siofra commented that:

> *my husband thinks that he is doing a master's, too!* (Siofra).

Due to the young age profile of the interviewees, only two of them had children and, because of their individual circumstances, childcare was not an issue for them.

In addition to the enablers and inhibitors, the interviewees were questioned about the highs and lows that they experienced in the course of their study.

In respect of highs, the class dynamic was frequently identified as a positive aspect of the programme. The field trip was another high point, and it was deemed to have contributed to the development of a cohesive class group. The overall professionalism of the delivery of the programmes was also identified as a high point.

The smallness of the college environment, and the support provided by educators were also commented upon. All interviewees were enthusiastic about being exposed to new ideas, concepts and research, Malachy commented that he had:

> *learned more from this year than in the previous four years* (Malachy).

Max enjoyed:

> *finding out that there was so much written about the industry... and the opportunity to tap into new information that could be applied* (Max).

Few low points were identified, and mainly related to specific modules, returning to exams and assignments after several years, or administration around some aspects of the programme.

Max, Walter and Ava had expected that there would have been greater opportunities to learn from others in the class but, due to the fact that many students were not long finished their undergraduate degrees, this was not the case. Max suggested that perhaps there were so few managers on the programme as it was difficult to combine the intensity of the industry and study.

The final theme examined their views on how the industry would react to their new qualification and their own career expectations. These two themes are presented in the next section.

The Industry's Reaction to a Master's and Interviewees' Career Expectations

While the literature review (e.g. Raybould and Wilkins 2005; O'Leary and Deegan 2005) identified the mismatched industry / student / educator expectations in respect of higher education, some of the interviewees who had already started to apply for jobs had not yet become aware of any industry cynicism.

Fred suggested that he could tell that employers were '*already more interested in*' him. Malachy, a full-time student with limited work experience, suggested that he had embarked on the master's programme to facilitate swift advancement to a management position upon graduation. Initial job searches, in recent weeks, had alerted him to the fact that industry sought practical experience in addition to the analytical and conceptual skills acquired during the master's programme. Malachy himself admitted that his career plans had been '*too ambitious*'. Ruby, Max, Walter, Ava and Zoe emphasised that they were able to apply the new information, gleaned in class, to their current jobs and this was welcomed by their employers.

Max, Zoe, Harry and Maud sought to use their MSc qualification to eventually exit the operational element of the industry and to work in academia. Walter and Ruby were optimistic of moving up the management career ladder on completion of their master's. Siofra and Ava hoped to remain, for a time, in their then current jobs but use the MSc to hone their skills and eventually do other things in the tourism industry. Fred, Zara and Malachy wished to gain entry-level management positions in the hospitality industry. Bert was glad that he did the master's but had secured a position in another field where he would still be able to use both the transferable and specialised aspects of his MSc programme. Barbara was going to take a break from the industry to facilitate her completion of the master's. Ellie and Poppy intended to travel before deciding on definite career paths.

Exploratory Research Summary

Interesting findings from this exploratory research included that the interviewees held a more positive image of the industry than that which had been portrayed in the literature, and all interviewees had worked in the industry either on a full-time or part-time basis. Having said that, the use of the MSc, as part of either a short- or long-term industry exit strategy, was also evident in some cases

There was an overwhelming sense of enthusiasm amongst the interviewees for their studies, and positivity about what the future might hold for their careers upon completion of the MSc, albeit some realised their plans may have been too ambitious. It was surprising that few of the interviewees had examined alternative study options prior to embarking on this very specialised programme. Few low points were noted and all interviewees talked about the importance of the class dynamic. However, the mix of experiences of peer colleagues or lack thereof was also acknowledged.

This exploratory research was not analysed in the same depth as the subsequent graduate questionnaires, educator, graduate and employer interviews. The main objectives of the exploratory research was one, to identify if this research topic was feasible, would people engage with the research and would it produce some thought provoking findings. Second, given the dearth of literature in the area of taught MSc programmes in tourism and hospitality, the exploratory research produced data and themes to inform the next stage of the research - the questionnaire design. The questionnaire findings are presented in the next section of this chapter.

Phase Two: Questionnaire Findings

This section provides an overview of the quantitative, scene-setting data that was gathered by postal questionnaire from 122 graduates of the MSc in Hospitality Management and the MSc in Tourism Management between the months of April and October 2010.

The following data analysis is in line with Denzin and Lincoln's (2005, p.11) view that:

> many qualitative researchers in the postpositivist tradition use statistical measures, methods, and documents as a way of locating a group of subjects within a larger population, they seldom report their findings in terms of the kinds of complex statistical measures or methods to which quantitative researchers are drawn.

Complex statistical data was not compiled for this stage of the research, as the main purpose of the graduate questionnaire was to provide baseline data that would guide the course of the in-depth interviews with graduates, educators and employers. The ten graduate interviews, eleven educator interviews and two employer interviews, add richness of detail, depth and lived experiences to the initial statistical findings presented below.

The questionnaire data is presented in the following order. At the outset, a respondent profile is delineated; this is followed by an overview of why the respondents chose to study at postgraduate level and how they feel they benefited from the process. The respondents' views on the postgraduate experience and their satisfaction with the programme are then explored. Finally, the respondents' life post-graduation is discussed.

Before examining the questionnaire data, generated through the use of basic frequencies and a number of cross tabs, some context is provided in respect of the representativeness of the response rate. Specifically, in respect of the two case study programmes, the following tables outline graduation numbers for the time period under investigation (a detailed breakdown of full-time and part-time graduation figures is contained in Chapter 3) and the questionnaire response rate with regard to year of graduation. This indicates that the response rate by year of graduation is reflective of the graduation figures for the time period under review.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
MSc Tourism	5	16	12	20	12	17	15	11	15	14	17
MSc Hospitality	11	7	11	22	8	18	11	16	15	7	6
Total	**16**	**23**	**23**	**42**	**20**	**35**	**26**	**27**	**30**	**21**	**23**

Table 5.1 - Total Graduation Figures 2000 – 2010 (part-time and full-time combined)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
MSc Tourism	2	4	6	7	8	7	5	7	1	6	1
MSc Hospitality	7	2	6	9	5	15	4	11	1	5	1
Total	**9**	**6**	**12**	**16**	**13**	**22**	**9**	**18**	**2**	**11**	**2**

Table 5.2 - Total Response Rate to Questionnaire

Respondent Profile

Of the 122 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 46.7 per cent had studied on a part-time basis and 53.3 per cent had studied on a full-time basis. This provides a balanced insight into the views of graduates who followed both modes of study. 54.9 per cent had undertaken the MSc in Hospitality Management and 45.1 per cent the MSc in Tourism Management. This respondent mix permits an overview of both of the programmes under review. However, this programme mix is slightly different to the actual make-up of the graduates in the ten-year period under review; in this time period 154 tourism students and 132 hospitality students graduated. Also, note that, as explained in the Research Methods chapter, 2008 graduates were not contacted.

70.2 per cent of the respondents were female and 29.8 per cent male. This is indicative of the gender breakdown of the participants on the programmes in general. Out of the 286 MSc students who graduated between 2000 and 2010, 199 were female. This gender mix also corresponds with the aforementioned HEA statistics.

Cross tabs and Pearson's chi-square test were completed in respect of gender, programme of study and mode of study (part-time and full-time). The only significant relationship ($<.05$) evident was between gender and programme of study. The tables below identify that the respondents who completed the MSc in Tourism Management

were overwhelmingly female and that more males completed the MSc in Hospitality Management.

Gender & Programme of Study Crosstabulation

A bar chart showing gender and programme of study crosstabulation. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 50. MSc H - Male: approximately 26 (39.4%). MSc H - Female: approximately 40 (60.6%). MSc T - Male: approximately 10 (18.2%). MSc T - Female: approximately 45 (81.8%).
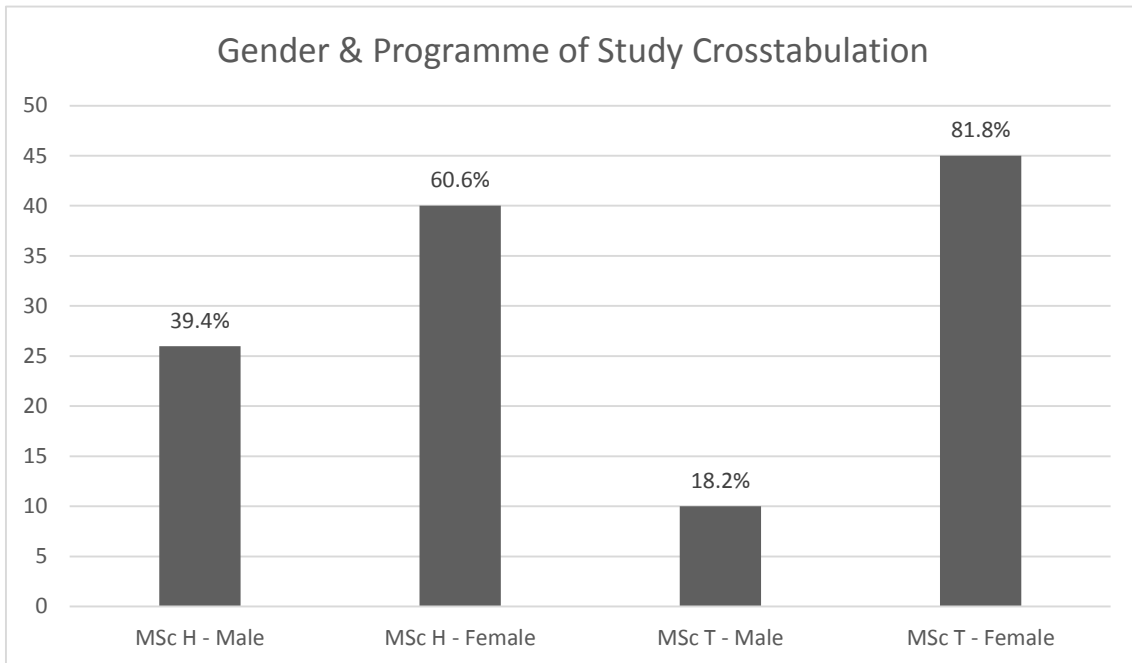
Pearson Chi-Square significance = .011.

Table 5.3 - Gender & Programme of Study Crosstabulation (n = 121)

A bar chart showing the age profile. The y-axis is labelled "Percent" ranging from 0 to 25. The x-axis is labelled "Age". 20-25: approximately 5. 26-30: approximately 20.5. 31-35: approximately 19. 36-40: approximately 20. 41-45: approximately 23. 46-50: approximately 5. >50: approximately 7.5.
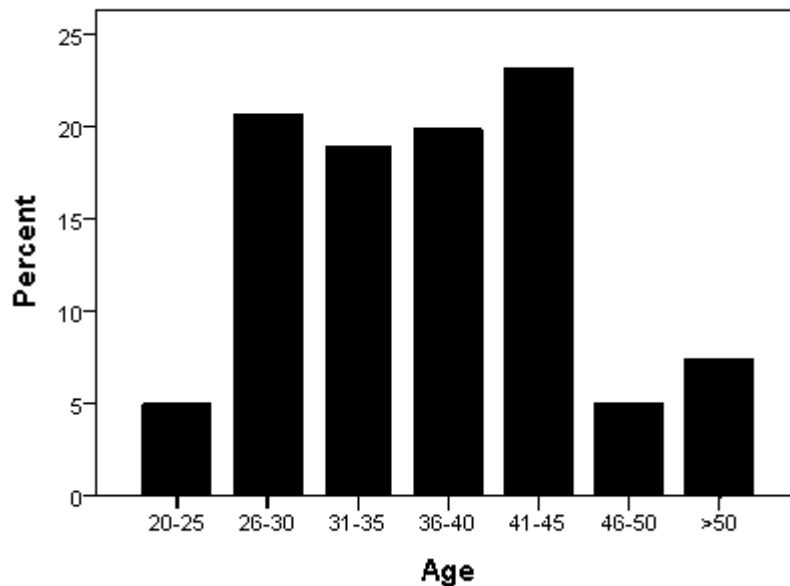
Table 5.4 - Age Profile of Respondents (n = 121)

Few of the respondents were in the youngest or oldest age categories, with 82.1 per cent of respondents in the 26-45 age range. Whilst official age data was not available for all

109

MSc participants, based on observations made over the past thirteen years of teaching these groups, this age profile is indicative of the general age profile of students who had participated on the programme.

Respondents with Children under the Age of Eighteen

In respect of marital status of respondents, 35.8 per cent were single, 62.5 per cent were married or co-habiting and only 1.7 per cent were divorced. Cross tabs and Pearson's chi-square test were conducted for marital status and family commitments restricting career progression and / or opportunity to study. A significant relationship (<.05) existed for marital status and family commitments restricting study. This is depicted in table 5.5 below.
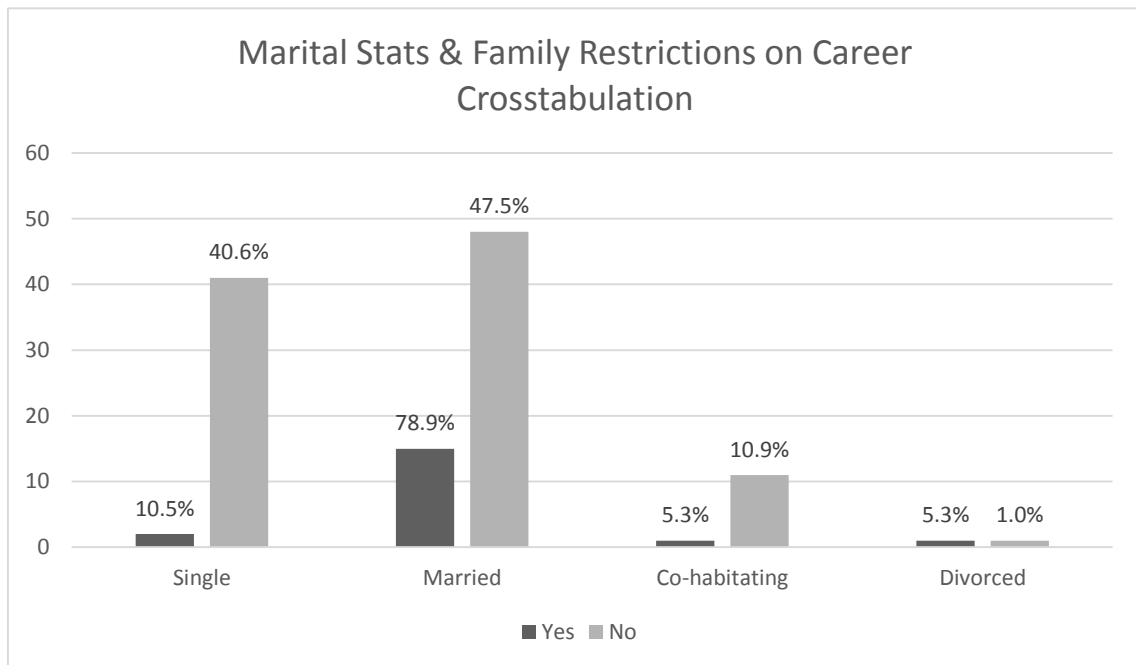
Pearson Chi-Square significance = .026.

Table 5.5 - Marital Status & Family Restrictions on Career Crosstabulation (n = 120)

35.5 per cent of respondents had children under the age of 18 but, in many cases, the respondents indicated that these children were only born after completion of the MSc. 22.3 per cent indicated that family commitments had restricted their opportunity for study and only 16.5 per cent identified that family commitments had hampered their chances of career progression. Bearing in mind that family commitments could include things other than childcare issues, one respondent mentioned the area of eldercare. Cross tabs and Pearson's chi-square test were conducted for gender and family

commitments restricting study and / or career progression. Significance (<.05) was not identified in either case.
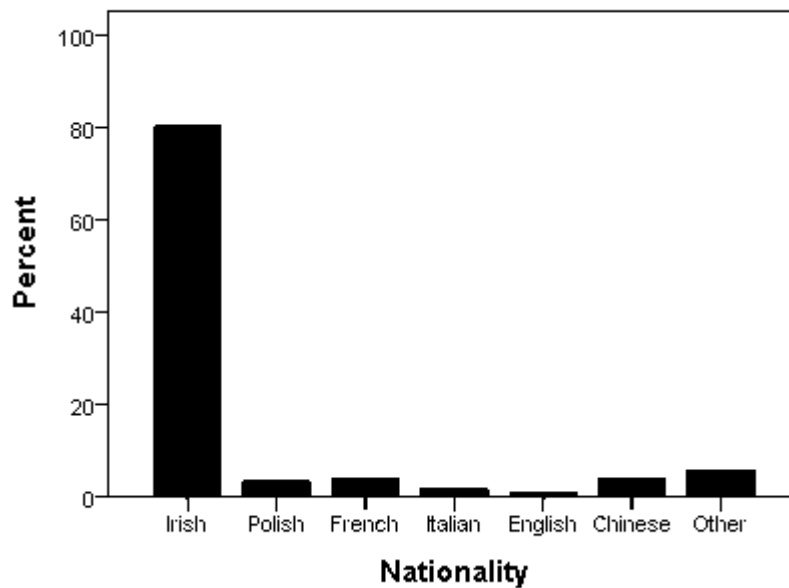
Table 5.6 - Nationality of Respondents (n = 121)

The respondents were predominantly Irish (80.2 per cent) and this reflects the composition of the MSc classes since the programmes' inception. In total, there were 81 non-Irish national participants on the programmes in the years under review. These participants included Chinese, African, Polish, American, French, and students from various other European countries. This non-Irish national presence on the programmes was in line with the increasingly culturally diverse nature of the Irish tourism workforce, as identified in the literature review. This trend corresponds to, but has by no means kept pace with, that of postgraduate tourism programmes in the United Kingdom, where non-EU students are in the majority (Botterill & Gale 2005). 24 non-Irish nationals (19.8 per cent of respondents_ completed the questionnaire. The low response rate among non-Irish national MSc graduates was most likely influenced by the unavailability of up-to-date postal addresses for European and international students, many of whom had returned home subsequent to graduation.
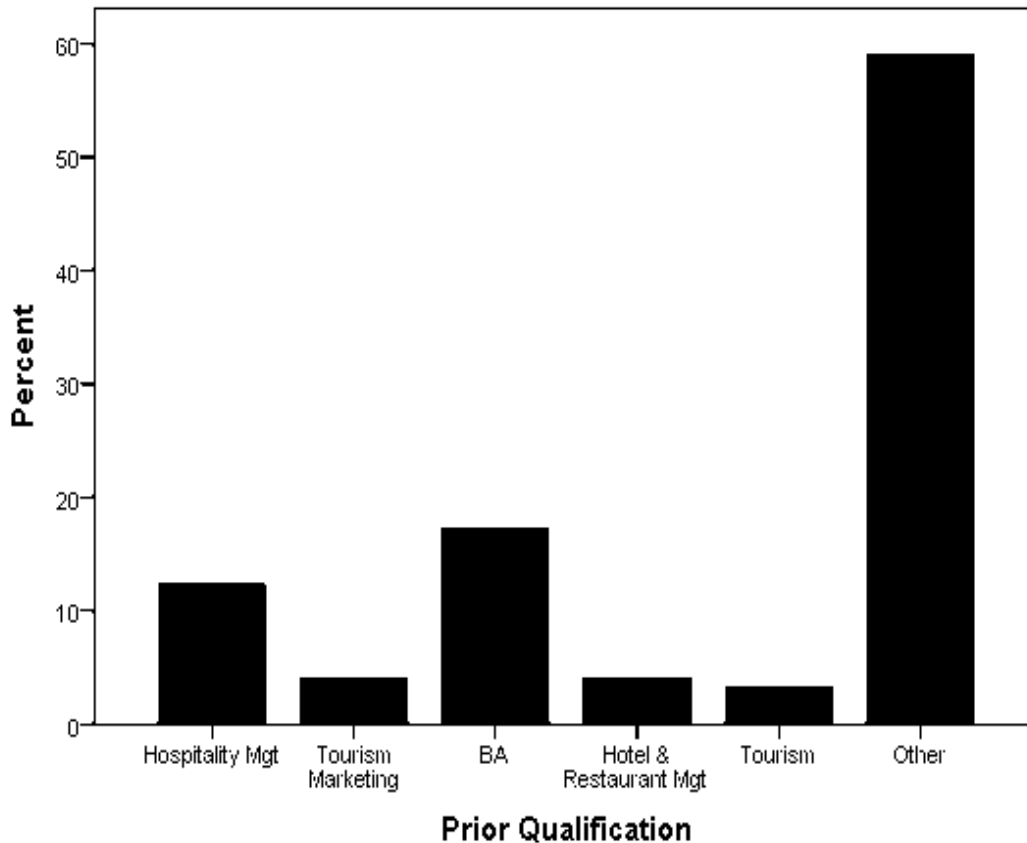
Table 5.7 - Prior Qualifications held by MSc Graduates (n = 122)

46.7 per cent of respondents were the first generation of their family to pursue higher education. 23.5 per cent of respondents had family connections with the industry. Seven of these respondents commented on how this had positively influenced their career choice:

> *As I grew up in the industry, it was always something I had an interest in, it just seemed like a natural progression* (96).

On the other hand, respondent 1 noted:

> *my Dad is a chef and has always discouraged me to go into hospitality industry due to unsociable hours, but I ended up somehow in the tourism industry.*

One respondent had chosen to complete the MSc as their family connections with the industry had led them to believe '*formal qualifications would support my progression*' (22). However, respondent 76 opted for the MSc '*to improve my career development and to have an alternative to the hospitality industry*'. Most respondents had completed their qualification, prior to the MSc, in the mid to late 1990s (35 per cent) or during the

2000s (47.5 per cent). Table 5.7 indicates that 59 per cent of the respondents selected the 'other' option in respect of qualifications. Initially, the presumption was that these respondents did not have a specialised undergraduate qualification in hospitality or tourism.

On closer review of the qualitative written comments gleaned from the questionnaires, it was apparent that seventeen respondents held a diploma in some combination of hotel, catering, restaurant, bar and business. Eight of the respondents held a BA in hotel / restaurant / tourism. Respondents with non-specialised hospitality and tourism qualifications included three with degrees in education, three with language degrees, five with business degrees and nine with degrees in marketing. A sample of the other non-hospitality and tourism related credentials included fine art, law, surveying, literature, politics and history. 18.9 per cent of respondents had previously attended Dublin Institute of Technology, 11.5 per cent Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, 9 per cent Athlone Institute of Technology and a much lower percentage had completed their prior qualification at an Irish university, e.g. Trinity College Dublin, 3.3 per cent and University College Dublin, 4.1 per cent.

Further Qualifications Acquired Post-MSc

30.3 per cent of MSc graduates studied for further qualifications in the aftermath of their postgraduate study. Amongst this 30.3 per cent, qualifications varied from PhDs to certificates and diplomas. 18.2 per cent were currently pursuing a further qualification, again including the same variety of credentials.
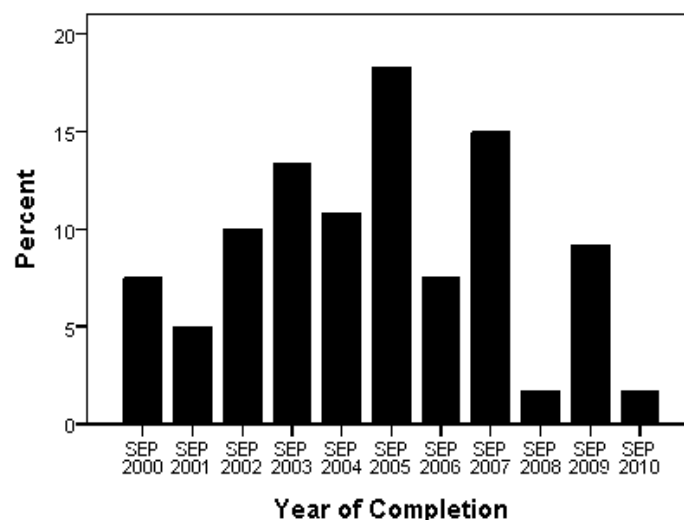
Table 5.8 - Year of Completion of MSc (n = 120)

22.5 per cent of respondents had graduated between 2000 and 2002, 42.4 per cent graduated between 2003-2005, 24.2 per cent graduated between 2006 and 2008 and 10.9 per cent graduated in the 2009-2010 period. The top three response rates were achieved from graduates of 2005 (18.3 per cent), 2007 (15.0 per cent) and 2003 (13.3 per cent). Two responses were received from respondents who graduated in 2008; this was despite the fact that this cohort was excluded from the main study as they had previously participated in the exploratory study. In these two cases, it is apparent that they should have graduated in the previous year but were delayed due to outstanding course work and / or personal circumstances.

Having now provided a profile of the respondents, the next section will investigate the motivators that drove respondents to pursue a postgraduate qualification and the benefits they believe that they achieved.

Motivation for Pursuit of MSc
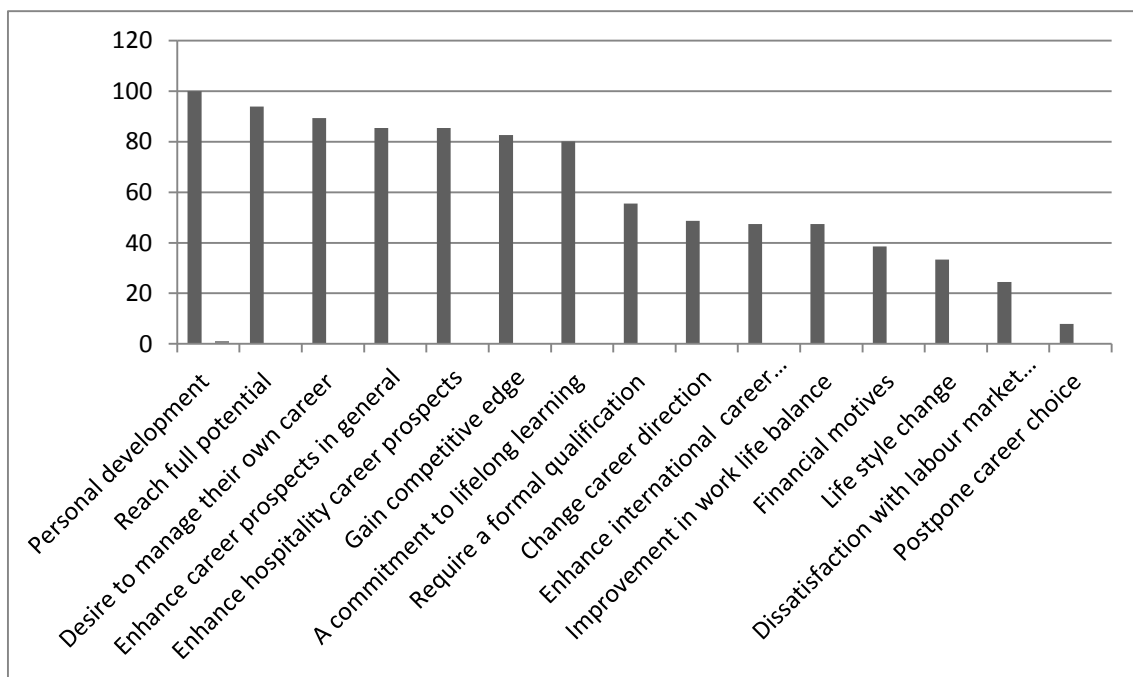
Table 5.9 - Per Cent of Very Important & Important Motivators

Key to Table 5.9

Motivator	Number Responding to this Motivator
Personal development	n = 118
Reach full potential	n = 118
Desire to manage own career	n = 113
Enhance career prospects in general	n = 116
Enhance hospitality career prospects	n = 117

114

Gain competitive edge	n = 116
A commitment to lifelong learning	n = 116
Require a formal qualification	n = 117
Change career direction	n = 117
Enhance international career	n = 114
Improvement in work-life balance	n = 116
Financial motives	n = 117
Life style change	n = 114
Dissatisfaction with labour market	n = 114
Postpone career choice	n = 114

The motivators for pursuing a postgraduate qualification, in terms of importance, are displayed above in Table 5.9. The statements utilised were drawn from the literature on why people engage with postgraduate study, to gauge the level of importance attached to the motivators.

Surprisingly, given the literature on the issue of the hospitality and tourism industry image and opportunities for employee development, enhancement of career prospects in hospitality was ranked by 85.5 per cent as very important or important. Again, unexpectedly, financial motives were viewed as very important or important by only 38.5 per cent; 35 per cent identified this as neither important or unimportant and 26.5 per cent indicated that this was unimportant or very unimportant.

In respect of a life style change, a higher percentage was expected, given the work-life balance issues identified in the literature. However, this factor was regarded by only 33.4 per cent (very important or important) as a motivator for study, 34.2 per cent deemed this neither important nor unimportant with 32.4 per cent perceiving it to be unimportant or very unimportant. An improvement in work-life balance was looked at as very important or important by 47.4 per cent, yet 25 per cent regarded this as neither important nor unimportant, and 27.6 per cent deemed this to be unimportant or very unimportant.

Dissatisfaction with their experience in the labour market was considered very important and important by 24.5 per cent. Unexpectedly, 36.9 per cent looked on this as unimportant or very unimportant.   Only 7.9 per cent of respondents regarded completing an MSc in order to postpone career choice important; none of the respondents deemed this very important, while 53.5 per cent felt this was an unimportant or very unimportant factor.

Cross tabs and Pearson's chi-square test were completed on the basis of gender, programme, mode of study and motivation for postgraduate study, relationships of any

significance (<.05) were not identified. This proved quite surprising in respect of motivators such as improved work-life balance and / or lifestyle change and gender. Having examined what motivated respondents to engage in postgraduate study, the next section explores the benefits they garnered.

The Outcomes of an MSc Qualification
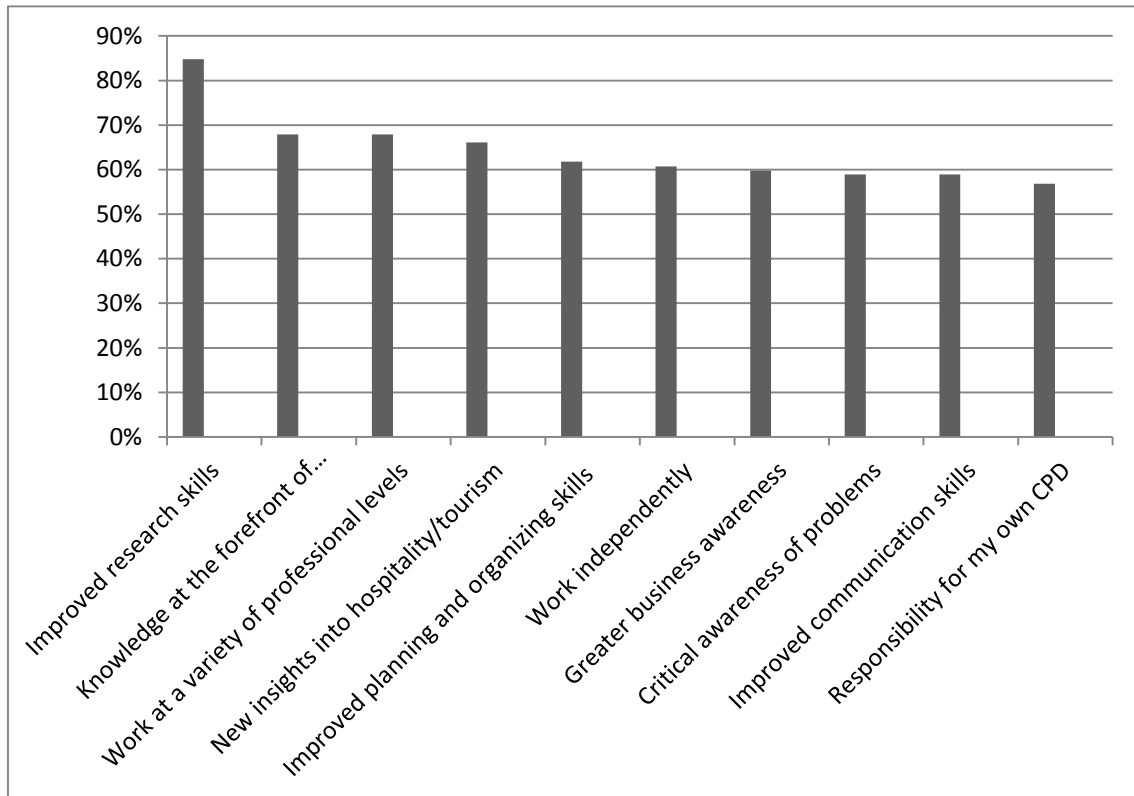
Table 5.10 - The Outcomes of an MSc Qualification – Knowledge and Skills Acquired

Key to Table 5.10

n = 112 for the following variables:

Improved research skills, Knowledge at the forefront of..., Work at a variety of professional levels, New insights into hospitality / tourism, Work independently, Greater business awareness, Critical awareness of problems, Improved communication skills.

n = 111 for the following variable:

Responsibility for my own CPD.

n = 110 for the following variable:

Improved planning and organising skills.

116

The respondents were asked to identify, from a list adapted, in the main, from the National Framework of Qualifications level 9 descriptors, what knowledge and skills that they had acquired by completing the MSc qualification. The top ten ranking results are depicted in the Table 5.10, above.

Lower ranking knowledge and skills acquired included improved interpersonal skills, improved decision making, improved literacy skills, the competence to work in ill-defined situations and becoming an agent of change. The lowest ranking skill acquired was improved numeracy (20.5 per cent).
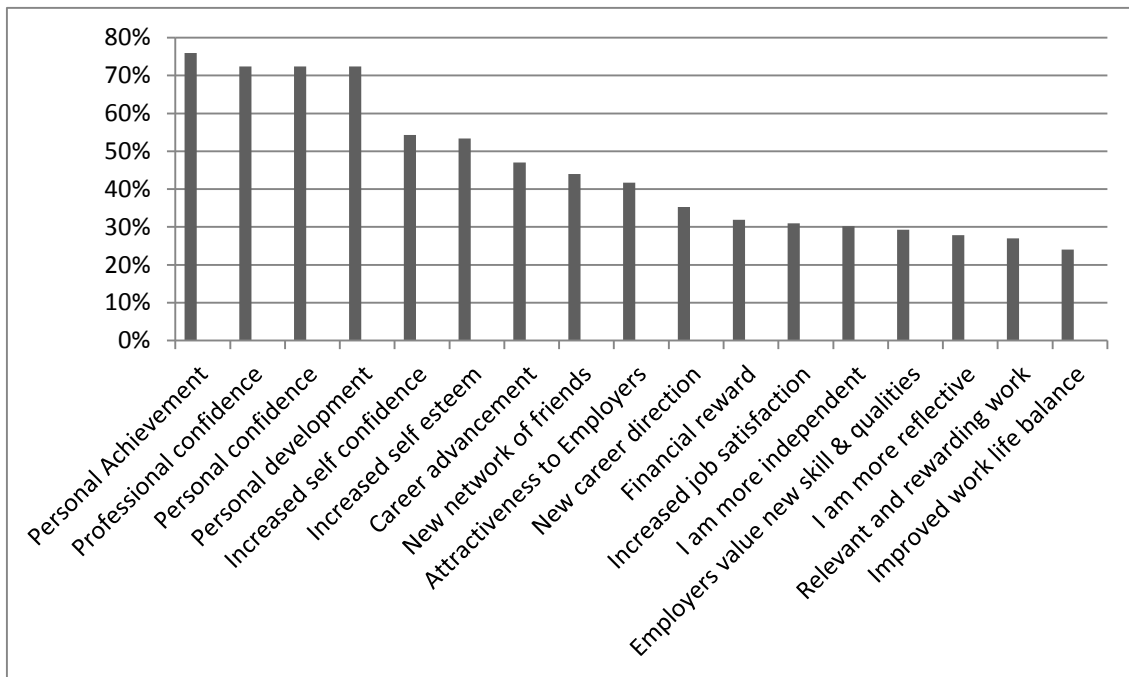
Table 5.11 - The Outcomes – Benefits Accrued Subsequent to Graduation

Key to Table 5.11

n = 116 for all variables with the exception of:

n = 115 for the following variables:

Career advancement, Attractiveness to employers, I am more reflective and Relevant and rewarding work.

Similar to the knowledge and skills acquired, the benefits accrued are depicted in a Table 5.11, above. It is noteworthy that it was terminology like 'personal achievement', 'personal confidence' and 'personal development' that resonated with the respondents. Surprisingly, 'career advancement' was acknowledged by only 47 per cent of respondents and a 'new network of friends' by 44 per cent. Increased 'attractiveness to

employers' was viewed as a benefit by 41.7 per cent and 'improved financial reward' was considered a benefit by 31.9 per cent.

Statements that struggled to achieve 30 per cent, included 'employers value my new skills and qualities', 'relevant and rewarding work' and 'I am more reflective'. The statement that attracted the lowest score was 'improved work-life balance' at 24 per cent. This data indicates that work related benefits were less obvious than personal benefits for the respondents. Cross tabs and Pearson's chi-square test were conducted on the basis of gender and benefits. The only significant relationship (<.05) noted was between gender and a new network of friends (.033).

The next section will investigate the views of the respondents in respect of their postgraduate study experience and general satisfaction with the programme.

Postgraduate Experience – Combining Work and Study / Full-Time Study

As previously stated, the respondents were drawn from two constituencies, those who studied on a part-time basis and those studied on a full-time basis. Therefore, it was necessary to examine issues specific to these individual groupings. Respondents who combined work and study are examined first and then respondents who studied on a full-time basis are investigated.

The 46.7 per cent of respondents who studied on a part-time basis were questioned specifically about their experience of combining work and study. Of those who studied on a part-time basis, 25 per cent worked in hotels, 25 per cent were in education, 14.3 per cent held jobs in tourism and 12.5 per cent were employed by a state agency. The numbers in education reinforce the anecdotal evidence that, originally, the MSc programmes were utilised by staff from other institutes of technology, as a route to acquiring the master's qualification required to teach in Irish third level education. A small number of respondents, seven people, worked in non-tourism or hospitality related industries.

Those who combined work and study were asked if they changed job while completing the MSc, the rationale for this being that the hospitality and tourism industry does not possess a good reputation in respect of work-life balance. 23.2 per cent of respondents changed job while studying, 15.7 per cent had one job change, and 7.8 per cent had two job changes. The majority of respondents, 76.8 per cent stayed in their original job. One respondent indicated that:

the fact that the programme runs 1 full day per week made it very challenging to move jobs, it was a decision breaker in all interviews I had (55).

Another respondent conveyed that:

I would not have moved had my new employer not agreed to facilitate the completion of the course (43).

However, from another perspective, one respondent suggested that they had to change job and that this was influenced by their participation on the MSc:

to ensure I could be guaranteed 1 day off for college per week. Yes – it was for my career and my employment didn't see any benefit in it (37).

26.3 per cent of respondents indicated that their participation in the MSc influenced their job change. Respondent 15 observed that they had changed job to '*improve work-life balance and also like the opportunity to change my career*'. This respondent also commented that the MSc had influenced this choice as they had become '*attracted to the world of academia*'.

73.2 per cent of 56 respondents indicated that their employer provided assistance in respect of their studies; this included fee support and study leave. 63.6 per cent stated that this assistance was given without any specific stipulations. Where stipulations existed, these included that fees were only reimbursed on graduation, that the programme was to be used to enhance work practices or that the participant would remain with organisation for a number of years upon completion of the MSc. One respondent commented:

When I commenced the MSc, my employer was unsupportive, I changed company mid-way through and my new employer was very supportive (4).

Pearson's chi-square test was conducted on the relationship between employer assistance with study and job changes, but no relationship of any significance (<.05) was identified.

Encouragingly, 68.5 per cent identified their employer's attitude to their studies as very supportive or supportive and 29.6 per cent suggested a neutral attitude. Optimistically, 69.8 per cent of 53 respondents indicated that their employer valued their MSc qualification.

Of the 53.3 per cent of respondents who studied on a full-time basis, 81.5 per cent of them had worked in the hospitality or tourism industry prior to commencing the MSc and, therefore, had some insight into this industry. This prior work experience varied

from '*part-time work in many bars and restaurants*' (113) to '*20 years in the field in six countries*' (99). Whilst 60 per cent held a part-time job while they undertook the programme, this job was not necessary in the hospitality or tourism industry. Positively, 73.4 per cent acquired employment relevant to their MSc after graduation.

Table 5.12 - Satisfaction with MSc Programme (n = 120)

92.5 per cent of respondents deemed themselves very satisfied or satisfied with the MSc programme and only 4.1 per cent indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the MSc experience. Pearson's chi-square test did not reveal any relationship between programme or mode of study and level of satisfaction. To reiterate this high level of satisfaction with this experience, 94.8 per cent would recommend the programmes to a friend. However, having said that, three of the full-time respondents did write a note of caution:

> *Yes, but with a caveat. The caveat being that the qualification will help in personal development and assist with the education world, but I question the value being attached to it (or any master's) within the industry* (95).

Similarly, respondent 65 reiterated:

> *Not really sure – for teaching / consulting, yes. There are too many working in hospitality with no qualifications or qualifications lower than degree level and MSc holders can be viewed negatively. It may be better to complete MSc later on during career when the candidate is in middle to upper management. This is based on my own experience.*

Respondent 56 also noted:

> *Reflecting on it, I think that if you have previous studies in Tourism, doing a master's that specialises more in a specific business area might be better to enhance a career (e.g. marketing, accounting). Otherwise, I would recommend it.*

Part-time respondent 34 was forthright about the negative aspects of the programme:

> *Yes and no, I have recommended the MSc but only because of changes made to the structure and assessment approach. It was the worst educational programme I ever experienced and I have engaged in programmes for about 15 years prior to the MSc in Hospitality, the class counted the assessment word count in the first year, it was about 94,000 words in assignments.*

Another part-time respondent noted that '*If I were to do it again I would do an MBA*' (4).

Most respondents provided comments on their level of satisfaction with the MSc experience. For the purpose of analysis, these comments were categorised into comments related to areas for improvement and positive comments.

Comments on Areas for Improvement

Lecture Material & Lecturers

Seventeen comments made by respondents specifically highlighted the standard of lecturing and the quality of material delivered. These comments are attributed to respondents based on their mode of study; those who studied on a part-time basis are described as part-timers and those who studied on a full-time basis, full-timers. More graduates who studied on a part-time basis, than those who were full-time students, identified lecture material and lecturers as an area for improvement. One graduate who had studied on a part-time basis noted:

> *The majority of the lecturers were excellent; however, some were not able to deal / facilitate a group of mature professionals. Some material that was delivered as part of key modules was not to the standard of a postgraduate programme, more an undergraduate programme* (31).

Another part-timer commented '*at times the level of lecturing was disappointing but overall it was very good*' (13). Respondent 41 observed that '*Information delivered in very uninspiring way and lack of experience by lecturers of realities in industry operations*'.

This was also reiterated by full-time respondent 81:

> *Some of the information taught was dated, lectures definitely needed to be updated to reflect industry changes. A huge benefit was the class I was part of. I learnt a lot from their experiences.*

Another full-timer recognised that '*there was a big lack of "field" experience among many lecturers*' (99).

How Programme Translated into Job Opportunities

A number of full-timers commented on the lack of career planning support provided as part of the MSc programme and on their employment opportunities subsequent to completion. In respect of career management support, full-time respondent 73 noted that career guidance could have been '*stronger*'; similarly, full-time respondent 101 observed that '*I would be very satisfied if more industry links could have been put in place for my job prospects*'. Part-time respondent 40 similarly noted '*no assistance once finished regarding employment*'.

In relation to career progression, post-qualification, the difference between careers in industry and education was identified. Full-time respondent 68 noted that they:

> *would have mixed feelings about value in industry, given my experience / reaction encountered when job hunting. Definitely of value in current lecturing / research role.*

This sentiment was reiterated by respondent 95 who acknowledged satisfaction:

> *in that it helped me gain my job within the world of education. However, I'm not sure it would have advanced my career within the hotel business should I have returned to the sector.*

Work, Study and Family Balance

Part-timers wrote qualitative comments about the challenges of juggling family, work and study. Respondent 3 noted that it was '*difficult to fit in home life, work and travel plus assessment and study*'. Similarly, respondent 18 observed:

> *While work load was immense and deadlines strict, most lecturers appreciated other concerns associated with mature learners / students (work / family commitments).*

The above illustrated some of the areas for improvement highlighted by the respondents. The next section outlines some of the positives acknowledged by the respondents.

Positive Comments

More than one respondent rated the MSc as the 'best decision' that they had made. Full-time respondent 61 noted that:

> *it was one of the best decisions I have made and I got a lot from the course. The course has improved my knowledge, self-confidence, along with helping me acquire new skill sets.*

Similarly, full-time respondent 91:

> *my MSc was the best decision I ever made. It gave me confidence to achieve what I have achieved to date in my career and my salary has increased.*

However, similar rewards had not been reaped in employment by all respondents, as was illustrated by full-timer 56:

> *I am happy to have a master's and still believe that in the long term it might make a difference for my career, although I have not seen the reward of it yet.*

Part-time respondent 30 noted:

> *I would strongly recommend the (Institute Name) Master's programmes to friends and colleagues pursuing their studies. I benefited tremendously, both from a self-development and career development perspective.*

Another part-timer, respondent 50, '*found the whole process energising and fulfilling*'.

Lecture Material & Lecturers

Whilst some respondents had expressed dissatisfaction with the lecture material and lecturers, the majority of respondents conveyed otherwise. One example, from a part-timer, is '*good lecturers, relevant to the real world. Learnt an amount!*' (20). Another part-timer, respondent 120, remarked that '*most lecturers first class, others less committed*'. Some respondents enjoyed the fact that that the programme delivered general business transferrable knowledge, whilst others had hoped for more field specific modules. Full-time respondent 102 liked that it was a '*general management MSc*', whilst full-time respondent 72 indicated that the programme '*felt more like a business course, felt I needed more specific information on tourism*'. Some respondents wrote comments about the support received from MSc programme staff and the benefits of a small class-learning environment.

In the next section, the final categorisation of data from the questionnaire is reviewed. This data pertains to the respondents' work-life subsequent to completion of the MSc.

Work-life Following Completion of MSc

Happily, 92.5 per cent of 120 respondents indicated that, at the time of the questionnaire completion, they were in employment. 66.6 per cent of those who were not in paid employment indicated that they worked in hotels, tourism and education after completing their MSc. These respondents ceased to work in paid employment for a variety of reasons, including the termination of their contract, family ill health, extended maternity leave, continued study and the decision to set up their own business. The small number who had not worked in paid employment continued to study or complete an internship.
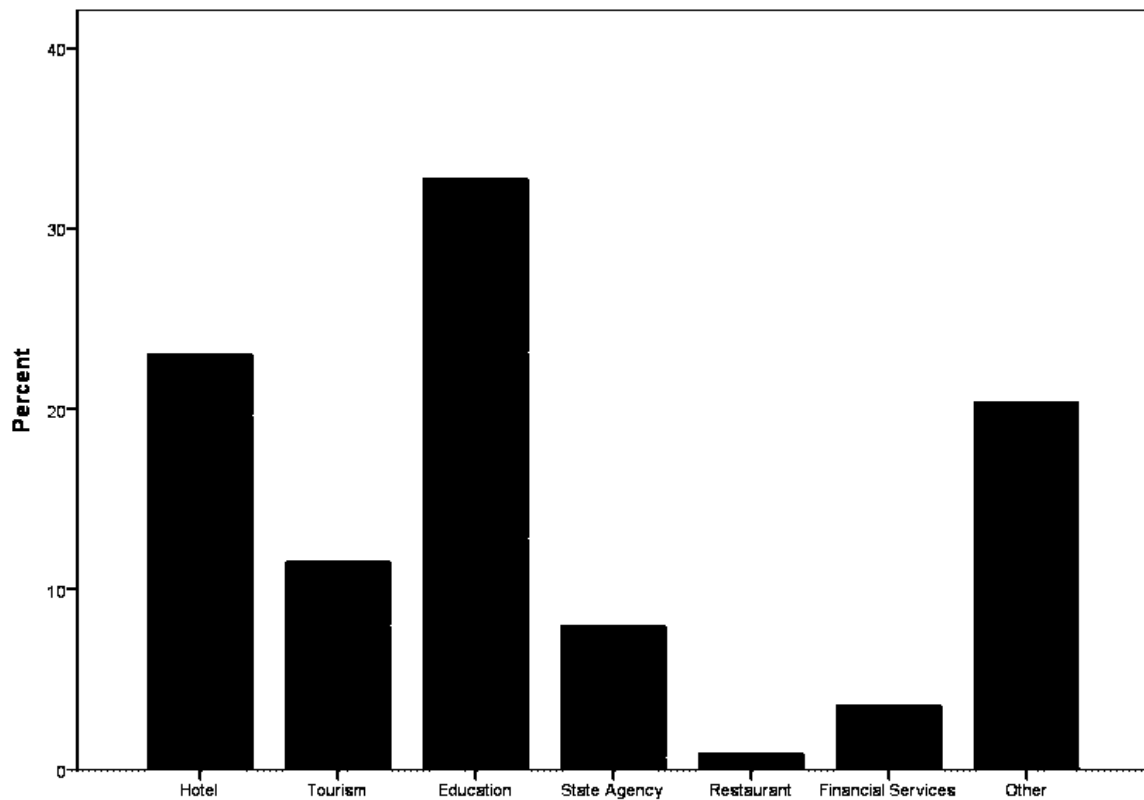
Table 5.13 - Source of Employment (n = 113)

For those who were in paid employment, at the time of completion of the questionnaire, the bar chart above indicates where they were employed. Some of the varied job titles recorded included lecturer, general manager, functional director, entrepreneur and receptionist. Other industries included pharmaceutical, manufacturing, consultancy and

events. On a very positive note, 84.3 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that their MSc was relevant to their then current job. A sample of comments volunteered by those who studied on a part-time basis illustrates this level of relevance.

Respondent 53 identified the relevance of specific modules:

> *my current function focuses almost exclusively on marketing and promotion, which was covered extensively in the MSc.*

Respondent 48 found the programme beneficial from an entrepreneurial perspective '*the knowledge gained during the process proved invaluable during the process of starting the company*'.

Respondent 28 is in the education sector and noted:

> *I use my master's thesis as the basis for a module I teach. I use knowledge gained in most of the subjects I teach and the research skills acquired are vital for new programmes and staying up to date in subject areas.*

Similarly, respondent 30 observed:

> *the knowledge and skills learned from the MSc have empowered me to be a more effective and efficient manager.*

However, respondent 52 did convey a cautionary comment, '*Personally I find it relevant, however, I'm not convinced if my employer does…*'.

Those who studied on a full-time basis recorded some less positive comments than the part-timers. Respondent 56 observed:

> *I think job opportunities have been relatively scarce, and employers are valuing experience mainly, which makes it hard for people that have been going to college straight after the Leaving Cert.*

Similarly, respondent 77 noted that:

> *the industry was not ready in terms of roles that a graduate with an MSc should perform. No distinction between a graduate with MSc and those who had graduated with diploma / BSc. Same reflected in remuneration / pay benefits, etc.*

66.6 per cent felt their employer had a very positive attitude or a positive attitude to the MSc, while 32.4 per cent identified a neutral attitude on the part of their employer. It was acknowledged by those who studied on both a part-time and full-time basis that an MSc was a requirement for a career in academia. The small number of non-Irish national students who completed the questionnaire commented that employers were impressed by their initiative to live and study abroad. In general, there were many

encouragingly positive and very positive comments '*I can now pick and choose the job I want*' (92). Likewise, respondent 25 observed that the:

> *MSc assisted in getting new job and better salary. My opinion is respected due to knowledge learnt in MSc (although MSc is not referred to).*

However, some of the qualitative comments written by both part-timers and full-timers also contained a certain level of realism with regard to the industry:

> *I have been rarely asked about my qualifications, even at interview stage. This is indicative of the hospitality industry, where industry experience is valued as much, if not more so at times, as formal education. I already knew this, however, and completed the MSc very much for personal reasons as opposed to career prospects* (13).

This sentiment was reiterated by other respondents, for example, full-time respondent 86:

> *it was positive, considering my chances to find a full-time job so easily and quickly at this time (hotels affected by economic downturn). I think I can say that I had a certain competitive advantage. But I cannot say 'very positive' as I still miss the long term experience that employers need from me in order to offer me a job with more responsibilities that will fully take into consideration my MSc.*

The issue of being overqualified was also mooted in some of these written comments. Full-time respondent 62 suggested that while the qualification may prove advantageous at the short-listing stage:

> *some employers will say that because of the qualification that I would be overqualified, which has made it very hard to gain experience in the industry... so most of the time I am either overqualified or under-experienced.*

Respondent 14 noted:

> *depending on the employers own values, some would think very positive towards it, others would make no reference to it.*

Part-time respondents who identified a neutral attitude on the part of their employers, made the following comments:

> *Employers now want the most qualified people with experience but do not wish to reward them* (51).

Respondent 50 highlighted that '*our industry does not have a strong positive attitude to formal studies*'.

Similar comments, regarding a neutral attitude, were evident in the questionnaires returned by full-timers. Respondent 65 noted:

> *in some organisations, I found that my colleagues & boss did not like the fact that I had an MSc & I am very slow to disclose any qualifications I have in the workplace.*

The issue of managers feeling threatened by staff with formal education was observed by respondent 88 as:

> *many people have worked their way up to senior positions they place less value on qualifications.*

Another comment in a similar vein was written by respondent 79:

> *unfortunately most are uninterested – no relevance and no impact on salary until I gained employment in X (a state agency outside of hospitality & tourism).*

A comment mentioned on four questionnaires related to confusion in industry as to the difference between an undergraduate and postgraduate qualification. Respondent 77 observed:

> *no distinction between a graduate with MSc and those with diploma / BSc. Same reflected in remuneration / pay benefits, etc.*

Pearson's chi-square test was completed for programme of study and employer attitude. It was apparent that MSc Hospitality graduates encountered a more positive employer attitude than MSc Tourism graduates did, as depicted below.

	MSc Hospitality		MSc Tourism	
	Count	**%**	**Count**	**%**
Very Positive	22	35.5	6	12.2
Positive	19	30.6	28	57.2
Neutral	21	33.9	15	30.6
Negative	0	0	0	0
Very Negative	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	62	100.0	49	100.0

Pearson Chi-Square significance = .005.

Table 5.14 - Employer attitude since completion of MSc Crosstabulation (n = 111)

The comments volunteered by the participants were reflected and summarised in their responses to a list of statements included in the questionnaire. Table 5.15, below, identifies the percentage of those who strongly agreed or agreed with the statements.
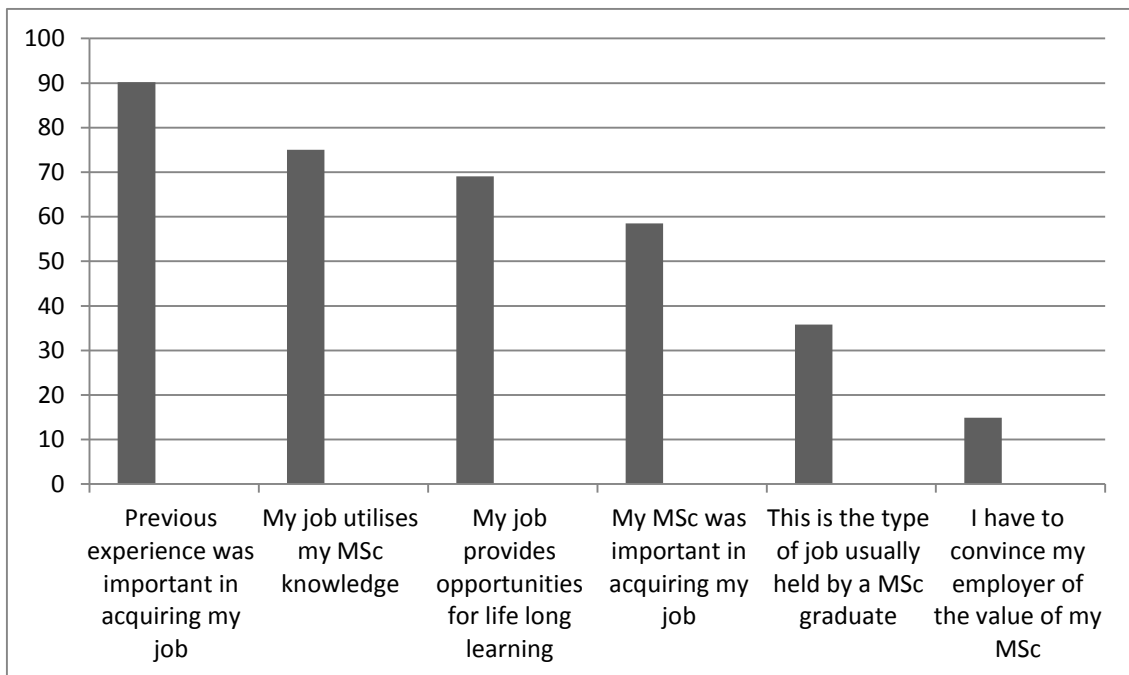
Table 5.15 - Summary of Views on Value of MSc in the Workplace

Key to Table 5.15

Variable	Number
Previous experience was important in acquiring my job	n = 112
My job utilises my MSc knowledge	n = 108
My job provides opportunities for life long learning	n = 110
My MSc was important in acquiring my job	n = 106
This is the type of job usually held by a MSc graduate	n = 109
I have to convince my employer of the value of my MSc	n = 107

Income Pre- and Post-Graduation

On the basis of the two tables below, it is evident that, post-graduation, more respondents are earning over €60,000 and fewer respondents are in the €30,000 income bracket. (Note that income levels have not been adjusted for inflation.) Some of those in education and working in state agencies identified that salary increases were due to the existence of pay scales.
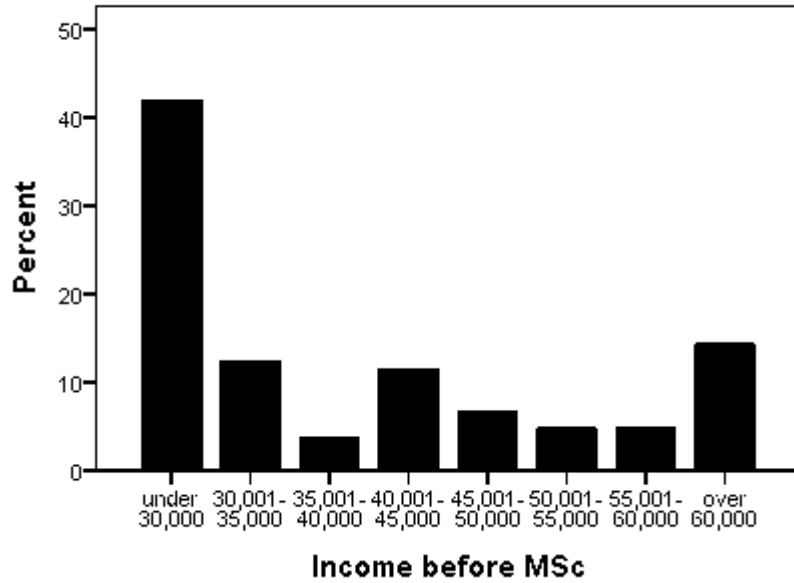
Table 5.16 - Income before MSc (n = 105)
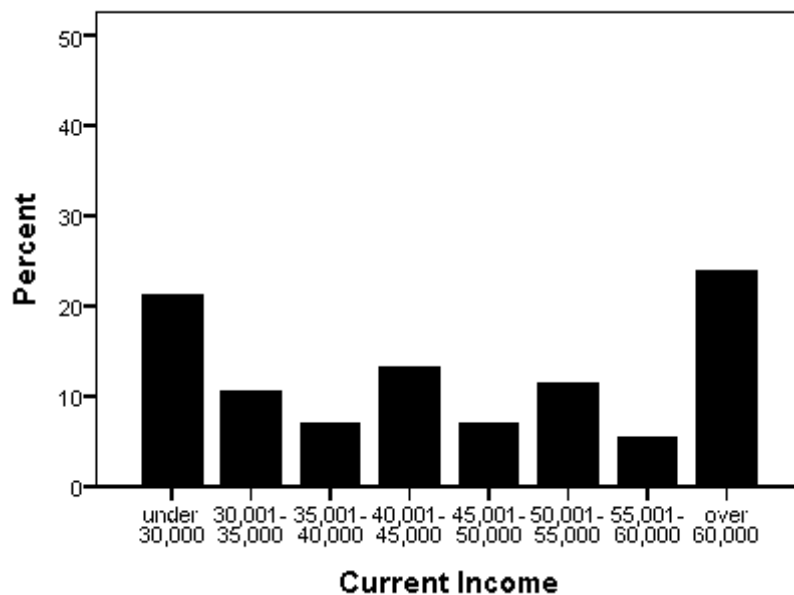
Table 5.17 - Current Income (n = 113)

Chapter Summary

This section of the findings chapter has provided an overview of the main findings from the graduate questionnaire. The respondent profile provided a good mix between programmes, modes of study and year of graduation. The majority of respondents were female and, in particular, the MSc Tourism respondents were overwhelmingly female. This was very much in line with the graduate profile in the time period under

investigation. The respondent profile was predominantly Irish and, as the main focus for this research was the Irish hospitality and tourism industry, it was not viewed as a drawback that few non-Irish national graduates completed the questionnaire.

Career progression and study did not appear to be hampered for those respondents who had children under the age of eighteen. Family connections in the industry did not feature to any large extent amongst the respondents. With regard to prior qualifications, respondents, in the main, came from a hospitality and tourism educational background, yet the programmes also attracted an eclectic mix of other undergraduate qualifications. The MSc was not seen as a terminal credential as many of the respondents had acquired or were in the process of acquiring other qualifications.

Motivators for embarking on MSc study were intrinsic and focussed on the individual, their personal needs, career development, and enthusiasm for life-long learning and search for competitive edge. Work-life balance, life style change and dissatisfaction in the labour market did not feature as predominantly as expected.

In respect of skills and knowledge acquired, research skills featured strongly and, despite qualitative comments about lecture material being out of date in some instances, a significant percentage of respondents also identified knowledge at the forefront of the industry and new industry insights as key skills and knowledge acquired. In line with the motivators identified, the benefits accrued were very much focussed, again, on the individual's personal achievement, development and confidence.

Those respondents who studied on a part-time basis and worked full-time acquired the support of their employers, in the main. Having said that, 37.5 per cent of these respondents worked in education and state agencies, where fee support and study leave are commonplace. The majority of respondents who studied on a full-time basis had varying levels of experience of the hospitality or tourism industry.

In spite of many comments about the quality of lectures, lecturing staff, workload and the employment prospects post-graduation, the majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall MSc experience. There was a low level of unemployment amongst the graduates and the majority believed the MSc to be relevant to their job and experienced a positive attitude of the part of their employer to their qualification. At the same time, previous work experience was widely acknowledged as superseding a formal qualification.

This chapter has attempted to set the scene in respect of student and graduate views on a taught postgraduate credential in hospitality and tourism and the outcomes of such programmes. The next chapter examines the in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with educators, graduates and employers.

CHAPTER 6: EDUCATOR, GRADUATE & EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from phase three of the research - the three different sets of interviews, conducted to supplement and add depth to the quantitative research outlined in the previous chapter. Each set of interviews are introduced individually; this is followed by a thematic overview of the interview data and a summary of each set of interviews. The first set of interviews explored is the educator interviews.

Phase Three: The Educator Interviews

This section of the findings chapter examines the qualitative findings from the eleven interviews conducted with the educators who teach on the two MSc programmes and supervise postgraduate theses. Themes were identified from a combination of the interview protocol and the educator interview data, the findings are presented in line with these themes.

Identity of the Educators

The selection of the educators was outlined in the research methods chapter. More detailed descriptions of the educators are not provided in order to protect their anonymity. Given the smallness of the tourism and hospitality education environment in ROI, it would be quite easy to identify the institute of technology in which the MSc programmes are delivered and, from there, the educators involved in teaching on these programmes. The educators were allocated fictitious names in a further attempt to protect their identities. The female educators interviewed are Lisa, Evie, Amy, Anna, Tessa and Laura and the male educators are Luke, Barry, Sam, Jack and Adam.

General Profile of the Educators

This section establishes whether or not the educators had experience of working in the hospitality or tourism industries prior to their academic careers, and the length and nature of their involvement with the MSc programmes.

The Educators' Association with the MSc Programmes

Those interviewed provided a good mix of experience of teaching on both of the MSc programmes and, in general, those interviewed had taught on the programmes for a

number of years. In fact, a number of those interviewed had held key roles in the development of the MSc programmes. Two of those interviewed no longer taught on the programmes but regularly supervised MSc theses. One staff member interviewed had only been teaching on the programme for two years, so this provided an interesting and refreshing perspective in contrast to those who had a long association with the programmes.

The Educators' Tourism and Hospitality Industry Experience

Five of the eleven interviewees had held operational roles in the hospitality or tourism industries prior to entering academia. None of those interviewed saw a lack of industry specific experience as a drawback or as a reason why students may question their credibility.

Sam suggested that it is important that educators work closely with industry and keep abreast of current industry challenges. He is of the view that:

> *it's fine to have somebody who has worked in the industry, working on programmes, but they need to have the academic side as well* (Sam).

Barry noted that:

> *I don't think a student, when they see law, expects a hotel manager to be teaching it to them, nor do I expect a hotel manager to be teaching them accountancy* (Barry).

Luke suggested that, while a background in the industry may get you extra '*kudos and credibility*' in the classroom, there was a fine line between that and '*name dropping*'. Laura indicated that, as she did not have a background in the industry, when she first started teaching on the MSc programme she went into lectures:

> *shaking like a leaf thinking, oh my god, what examples are they going to bring up?* (Laura).

This is no longer a worry for Laura. After a short time lecturing on the MSc programmes, it became apparent to her that, while the students brought valuable industry examples to the classroom, they were there to learn about the literature, academic theories and trends from elsewhere in the world and other industries.

Amy admitted that her industry experience has, indeed, assisted with her module delivery, but noted that it is not always possible to have a '*track record*' in industry specific areas, as practices change and new initiatives appear, e.g. the use of social media. Both Adam and Jack felt that background experience in hospitality and tourism

was more important for teaching at undergraduate level than postgraduate. Adam suggested that the postgraduate students may draw on their own life experiences and they have come to college for field specific expertise. Jack indicated that staying in touch with research about the industry provides ample knowledge to teach his module, and he was of the view that working in the industry would not have been of benefit to him personally. Amy noted that, while she brings her industry experience to the classroom, similarly she:

> *brings to bear my own experience in terms of my own research, which in some cases have not been hospitality related* (Amy).

Amy appears to be lucky in this respect, as some others suggest that they do not have the luxury of teaching in the areas of their own research expertise. Anna highlighted, however, that she never gets the opportunity to link her teaching and research:

> *...there's no line between my research and my teaching which is daft and I have always tried to make this point ... it just doesn't seem to be possible* (Anna).

Having provided a general overview of the educators, their previous industry experience and association with the programmes, the next section assesses their opinions on the two MSc programmes.

The MSc Programmes - the Past and Present

In this section, the views of the educators are presented with regard to how and why the programmes were developed, the role and objectives of the programmes, the students who participate on the programmes and the difference between undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

The Establishment of the MSc Hospitality and Tourism programmes in the Institute of Technology

A number of those directly involved in the establishment of the programmes provided a context for the development of, in the first instance, the MSc Hospitality Management followed by the MSc Tourism Management. Specifically Adam, Sam and Tessa held instrumental roles at the programme development stage. Other than those key informants, other interviewees had been part of the working groups that brought the programmes from initial development to quality assurance validation stage.

The initial idea of developing a taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality appears to have derived from one staff member who was new to the college at the time. After

the initial proposal to develop what was to be the Institute of Technology's first taught MSc programme, a working group was established to gauge the level of interest in and demand for this initiative.

Sam described this time period as '*kind of new territory for everyone*'. A review of programmes elsewhere outside of ROI suggested a trend in the development of taught postgraduate education in the field of hospitality. This was reinforced by positive feedback from the Irish hospitality industry and industry representative groups. The hotel chains were seen to more strongly support the proposed MSc, whereas there was less awareness of this type of qualification among the independent operators at the time. The initial objective of this programme was to provide a management development programme for industry.

Adam indicated that market demand at the time seemed to be from middle managers who aspired to updating their skills, achieve higher positions, or move from general management into the corporate side of the hotel business.

The MSc in Tourism Management was preceded by a postgraduate diploma in rural tourism. Tessa explained that, at this time in ROI, tourism was an emerging field that was attracting significant financial investment from Government, both for product development and marketing. Many of those involved in key roles in tourism held undergraduate qualifications but not master's qualifications, while others in the industry did not have any third level qualifications. The industry seemed open to the idea of a master's and the staff at the Institute of Technology were enthusiastic to develop the postgraduate diploma into a master's programme. After twenty months of research and preparation, the MSc in Tourism Management was launched. In the initial years of the MSc in Tourism Management, Tessa appears to have been a driving force for the programme.

In addition to the gap in the market in ROI for tourism and hospitality MSc programmes, Laura suggested that, in respect of the provision of these postgraduate offerings, it is also about profile. As an institute providing programmes in tourism and hospitality, it is important to be seen to be offering programmes not only at undergraduate but also postgraduate level.

The Purpose of the MSc Hospitality and MSc Tourism Management

The two MSc programmes were originally differentiated on the basis that the MSc Hospitality was a deepening programme and the MSc Tourism was a conversion

programme. Therefore, the entry requirement for the deepening programme was a primary degree in hospitality and some work experience in the area, whereas the MSc in Tourism Management recruited from a broad range of backgrounds including general arts, languages, history, geography, business, and welcomed students without any formal qualifications but who held a number of years' experience in the industry. Luke was of the opinion that:

> *tourism has become quite a professional industry and it needs professionals and it needs people with a professional qualification... that gap was there, we identified that gap and, so far, we have been quite successful in terms of filling it* (Luke).

Lisa also mentioned this issue of 'professionalism' and in her view what the MSc programmes:

> *help to achieve is a professionalization of these industry sectors, badly needed in this country* (Lisa).

The majority of the educators questioned if this conversion / deepening division has continued to exist, as some suggested a blurring between the roles of the two programmes. Anna noted, in respect of the MSc Tourism, that:

> *being perfectly frank, I am not at all clear in my head as to what the role is because currently ... we take on graduates from our undergraduate tourism marketing programme and so to have them in the classroom at the same time as to have, let's say, art history graduates from Trinity, begs the question of what is this, is it conversion or is it deepening and I am never quite sure how to handle this* (Anna).

While the educators acknowledged that students view the MSc as an opportunity for career advancement or a career change, Laura indicated that involvement in teaching on these programmes did not have the same benefits for staff. In Laura's opinion, the programmes, as they are currently configured, do not facilitate the dissemination of staff research or increase the number of staff / student joint publications:

> *I can't think of any dissertation student I have had who has come and done something in my area to a good level where it would be publishable for example, or it could go in as a conference paper or those sorts of things* (Laura).

The MSc Students

The motivation of the MSc students was acknowledged by the educators; Amy commented that the students are:

very keen and very, very highly motivated to develop their career, to develop their career prospects and, indeed, themselves as individuals (Amy).

Yet, all educators admitted that there had been an obvious change, over the past ten years, in the type and calibre of the MSc in Hospitality students. Adam noted that:

it is clear and simple the reason for this is that the programme was marketed at Irish hotel managers. There are not enough of them to sustain the programme. And, therefore, there is a struggle with some international students who came at different times (Adam).

Sam suggested that a lack of marketing of the MSc in Hospitality has contributed to its decline. All educators commented on the worrying drop in numbers on the MSc Hospitality programme in recent years, to the point that in some classes in the past two years there were only six students. It was highlighted that this has had a detrimental impact on the learning environment and the class dynamic, as illustrated by Evie's comment that the class experience is important:

I think a lot of benefit is with the interaction of the students themselves and learning from each other from all different walks of life (Evie).

Lisa was candid in her observation that, in the past year, those studying on the MSc in Hospitality Management:

had no experience, really, of a really good classroom interaction because there are too few of them (Lisa).

The MSc in Tourism does not appear to have suffered the same fate as that of the MSc in Hospitality. Jack noted that the hospitality students have been:

weaker over the last number of years ... a lot of them struggle with the programme.

Yet, in the tourism groups:

there is a better vibe, there is a buzz about them (Jack).

This view was reiterated by a number of staff who deliver modules on both programmes. Lisa identified that the tourism students, given their diversity of backgrounds, '*create a liveliness*' in the classroom that may not be evident in the hospitality programme. It was identified that, in the early years of the MSc in Hospitality, while some of the students may have been weak academically, they had acquired a wealth of experience from their many years in industry, and that gave them confidence to deal with the demands of the programme.

Anna felt that in general the selection process for accepting students had to be *'tougher'*. In respect of the MSc Tourism students, Luke expressed a high level of satisfaction with the cohorts to date. He outlined that there is normally a good mix of ages, industry experience and direct entry from undergraduate, in addition to, perhaps, 30-40 per cent of the classed comprised of international students from America, Japan, China and European students from France, Germany and Italy.

None of the educators suggested that there was any major obvious difference between the part-time and full-time students, other than the part-time students had to juggle the demands of work, study and home life.

The educators acknowledged the change in cultural diversity of MSc students in recent years and that, in the main, this has a positive impact in the classroom. Anna mentioned one UK university with which she is familiar and commented that:

> *they don't get British students at all. It's all international and that would be a nightmare I think, a nightmare. Whereas in [another UK college] they have a balance, they get local, they get European and they get international. That to me sounds fine* (Anna).

Teaching at Postgraduate and Undergraduate Levels

The majority of the educators identified that the sharing of experiences among the students themselves was a key component of delivering lectures at postgraduate level. Again, this was dependent on who had been accepted on to the programme. Anna noted that a class on the MSc Tourism Management could have participants from industry who had been away from education for many years, graduates from non-tourism backgrounds and the Institute's own graduates:

> *yet, somehow it works as each of these people, no matter who they are, they still have gaps in their knowledge* (Anna).

Jack and Laura suggested that they do not see any major difference delivering a module at undergraduate or postgraduate level as, in both cases, they strive to create a rich, interactive learning environment.

There was resounding agreement amongst the educators that the postgraduate thesis is an important component of the taught postgraduate experience. Amy noted that she encouraged graduates to use their thesis *'on their CV as their USP'*. However, Tessa commented on the quality of the dissertations:

> *They are ok, rarely you would get a good one, you know a first class honour* (Tessa).

This section has charted educators' views on the role and purpose of the programmes, the students who study at MSc level, and how they the educators view the postgraduate teaching environment in contrast to the undergraduate classroom. The next section captures the educators' opinions on the changes that have occurred in respect of the programmes in the past ten years, and identifies what changes they would welcome in the future.

The MSc Programmes – Into the Future

Changes Over the Past Ten Years

Both programmes have been reviewed, at five yearly intervals, in line with the third level institute's quality assurance procedures. Beyond these obligatory reviews, the majority of the educators are of the view that the programmes have not received a rigorous, root and branch evaluation from which they would have benefitted. The quality assurance reviews heralded the inclusion and removal of certain modules, and the amalgamation of the tourism and hospitality classes occurred to create greater cost effectiveness in the delivery of optional modules.

Most staff were reticent about making negative comments on the quality of the current programmes. Sam indicated that while the programmes' structures have been '*consistent*' since initial development he is:

> *happy enough that it's a good product, that what we are doing is good*
> (Sam).

Similarly, Adam felt that the marketing and mode of delivery of the MSc in Hospitality has fallen behind market needs, yet he was of the opinion that the '*content is appropriate...*' and '*...is comparable at international level*'. In a different vein, Anna advocated that staff should up-skill themselves in order to be able to teach cutting edge modules on the MSc programmes, particularly if we are to expand the suite of MSc streams. Laura confided that she has not witnessed '*any radical change*' in the programmes since their establishment and that is a problem.

The Perceived Value of the Programmes

The educators were asked about how they thought students, industry / industry representative groups viewed the two programmes.

A number of educators commented that students are surprised by the intensity of the programmes or, as described by Amy, they find it:

> *challenging in terms of the range of subjects and the nature of the assignment components* (Amy).

Jack suggested that students are:

> *shocked initially anyway at the amount, at the volume of work they have to do* (Jack).

Lisa reinforced this view that:

> *there is a lot thrown at these people...it's a busy sort of course ... a lot is expected of students in terms of what they produce* (Lisa).

This lack of opportunity to reflect on what is being learnt was also highlighted by Laura who suggested the timetable is such, that students just focus on '*getting through the lectures*'.

Industry

In terms of industry's perception of the value of an MSc in Hospitality or Tourism Management, Amy suggested that employers in tourism and hospitality are:

> *increasingly recognising the value of qualifications* (Amy).

However, Jack commented that:

> *in general, I would think they don't think too highly of it ... I would think that they are probably more impressed with somebody coming out with an MBS or MBA rather than what we are offering* (Jack).

Laura reiterated this sentiment with the comment that:

> *I think that industry don't see it as highly as other institutions see it* (Laura).

Laura's impression is based on the perceived number of MSc graduates who were teaching, or who, upon graduation, commenced teaching in one of the Institutes of Technology around the country. In that sense, the MSc programmes could be viewed as a feeder route out of operations and into academia. Sam was of the view that, in respect of the MSc in Hospitality, there needs to be increased dialogue between the Institute and industry so it has a more realistic picture of the qualification.

Evie, who has numerous years' experience in industry operations, commented that:

> *Talk to managers in the industry and they would always say you know, that's great that you have a degree but ... get the experience at the ground and you know, learning as you go is very, very important* (Evie).

Some educators noted that industry probably knew very little about the programmes. Industry's involvement with the MSc provision is mainly at the quality assurance programme review stage, and through site visits and guest talks. Amy emphasised the role of educators in relation to programme development:

> *I think there is a responsibility on us as educators to undertake that leadership role rather than merely, you know, responding to or following the needs of specific fads of industry* (Amy).

The Future

All interviewees agree that there is a future for taught postgraduate education in the areas of hospitality and tourism and, similarly, all agree that the programmes as they are currently configured may not be the way forward.

Sam indicated that the MSc Hospitality programme needs to return to its original objective of being a management development programme:

> *there is a need for a very strong management development programme* (Sam)

and to, possibly, introduce a conversion hospitality programme for those who are coming from other sectors. Adam indicated that there is a demand for hospitality postgraduate qualifications elsewhere in the world, yet it has to be recognised that demand for the current offering will always be limited by the size of the domestic market and, therefore, the need for constructive international recruitment.

The idea of merging the programmes in some format was mooted by some interviewees. Anna is of the opinion that the way forward is one MSc programme with a number of streams, as is the case in many UK universities. Currently, discussions are ongoing to develop a third master's, an MSc in Event Management, but Adam noted a word of caution that:

> *the fact that we have a successful undergraduate degree in event, that is absolutely no reason for developing a master's degree in event. I don't think the market is there. I think there should be one postgraduate programme with streams in each* (Adam).

A need to look beyond the domestic Irish market was also highlighted as a challenge for the future. Yet, it was acknowledged that rather than follow the UK trend of tourism

and hospitality master's programmes populated entirely by international students that there would be a need to achieve a balance in the student mix.

Other forms of delivery, be it block release or online / distance / blended learning were also proposed as possibilities to attract greater student numbers and facilitating the work-life balance demands of those combining work and study. However, this was not deemed to be a feasible option for the delivery of all modules.

Summary of Educator Interviews

In the main, the educators interviewed had a long association with teaching on the programmes; two of the educators had spearheaded the development of the MSc qualification in the Institute of Technology. Five of the eleven educators held roles in industry prior to commencing their careers in academia. None of the educators held the view that a lack of industry experience negatively impacted on their credibility in the classroom. The educators acknowledged the importance of the rich exchange of experience and views between students in the classroom- enhanced student learning. Yet, this was very dependent on the calibre of the student intake, and whilst student motivation could not be questioned, the calibre and size of recent MSc hospitality cohorts was an area for concern.

It was alluded to by three of the educators that this formal education programme contributed to the professionalism of the ROI tourism and hospitality industries. Yet, three of the educators questioned how the industry perceived the credential, when compared to a general business postgraduate degree or industry experience. It was also suggested that an MSc in Tourism or Hospitality might be seen as a gateway into academia and a route out of industry. Educators were in general agreement that the industry - academia dialogue could be expanded, and that industry may be unaware of what exactly an MSc credential entails.

Educators supposed that students found the programmes demanding and time consuming. Yet, they were reticent to comment on any negative aspects of the quality of the programmes.

Having presented an overview of the educator interviews, the next set of interviews presented is that of the MSc graduates.

Phase Three: The Graduate Interviews

This section presents the data from the ten graduate interviews. Key themes were identified, in line with the interview protocol themes and the interview data itself, the graduate interview data was then analysed under these themes. The analysis was divided into three main areas, in accordance with the graduate interview protocol: why graduates chose to complete a taught MSc in tourism or hospitality, the graduates' experience of the taught programme and the graduates' experience in the world of work post-graduation. Subdivisions were made within each section to illustrate the data.

Some of the common issues that evolved from this data analysis included comments that related specifically to the tourism and hospitality industry and comments that were applicable to postgraduate education in the field of tourism and hospitality. To summarise some of the comments in respect of the industry, interviewees identified that tourism and hospitality employment involved '*hard work*' (Noel) and long hours, for example, '*seventy hour weeks*' (Portia). The smallness of the industry in the ROI, and the importance of industry networking were also emphasised.

Data analysis brought to light that all interviewees valued education, and were excited by the opportunity to complete an MSc qualification and, in some cases, further study beyond the MSc. It was apparent that the interviewees were very motivated individuals, with career plans, as opposed to people who had just fallen into an MSc programme. The profile of the MSc class was identified as important, and the learning gleaned from peer colleagues appreciated. However, this networking and learning from peer colleagues was an opportunity that appeared to have waned over the years as the makeup of the class changed. The financial cost of the programme and relevance of the material covered were two other concerns evident from the graduate interviews. The following sections examine these themes in greater detail.

The table below outlines the profile of the graduate interviewees. All interviewees have been allocated fictitious names, and only vague employment details have been provided, in order to protect their anonymity.

143

Graduate	Year of Graduation	Gender	Age	Programme of Study	Mode of Study	Current Position	Further study
Anthony	2005	Male	31-35	MSc Tourism	F/T	General Manager	No
Phelim	2005	Male	26-30	MSc Tourism	F/T	Educator	Yes
Noel	2004	Male	36-40	MSc Hospitality	P/T	General Manager	Yes
Seb	2003	Male	46-50	MSc Hospitality	P/T	Educator	Yes
Portia	2005	Female	36-40	MSc Hospitality	F/T	Management Consultant	No
Gaia	2006	Female	41-45	MSc Tourism	F/T	Educator	No
Tamzin	2009	Female	36-40	MSc Hospitality	F/T	Sales & Marketing	No
Iris	2000	Female	36-40	MSc Hospitality	P/T	Senior Manager	Yes
Nancy	2003	Female	26-30	MSc Tourism	F/T	Unemployed	No
Alice	2007	Female	41-45	MSc Hospitality	P/T	Consultant – State Sector	No

Table 6.1 - Profile of the Graduate Interviewees

Why Graduates Chose to Complete a Taught MSc in Tourism or Hospitality

Rationale for Completing a Taught MSc

The education background, or lack thereof, of the interviewees appears to have had an impact on their rationale for embarking on a taught MSc qualification. On this basis, the data analysis, took cognisance of the path to postgraduate study that was followed by the interviewees. Three categorisations have been developed, in an attempt to analyse the data, relating to why the interviewees decided to pursue a taught postgraduate qualification. The interviewees have been labelled as (1) the direct entrants: direct progression from undergraduate to postgraduate study, (2) the degree seekers: certificates and diplomas, but no degree or (3) degree holders: those seeking a new direction.

The first category, the direct entrants: direct progression from undergraduate to postgraduate study, will be discussed in the next section.

The Direct Entrants: Direct Progression from Undergraduate to Postgraduate Study

Three of the interviewees, Phelim, Iris and Nancy went directly into the MSc programme. Having completed an undergraduate degree in the area of hospitality or tourism, they undertook the MSc on a full-time basis. All three had completed their undergraduate qualifications in institutions different to where the case study programmes took place. Similarly, all three had worked part-time or during the summer in the industry, whilst completing their undergraduate qualifications.

The direct entrants recognised that work experience was important, even though they had decided to pursue further study immediately after their primary degree. For example, Iris noted that the MSc was a good choice for her as:

> *...it was predominantly because I had the industry experience. It was easier for me to adjust to that level of academic modules and research, because I was able to apply more, because I'd had the level of experience* (Iris).

All spoke of the financial implications of further study. Phelim and Nancy did not work during their postgraduate year and were reliant on grants and financial support from family. Iris worked practically full-time in industry to pay her fees.

The drive to complete an MSc was part of the direct entrants' plans for the future. Phelim noted that a postgraduate qualification could provide an edge over those with only an undergraduate degree; he commented:

> *I suppose everyone had degrees and, in order to try to separate yourself out a little bit, you need to do a master's* (Phelim).

He was also aware that earning potential could be enhanced by a postgraduate qualification. Someone once told him that:

> *if I had a master's, he'd give me five thousand more per annum on the pay cheque* (Phelim).

Phelim, Iris and Nancy all acknowledged that it was preferable to continue to postgraduate study while '*in study mode*' (Nancy) and if a break from academia was taken '*I'd find it very hard to get back into it'* (Phelim).

Their choice of MSc was influenced by a lack of other available options for postgraduate study in hospitality and tourism in the ROI, at the time. None of the direct entrants had investigated other types of postgraduate programmes, e.g. Master of Business Studies (MBS). It was apparent that Phelim and Iris, and to a lesser extent, Nancy, held very specific career goals at the time. Phelim and Nancy sought to move away from the operations element of the industry and pursue their '*dream job*' (Phelim) in a state tourism agency. In reality, this did not materialise for either of them. Iris, on the other hand, had the ultimate goal of teaching as a career path, after some further industry experience.

Iris and Nancy noted the class mix of experiences as a factor in their attraction to the MSc:

I knew at the time, when I applied, that there was huge opportunities to learn with individuals who'd come directly from industry. It wasn't necessarily going to be a cohort of students that just finished a degree (Iris).

Support from family and friends was also acknowledged as important by the direct entrants. All three had the benefit of family support. However, some friends did question their route from undergraduate to postgraduate study. Nancy commented:

some people were like, oh, you're mad, do you not want to go working and you're going to be an eternal student (Nancy).

Many of Phelim's friends had dropped out of college and were reaping the benefits of the Irish Celtic Tiger salaries; while he was studying he '*never had money*'. At the time of the interview, the tide had turned, and Phelim had secured a job with good prospects, while some of his aforementioned friends had to emigrate, as they had lost their jobs in ROI. So, it worked out well for Phelim, who worked really hard as he was '*fixated on getting the best result I could*'.

All three direct entrants were passionate about the area of study and, happily, two of the interviewees, Phelim and Iris, secured good jobs related to the industry following graduation. Unfortunately, Nancy, who had a '*passion for tourism*' from her initial introduction to the field in transition year in school, never found employment in the industry and, at the time of her interview, was unemployed.

The next categorisation described is that of degree seekers: certificates and diplomas, but no degree.

The Degree Seekers: Certificates and Diplomas, but no Degree

Alice had completed a diploma in hospitality and Noel a certificate in hospitality, but both were acutely aware that they did not possess a primary degree, and this influenced their decision to return to education.

Noel had hoped to study hospitality at undergraduate level, but did not secure sufficient grades in his final school state exam (Leaving Certificate) to obtain a place in college. Alice and Noel completed their third level qualifications while holding full-time jobs. This had proven to be challenging, and a degree-long programme would not have been feasible.

Alice commented:

I just physically wouldn't have had the time. I mean, my normal day was like kind of ten, twelve hours. ...most Saturdays, I was in, probably, a half day, but I mean, you're still talking kind of six or seven hours (Alice).

Alice felt that she had become a '*workaholic*' and reached a point where she knew that '*I wouldn't work for another hotel company*'. When she moved away from hotel operations, the opportunity to complete an MSc appeared feasible. Similarly, Noel commented that, at the outset of his career in the industry, he had considered a certificate that required block release from work. In response to this suggestion, he experienced the negative side of the hospitality industry as his employers, at the time:

> *weren't very supportive, weren't willing to sponsor me, weren't willing to pay fees, weren't willing to give me time off work. So, that kind of left me in a bit of a dilemma* (Noel).

Eventually, he found a programme where he was able to work five / six days a week and go to college on the seventh day.

After some time working in ROI, both Noel and Alice moved abroad and were employed by multinational enterprises (MNE). There, they benefited from in-company training and development in these MNEs. This differed greatly to the training opportunities presented to them in the hospitality industry in the ROI, prior to their travels. Noel commented that, on his return to ROI, he '*was far more up-skilled than my contemporaries*' who had remained at home. Equally, Alice and Noel had progressed to senior positions within the hospitality industry, yet acknowledged that '*a good, firm qualification*' (Noel) was missing from their career portfolio. Noel had reached a level of management where he was interacting with senior executives, who had studied and worked outside of hospitality, and he wanted to confidently engage in the strategic management discourse of this group. He also felt that a qualification would aid his career and:

> *I suppose, I had something to prove to myself as well, having not maybe gone to college in the formal sense and not obtained a degree* (Noel).

Noel and Alice held a strong appreciation for education and learning. Noel identified that:

> *life-long learning has been a real mantra of mine* (Noel).

Alice noted that:

education was always a big thing in our house. So, I just wanted a degree (Alice).

Alice decided to opt for the MSc in Hospitality Management, as she felt more comfortable in this specialised area, in which she already had a wealth of experience. She was conscious that she did not have a degree and she '*hadn't opened a book for twenty years*'. Noel had considered a Master of Business Administration (MBA) but the time and cost commitment proved prohibitive.

Given Noel's and Alice's mix of experiences, they were suitably positioned to comment on the previously documented realities of long hours and poor work-life balance, indicative of employment in the hospitality / tourism industry. Through their experiences, they were also qualified to make observations on the differences that existed between employee development and human resource management in MNEs and indigenous Irish businesses.

Noel captured the essence of his early experiences in the indigenous industry by commenting on the '*fun and exciting nature*' of the industry but, unfortunately, sometimes staff were made to feel like '*slave labour*', or encountered:

> *shoddy employers where there was no training and no development* (Noel).

The final group of interviewees described is the degree holders seeking a new direction.

Degree Holders Seeking a New Direction

Anthony, Portia, Seb, Tamzin and Gaia all had completed degrees a number of years prior to joining the MSc class. Seb, also, held a general master's qualification, but was looking to obtain a specialist MSc in his field.

Anthony had worked in a junior management position in a hotel for 16 months, subsequent to completing a degree in hospitality. He '*always knew*' he wanted to study at MSc level and while it '*came quicker than I thought*', he decided to embark on an MSc after just 16 months working full-time. He made the decision:

> *I'm not going to be a hotel manager, I'm going to do something else...*
> *and I wanted to have a further academic qualification that would lead me*
> *on perhaps to education... or maybe consultancy* (Anthony).

Anthony continued to work part-time in the hotel industry, and credits two senior managers as valued mentors, who supported his decision to return to college. He did not consider any other programmes other than the MSc in Tourism Management.

Portia's career had progressed steadily since her graduation, with a degree in hospitality, so it was a '*big decision*', particularly financially, due to recently having secured a mortgage. She decided on a specialised MSc as she felt that an MBA:

> *it's something I might do when I'm older* (Portia).

Portia reached her decision to return to education, primarily because she wanted a change:

> *I didn't want to work in a hotel, but I wanted to work in the industry* (Portia).

Portia acknowledged that some peer colleagues suggested to her that:

> *it's your experience that you'll always be employed for and not your qualifications* (Portia).

She recognised the importance of experience and networking in the industry. This did not dissuade her, as she was of the opinion that, while a significant percentage of the industry had a primary degree or no qualification at all, few held an MSc. Her choice of studying on a full-time basis, was surprisingly, viewed as a '*break*'. In the previous 18 months, she:

> *was working probably 70 hour weeks, because of the opening of a hotel, and it really was crazy. And, I just wanted a break* (Portia).

Portia, similar to Anthony, worked for '*good*' employers, who were supportive of her decision and provided her with some part-time work during her year of study. She admitted to being very excited about this new chapter in her career.

Seb was unusual in that he was the only interviewee who already held a master's credential prior to completing the MSc in hospitality management. In hindsight, he regretted following this course of study but, at the time, he believed that he was '*closing the loop*' on his industry experience with a specialised master's.

Seb had commenced his working life in operations in the hospitality industry; he did not hold any qualifications at that stage. He began to acquire industry specific qualifications and, very early on in his career, he developed an interest in teaching. This motivated him to obtain general academic qualifications, a degree and an MA, which provided him with the opportunity to leave the industry, and pursue a career in higher education. His friends and family did not support his decision to embark on yet another master's. He did not require another master's for his job or promotion, this was a personal objective.

Subsequent to obtaining her primary degree, Tamzin spent nine years in the hospitality industry, and worked her way up to general manager of a hotel. At this point:

> *her life kind of was hotel work. So, I needed to change that* (Tamzin).

Similar to Noel, Tamzin talked about the demands of a career in hospitality:

> *we worked hard... we were like mini (company name) people. We did everything... fourteen or sixteen hours a day... we did what we had to do at a management level* (Tamzin).

These work-life balance issues prompted Tamzin to take a year out and, at the end of this year, she decided against returning to the hospitality industry. Instead, she worked in a consultancy role in a completely different sector.

> *Further education is something that was always there... I think that I was also aware that, you know, as you get older, all the experience in the world, you know, on its own, it may not be enough* (Tamzin).

On this basis and due to an interest in lecturing, after four years in her new role, she made the decision to return to education. Tamzin felt more comfortable doing an MSc in an area in which she had previous experience, rather than a general business master's. Despite this decision, Tamzin was pragmatic, in that she felt the MSc would have limited value in securing employment in hospitality, but acknowledged that education was important for the hospitality industry in general. With improved education:

> *we might have less of the issues or better managers, you know, on the floor, when they're coming out of college* (Tamzin).

Gaia was the only non-Irish national graduate interviewed. The MSc experience was part of a bigger life style change that Gaia had made, which also involved moving to ROI. Gaia's primary degree was in a non-tourism related area; she had worked in a non-tourism sector and had eventually owned her own business. Her end objective was to combine her previous experience with her newfound knowledge of tourism and develop a business opportunity. Surprisingly:

> *where I ended up as a teacher, I never thought I would be* (Gaia).

The cheaper cost of the MSc, relative to pursuing an MSc in her country of origin, was a factor in her decision. Gaia used a bank loan to fund her MSc. She received overwhelming support from family and friends to follow her dream.

The next section will look at the second theme explored, the graduate experience of a taught MSc.

The Graduate Experience of a Taught MSc

As discussed in the previous section, all interviewees displayed a high level of enthusiasm for the idea of pursuing a postgraduate qualification. This section focuses on how this zeal fared, once they had actually commenced the programme. The interview data pertaining to this theme was analysed using the following subcategories, as identified in the interview protocol – expectations on commencement of programme, satisfaction with the programme, class dynamic and networking opportunities, differences between postgraduate and undergraduate study, standard of the programme, the full-time and part-time experience and suggested changes for the programme.

It must also be noted that the interviewees studied either tourism or hospitality and, as identified in the research methods chapter, in the early years of the programmes there was a marked difference between the two master's. The MSc Tourism Management was deemed to be a transition programme, whilst, the MSc Hospitality Management was marketed as a deepening programme. In later years, as demand for the programmes declined, this differentiation became more subtle. Another point to be noted is that core modules may have changed in content over the years; the optional modules offered may have differed from year to year depending on demand, as indeed did the staff delivering the various modules.

Expectations on Commencement of Programme

In general, the interviewees expected that the programme was going to be challenging and that they were facing into one or two arduous years. All of the interviewees were very focussed, due to the time and financial commitment they:

> *wanted to ensure that you were going to get the value out of this* (Iris).

Direct entrant, Phelim, talked about:

> *the one thing that people kept saying was it's going to be really, really tough* (Phelim)

and this came to pass as he:

> *hit the ground running in terms of the workload* (Phelim).

Iris's expectation was that the MSc would broaden her horizons, whether she stayed in the industry or went elsewhere. Therefore, she was willing to put her work-life balance on hold for two years. Nancy, similar to Portia and Tamzin, highlighted that she put in

more time and effort than in her undergraduate degree, as she felt that there was more at stake:

> *I was like, oh my God, I'm doing my master's, I have to up my game here* (Nancy).

For all three direct entrants, student union activities and social life were not an important element of postgraduate college life. Anthony was of a similar mindset, he was '*expecting a tough year*' and a '*different sort of learning*' very different to the '*spoon feeding*' that could occur at undergraduate level. Anthony was very focussed, as he had set himself the target of achieving a first class honours and '*that's what I got*'.

Whereas degree seeker Noel was less nervous and very focussed on getting the:

> *bit of paper at the end... with learning along the way* (Noel).

Alice, who hadn't opened a book in twenty years, was struck by how the modules were '*like a different language to me*'. However, after a time, she realised how her work experience stood to her. She commented that:

> *I didn't know the academic terminology,*

but what she was learning was:

> *the book version of what I'd been doing* (Alice).

This provided Alice, she felt, with an advantage over those students who did not have her industry experiences. Portia, who was leaving behind long hours and a hectic industry role, could not wait to start the programme, in her own words:

> *I was dying for it. I was very excited* (Portia).

Similarly, Tamzin saw this opportunity to attend lectures and study to be a luxury compared to the demands of full-time employment:

> *I loved it, it was nearly bringing you back to childhood, I'm back in school and that's all I have to do right now* (Tamzin).

Gaia, too, was returning to education from the world of work but, not alone that, she was also moving country and, therefore, making significant life changes. All of these changes, including leaving full-time employment, meant that she operated on a tight budget. She acknowledged a level of nervousness about becoming a student again, in addition to concerns about:

> *how do I live in shared accommodation again, how do I go back to who drank the last of the milk in the fridge, those kind of issues. ...and I knew*

that I was going to be a little bit older than most colleagues. But, other than that, I was really ready to learn (Gaia).

The next area analysed was graduate satisfaction with the programme. It was obvious from the questionnaire findings that there was a high level of satisfaction recorded, and this was further reiterated in the interviews.

Satisfaction with the Programme

The college brand and reputation, the modules delivered, modes of assessment and the classroom environment were identified as contributors to student satisfaction during their time studying on the MSc. All interviewees, with the exception of Seb, were satisfied with their MSc experience and this is in line with the questionnaire data. In general, the feeling was that, despite any drawbacks, the programme '*did exactly what it said on the tin*' (Phelim).

In Seb's case, his dissatisfaction could have stemmed from the fact that he already had an MA and felt that:

> *I won't say wasted two years, but certainly didn't take anything really beneficial away from the actual programme* (Seb).

Two graduates, Phelim and Nancy, talked about how well managed the programme had been. Nancy commented that this may have been driven by the fact that students were paying a lot of money to complete the MSc and that '*opinionated people in the class*' would have highlighted anything that was not working.

However, some of the concerns highlighted by Seb, including workload, standard of delivery and the learning environment, were also mentioned by others. The issue of workload was similarly discussed by Gaia:

> *It's a good environment, it was possible to socialise quite easily and, also, to share ideas. And, also, the working together element was good as well. It was unfortunate that everything came down to a test, rather than continuous assessment* (Gaia).

The next area examined was networking and the class dynamic. Again, this was mentioned extensively in the questionnaire findings and, in the interviews, was a frequently cited highlight.

153

Networking and the Class Dynamic

Eight of the interviewees acknowledged the friendship, networking and learning from peer colleagues that occurred in the course of their studies.

Phelim's comment sums up the positives of this interaction:

> *I learned as much from the people in the class as I did from any of the lecturers as well. And, I suppose, that whole networking... by spending such intense time with people and, you know, sharing common kind of stresses and common issues or lecturers that you mightn't be getting on with, that brought everybody together. So, again, I think it is a kind of a little family almost for the time that you're there* (Phelim).

Gaia, who had followed a very different path to the MSc to Phelim, also talked of the close bond formed with her classmates, a connection that, in fact, continued long after graduation:

> *We stay in touch, actually, you know weddings, christenings and the like and just friendship* (Gaia).

Anthony saw as advantageous the '*broad range*' of students, those with and those without experience, and the prospect of learning from each other as well as from the programme. Anthony emphasised this point, by naming a number of people from hospitality, tourism and other industries, who held senior roles or owned their own businesses, and who were in his MSc cohort:

> *When people start talking and debating and, you know, really discussing issues, that's when you learn and I suppose that was one very satisfactory part of it* (Anthony).

Similarly, Iris saw the '*opportunity to open doors for me personally*' as she was in class with people who had been in industry for a long number of years and who held both national and international hospitality experience. This meant that they had vast industry experience, but may have found the application of that in assignments and exams more stressful than the direct entrants, such as Iris, Phelim and Nancy. While Phelim and Iris revelled in learning from their more mature peer colleagues, Nancy was reticent, at the start, about sitting with mature students, who willingly provided examples from their working lives and lived experiences.

The mix between younger and more mature students was also acknowledged and enjoyed by Alice who felt that the:

> *younger ones were probably much more savvy about putting together assignments, all of that kind of stuff,*

however, her age group who held industry experience:

> *brought something else to the table* (Alice).

Even Noel and Portia who, already, had strong industry links, forged more contacts through their participation in the programme. Portia remarked that there had been healthy competition in her cohort and that she had remained in touch with people who were quite vocal in the class, as opposed to those who would not have contributed to class discussions:

> *I really enjoyed the year. I felt I got loads out of it, from learning new things to just being more confident to making some good friends and business associates* (Portia).

However, it must be noted that networking and learning from others, was very much dependent on the class profile and, in some years, such opportunities were not as evident. Seb was '*disappointed*' at the absence of networking and learning from others in his MSc cohort. Similarly, Tamzin indicated:

> *disappointment... some of the things that would have surprised me were, maybe, the profile of the class. I probably would have expected, through the programme, for there to be a bit more discussion in the class. And that didn't happen due to the profile of the class, the age mix and stuff. ...but it was completely made up for by what I learnt through the research and through the lecturers that delivered it* (Tamzin).

In the main, interviewees commented on the positives of a mixed class profile of younger, mature, international students and different discipline backgrounds. It appeared to have created a melting pot of exchange of knowledge and ideas. It was noted by interviewees, however, that this balance was something that needed to be managed by the programme tutors to prevent an imbalance of any particular type of participant.

The level of the commitment of the class was captured by Noel's comment that he did not think there were:

> *any wasters in my year. There were a few people who struggled, but that was because, you know, I think English wasn't their first language and they probably lacked experience, so they would have struggled a little bit* (Noel).

This matter of language proficiency was an issue that became more pronounced in later years of the programme. This was also alluded to by Tamzin. Noel and Seb also questioned the value of students going directly through to postgraduate study from undergraduate study.

The next section describes how the interviewees viewed their postgraduate experience in comparison to undergraduate study.

Differences Between Postgraduate and Undergraduate Study

Semesterisation, small class size, student discussion / participation in lectures, two or one day a week delivery of modules, a resource room dedicated to the sole use of MSc students, student driven learning and a peer based relationship with accessible lecturers were all identified as differences between postgraduate and undergraduate study. The direct entrants, Phelim, Iris and Nancy, suggested that the modules were deeper than their experience at undergraduate level. Phelim observed that:

> *we drilled down a lot more into things and we were asked to put our own, I suppose, ideas and opinions forward which was very different (to undergraduate level)* (Phelim).

Yet, as identified by Seb and Gaia, in their opinion, the lines between undergraduate and postgraduate were blurred in much module content and delivery. Seb even suggested that his peer colleagues in class:

> *missed out on, say, what a master's level should be at* (Seb).

Having said that, he did acknowledge that he had participated on the programme when it was in the early stages, and that changes had since occurred, as a result of feedback from his cohort.

On the other hand, Iris and Phelim commented that the modules and assessments, in their experience, had greater links with industry. In Iris's case, students were required to work on live industry projects and present their findings to managers from industry.

The class size was also seen as an advantage. In their undergraduate studies, Portia and Nancy had been in classes with 200 and 400 other students, even the interviewees who had been in significantly smaller undergraduate classes of 40 or 60, also appreciated the interaction and discussion value of the MSc class size of 20 to 25.

In the next section, the standard of the programme is discussed under two headings, the academics delivering the programme and the modules delivered.

Standard of the Programme

In this section, interviewees were asked about the career academics delivering the programme, the material covered in the modules studied and the workload.

<u>The Career Academics Delivering the Programme</u>

In general, the graduates did not seem to care about the background of the academics leading a module. Phelim noted:

> *as a student, I suppose, speaking as a student first of all, it didn't really matter to me where the people came from, what they did, as long as they could deliver the material and as long as they could make it relevant... In fact, one of the lecturers who had a background in industry was probably one of the least, wasn't one of the better lecturers as such in terms of their style and that* (Phelim).

Phelim also seemed to be influenced by the academic standing of some of the staff:

> *X had the book written, same as Y had the book written as well... so, again, we said these must be good, they've written a book* (Phelim).

Iris and Noel commented that, at times, it could be challenging for the academics delivering the modules, particularly when faced with senior managers who say '*that's not how it is*' (Noel). Alice did not feel strongly that academics delivering at MSc level should hold specific industry experience. However, she did note that it may have been more beneficial to her rather than the younger students, who had, in any case, an academic focus. A mix of experiences would have been preferable in her view. Gaia was happy that the lecturing staff were:

> *my peers age-wise ... it was nice to have a sort of a peer-to-peer relationship almost* (Gaia).

<u>Modules Studied</u>

The interviewees were prompted to discuss the modules that they had found most relevant, most enjoyable, least relevant and least enjoyable. This categorisation was very much dependant on the interviewee's background, employment or future plans.

The majority of the interviewees enjoyed the management modules, with strategic management and human resource management getting frequent mentions. In particular, Noel and Anthony, who now hold general management positions, and Portia who is a senior consultant, emphasised the relevance of strategic management to their job. Noel commented that when he was involved in restructuring at work:

> *I actually found myself going back to my college notes (on strategic management) from ten years ago* (Noel).

Financial management divided the interviewees into those who really enjoyed the module and those who found it stressful and daunting. Web development was another module favoured by the interviewees.

The MSc tourism graduates also talked favourably about the class field trip. This had many benefits both in the context of the material covered, and, also, the contribution that it made to the class dynamic. Phelim commented '*we still talk about the trip away*'. Gaia noted fondly:

> *now we're probably considered to be mad as brushes because we chose to go to X destination on our field trip* (Gaia).

In the main, the interviewees, with the exception of Iris and Seb, who had previously written theses, valued and immersed themselves in the challenges of the thesis.

The area-specific modules, such as, for example, tourism policy and planning was also highlighted as a favoured module. Yet, Gaia, whilst she thought the module content was good, was also of the opinion that both the general management modules and specific tourism ones were pitched at '*refresher course*' level, and could have been found on an undergraduate programme. She, unlike Phelim, did not think that there was enough '*drilling down*' into the issues. Similar to Gaia, Noel, despite his positive comments on strategic management, communicated a concern that some of the course content was '*maybe a little bit out of date*'. Noel compared the material to another short programme he had completed subsequent to the MSc:

> *The gap between where the lecturers are in (international hotel school) versus where they are in (MSc provider) is light-years apart... Some of them (the lecturers) have industry backgrounds, but they've maybe been out of the industry for too long or they just haven't been keeping in touch with what's happening with the industry* (Noel).

Portia observed that some material '*wasn't cutting edge*' and, compared to modules she had studied since graduation, the MSc modules needed to be:

> *more in the now and innovative,*

rather than:

> *the curriculum was obviously staying the same year after year* (Portia).

Portia's class cohort had much industry experience, which included conducting presentations; this influenced their assessment of some lecturers' presenting skills and Portia suggested that, in some classes, she thought:

> *God, you know, we could do better ourselves* (Portia).

Alice was of a similar opinion to Noel, Gaia and Portia, that some modules could have been more '*dynamic*' and she thought that one team taught module was '*disjointed*'. Seb commented, in general, on the lack of linkages between modules and that staff were:

> *delivering in isolation to each other* (Seb).

The next section provides an overview of interviewee opinions expressed about studying on a full-time or part-time basis.

The Full-time and Part-time Experience

Seb talked about the demands of balancing work, study and family life. He commented that:

> *there were volumes of work there I hadn't met before on any other programme. And, that impeded the learning on the programme* (Seb).

Seb also indicated that in order to combine work, study and family life, he was frequently studying until two o'clock in the morning. The part-time attrition rate was also highlighted by Seb; of the 21 part-time students who commenced the programme with him, only 6 completed the MSc. The implication is that the combination of work and study proved too onerous for many part-time students.

On the other hand, Noel commented on how the combination of work, study and home life enhanced his time management skills and he became ruthless at juggling, a trait that had been acknowledged as attractive by subsequent employers:

> *I think employers kind of nearly value that nearly as much as they value the fact that you have a degree or a master's, that you were able to juggle this and do all of this and come out the other end, shows that, you know, you're quite a focused individual and you have shown that you can work in a pressurised environment, but you can also achieve results and deliver at the same time* (Noel).

Whilst Alice had supportive employers and peer colleagues, who had similar experiences of combing work and study, returning to college did impact on her personal life, in particular her weekends.

Nancy and Phelim recognised that they were lucky in that they did not have to juggle work, study and family similar to some of their frazzled part-time colleagues.

Few suggestions were put forward in respect of programme changes and those that were made are detailed below.

Suggested Changes for the Programme

While all of the interviewees recognised that e-learning is a trend in higher education, none advocated the use of e-learning to the detriment of the classroom learning experience and dynamic. Even Tamzin, who had been disappointed by the profile of her MSc cohort, felt that the engagement with lecturing staff would be diminished in an e-learning space. A blended rather than a complete online experience would be favourable. Iris commented that:

> *I still think the kind of opportunity in a classroom environment to network with your colleagues is paramount* (Iris).

Similarly, Noel intimated that:

> *there's nothing like being in a classroom situation... and, particularly, I think maybe in a master's or on MBA level, where you have people with a lot of experience, that bring a lot to the table and just to listen and learn and bounce off other people* (Noel).

The final section of this graduate interview findings examines the graduate experience in the world of work after obtaining an MSc.

The Graduate Experience in the World of Work after Obtaining an MSc

This section of the interview reviewed what the interviewees had done subsequent to the completion of their MSc. The topics discussed in this aspect of the interviews included the following - work-life post MSc, including relevance of MSc to their job, and the application of their MSc skillset.

Work-life Post MSc

All of the graduates returned to, or entered, full-time employment subsequent to the completion of their master's qualification. This data was analysed in two parts, firstly by exploring what those who were already in employment did upon completion of the postgraduate qualification and, secondly, by investigating what happened to those who sought employment subsequent to the MSc.

What the Job Holders Did Next

Seb, Alice, Noel and Iris had continued to hold full-time jobs whilst studying. Seb remained in the same job further to acquiring his MSc qualification but, in the ensuing

years, achieved two promotions. An MSc qualification was required for Seb's academic role but, given that he already held a master's, he did not see any direct benefit from acquiring his MSc in hospitality. Within three years of graduation, Seb went on to study at doctoral level, which he found to be a much more positive learning and assessment experience than that of the MSc. It was surprising to hear that the doctorate workload was more '*doable*' than that of the MSc. At the time of interview, Seb was happy in his role and had no plans for further study, as he was looking forward to regaining his work-life balance once his doctorate was completed.

Alice, similarly, continued in the position that she held prior to commencing the MSc, but within a short period of time achieved promotion. Further to this promotion, she went on to acquire another role within the same organisation. While she could not remember if a master's was essential or desirable for her promotion, she did acknowledge that the MSc was '*hugely beneficial to me, work-wise*'. Alice had lived and worked abroad for a long number of years, so completing the MSc, shortly after her return, provided her with a valuable insight into the Irish hospitality and tourism industry. For Alice, personally, the MSc built her confidence as she '*proved to herself that I could do it*'. At the time of interview, Alice was content in her position, she had completed a number of online modules, subsequent to her MSc, but did not feel that she was:

> *willing to give up that much of her life*

to complete a doctorate, even though there has:

> *always been a part of me that wanted to do the whole teaching thing*
> (Alice).

Similar to Alice, Noel admitted to feeling a sense of '*personal gratification*' on having completed the MSc. He was uncertain of his future career plans but, shortly after finishing his MSc, moved job to a general manager role in a more superior hotel. However, he did note uncertainty about the value of a postgraduate qualification in the hospitality industry:

> *I don't think that it made getting jobs easier. I don't recall employers commenting in it. Or it even being questioned. I don't remember being in a job interview where I was asked what did you study or what did you do, did you find this beneficial or anything like that. I do think that at a certain level it's taken for granted that you have some form of third level qualification. And, I would hope if there was maybe two candidates of similar experience, you know, the fact that you maybe have a higher qualification might help you or help that decision-making process and*

certainly the further you go in your career, I think it will become even more important (Noel).

With regards to the future, Noel felt that a specialised MSc may limit his career to management of an individual property, whereas a MBA may be necessary to provide more opportunities in relation to multiple properties or a division within a hotel group. At the time of interview, Noel was happy in his then role, he was uncertain if he would remain in a corporate position or eventually become an entrepreneur and open his own business. In any case, he felt that it was not education alone that contributed to career progression but also luck, as he had been lucky that he had worked for progressive, large, international employers and steered clear of '*crazy builders*', who had little interest in the talent management of their employees.

Iris had combined work and study but, as a result of a contact made in her MSc cohort, she acquired a new position in the hospitality industry before completion of her master's. In the subsequent years, Iris made a number of job moves within the hospitality industry. She also returned to study for a specialist degree, in which she received many exemptions due to her MSc qualification. This was viewed by Iris as a huge advantage in itself in having completed the MSc; she also acknowledged that the programme had increased her confidence. Eventually, Iris left hotel operations, but continues to work with the industry. Iris has continued to acquire a number of further qualifications since her MSc, as she embraces the idea of life-long learning. The workload for these other programmes is never daunting for Iris:

because of the level of work I would have done at the master's (Iris).

Iris was realistic about the level of impact that an MSc has in the world of work in hospitality and tourism:

I would say having a master's on the CV would definitely support you to get to interview stage. But, in our industry, even at that time, I would still say it didn't necessarily reciprocate on the pay scales (Iris).

What the Job Seekers Did Next

Phelim, Gaia, Anthony, Portia, Nancy and Tamzin did not hold full-time employment whilst they completed their MSc.

After completion of their qualification, Phelim and Gaia acquired positions as a result of recommendations made by lecturing staff that they apply for certain vacancies. Phelim worked in this position for four years and, during this time, he also began to teach part-time in a number of colleges. During his first number of years working in an industry

162

support role, he regularly consulted his MSc notes, if only to find other sources of references. He now works as a full-time educator in one college but continues to liaise with industry on various projects, as he sees it important to remain relevant and up to date with what is happening outside of academia. He credits the MSc with:

> *getting me into a lot of these places*,

however, similarly, as a result of his industry links, he says it has been an '*eye opener*' that:

> *employers prefer to see experience rather than pieces of paper necessarily* (Phelim).

Phelim will eventually do a PhD even though:

> *someone said to me one time, a PhD will close more doors than it will open for you* (Phelim).

He noted that this comment was made in the context of industry based rather than academic jobs.

Similar to Phelim, Gaia secured the job of which her programme tutor had made her aware. Gaia has remained in this job since graduation and, as it is a teaching position, her MSc is relevant to her work. She finds her work '*personally rewarding*', even if the financial rewards are not huge. Skills-wise, she regularly uses her research skills acquired through the MSc. Gaia claimed that she already was confident, having made the decision to change her life and move to ROI, but the MSc gave her professional confidence due to the reputation of the college. Due to financial constraints, Gaia is unable to commence a PhD.

Contrary to his original plan, upon completion of his MSc, Anthony secured a senior management position back in the hotel industry. His previous employer had made him aware of this employment opportunity. This previous employer had also proven to be a supportive mentor to Anthony in his decision to embark on postgraduate study. His new job in a five star hotel '*reinvigorated*' Anthony's interest in the hospitality industry; he '*loved*' the hotel, his job and the environment. From this position, he eventually moved to another luxury property, again through personal recommendation, and within a short time had secured the general manager role. The importance of industry networking and word of mouth recruitment was highlighted by Anthony; he noted that in the ROI, hospitality is a '*very small business*'. Strategy, finance, sales and marketing and human resource management were some aspects of his MSc that he

deemed to be useful in his current role. Yet, Anthony was uncertain as to the impact his qualification had on his progression to this senior management position at a relatively young age. He felt that his previous experience and the personal recommendations were more important than the fact that he had acquired an MSc. Anthony was adamant that:

> *If it's experience over qualification, the experience will always win it* (Anthony).

Furthermore, he identified that:

> *I mean, if somebody does not have a diploma or degree in hotel management, you know, nowadays, you kind of wonder what they've done. But it really is still about experience in this job, because you can have all the qualifications in the world, if you can't actually get out there and meet, greet, manage people, sell to people, you know, you're not going to make it* (Anthony).

Similar to Noel, Anthony had considered further study in the form of the management development programme delivered by a major US hotel school. However, he did not embark on this course of study as his focus was on steering his hotel through the economic challenges of the recession. While Anthony is content in his current role, having '*equipped*' himself with the MSc qualification, eventually he hopes to realise his long term plan of working in academia or the state sector.

Portia, despite some concerns that she may have had about the modules and delivery on the MSc, felt that the MSc was '*probably one of the best decisions*' she made, given what has happened her career since graduation. Upon completion of her MSc, initially Portia thought that she wanted to follow a career in lecturing, but after having spoken to some of her MSc colleagues, she realised that she was more interested in consultancy. Her MSc proved essential in securing her consultancy position in a leading firm. While Portia now felt that she had outgrown the MSc, she recalled her selection interview and the emphasis placed on her MSc:

> *The master's was the first thing that I was asked when I came in. They wanted to know what subjects I covered, my results, they asked me what I did for my thesis and then I just gave them the one-liner, this is what I did, but they asked like what research did you do... So, I'd say my interview was about three hours long, but the first 40, 45 minutes were purely talking about the master's* (Portia).

Portia has since been promoted in the same company and now holds a senior position that brings with it some of the work-life balance issues and long hours that prompted her to leave hotel operations. In the future, she would be interested in combining her work with part-time lecturing.

Nancy sought employment in the tourism industry but to no avail; after three months of applying she eventually took a job in a non-tourism related sector:

> *Yes, I was applying for work and I was getting feedback saying you're overqualified or you have no experience. That was, basically, all the feedback I got. I'll always remember, I applied for work in (name of a tourism attraction) and it was just basic and I wasn't expecting to be going in with any high grade, because I knew that I didn't have the experience, and I sent my CV in and they came back to me and said you've too much, you're too educated to come in at a role and like, I mean, I would never expect to be going in at a high-end role, I was sort of expecting to go in anywhere and working my way up* (Nancy).

Whilst Nancy did not work in tourism, she was able to use some of her marketing, HR, services management, law and strategic management knowledge in the role that she held for nine years. The research skills acquired during the MSc also benefited her in her role. Unfortunately, due to the economic downturn, Nancy was made redundant and, at the time of her interview, she was unemployed. She was, once again, experiencing difficulty in acquiring a position in any industry. She had not given up on her dream of working in tourism or her passion for learning as she had signed up for a course in payroll management.

Tamzin took a year out, due to family commitments, after having completed her MSc. At the time of her interview, she had acquired a six month contract working in sales in a tourism-related field. Tamzin had no desire to return to hospitality operations but was interested in pursuing a career in teaching. Due to the economic climate, and retrenchment in the public sector in ROI, Tamzin held little hope of securing a full-time lecturing position. Yet, she had no regrets about having completed the MSc, she felt that she had grown in confidence and:

> *the day I graduated was huge, it was a big day for me* (Tamzin).

Summary of Graduate Interviews

The graduates had embarked on their MSc journey from a number of different starting points. Three interviewees commenced their MSc studies directly after having completed an undergraduate qualification. Two of the graduates had sought a postgraduate qualification, as they had never acquired a primary degree. Five of the graduates were motivated by the idea of changing their career path upon acquisition of the MSc qualification. It was apparent that none of the interviewees had seriously considered other postgraduate programmes, and opted for the MSc in hospitality management or MSc in tourism management as it was deemed more accessible that an

MBA or MBS, and the fees were lower. All of the graduates were highly motivated to learn, yet they acknowledged the enormity of the workload of the MSc programmes. A common theme emerged from the interviews that those graduates who were working in hospitality or tourism operations saw an MSc as a gateway to academia or consultancy and a move away from operations. Those interviewees who had extensive industry experience acknowledged the long hours, poor work-life balance and 'hard work' culture ubiquitous in industry operations. However, the existence of good employers who operated progressive human resource management practices and encouraged employee development, in particular in larger companies and MNEs, was recognised. The interviewees acknowledged the experience versus qualification debate within hospitality and tourism, and the level of acceptance of qualifications by industry.

In line with the questionnaire findings, there was a high level of satisfaction expressed with the MSc experience. Some of the positive aspects identified included the small class size that facilitated learning from peer colleagues and good interaction with the module lecturer. There was a distinct lack of enthusiasm for an e-learning version of the programmes. Other positives included the development of career networks and life-time friendships among the various MSc class cohorts. Similar to the questionnaire findings, the interviewees identified some of the more negative aspects of their experiences, in particular the standard of delivery of some modules and the absence of cutting edge and in-depth material as would be expected at postgraduate level. Having said that, interviewees appeared to have transferred many of the competences developed during their MSc to their subsequent employment, some even mentioned that they had referred back to lecture notes when different scenarios occurred in work.

The next section of this chapter presents the findings from the employer interviews.

Phase Three: The Employer Interviews

Two employer interviews, each of one hour duration, were conducted with two key informants – one from the tourism industry and one from the hospitality industry. Themes and ideas from the literature, and the graduate findings, informed the questions that guided the employer interviews. The questions asked of employers, and the subsequent answers provided, aided the development of themes for the employer data analysis that is presented below.

Profile of Employer Interviewees

The names used to identify the employer interviewees are fictitious, in order to protect their identities. Neither of the interviewees had attended the higher education institute in which the two MSc programmes are delivered, and they do not hold a master's qualification themselves. In the course of the interviews, the two interviewees used the terms tourism and hospitality interchangeably when discussing this sector.

George is the chief executive officer of a very successful tourism attraction in the Republic of Ireland; he is in his mid-fifties. Prior to working in tourism, George had spent 25 years working internationally in the hotel industry and, overall, he has worked in tourism for 14 years. He employs in the region of 150 people. George is also involved in an industry representative association. Whilst George did not come from a hotel family background, he worked in the industry from a young age. He holds a culinary qualification, a hospitality-specific undergraduate degree, and has completed two management short courses, one in a leading international hotel school and one in an Irish executive education business school.

Edgar is the general manager of, in his own words, '*a reputable, high-end, four-star hotel'*; he is in his mid-forties. He employs in the region of 103 staff. Edgar comes from a hospitality industry family background, and he credits this as the reason that he was attracted to the hospitality industry:

> *I always knew that this was absolutely what I wanted to do* (Edgar).

He has worked in the industry for 30 years, having started working in bars, hotels and restaurants while still in secondary education. Edgar completed a hospitality-specific degree at the same Irish hotel school as George; their time at the hotel school did not overlap. A number of years ago, Edgar also participated in a management development programme at the same leading international hotel school as George; this was a different programme and at a different time to when George studied at this institution. Also, similar to George, Edgar is involved in an industry representative association.

George and Edgar both started their careers in a large international hotel group, and that appears to have had a noteworthy impact on the success of their careers. George commented that he had commenced employment in:

> *a great company and a great training ground* (George).

Both George and Edgar have worked for significant periods outside of the Republic of Ireland. Both interviewees held management positions from a young age, and both

were headhunted for different positions at various stages of their careers. They are two good examples of tourism and hospitality career success stories.

However, they both acknowledge that, in addition to hard work and long hours, they have been fortunate in their choices of employers. Similar to the graduates interviewed, who have risen to general management positions, George recognised the importance of gaining experience in large, multinational enterprises that embrace employee training, engagement and reward. In line with the graduate interviewees, Edgar noted the value of working for well-established career hoteliers, as opposed to people who were not hoteliers, but who had invested in the industry during the boom years purely for financial reasons.

This section provided a general profile of the interviewees; the next part of the findings paints the picture of the tourism and hospitality industry from the employer perspective.

The Tourism and Hospitality Industry – The Employer Perspective

Both George and Edgar used the emotive term '*love*' to describe their continued association with the tourism and hospitality industry. Even after 30 years, Edgar noted that:

> *I still love it, I have to say. I couldn't see myself doing anything else. I'm passionate about the business, to be honest* (Edgar).

George identified that, from the outset, he '*loved*' the industry:

> *I loved the idea of meeting with people and all of that. But, at a very early age, I also realised that I didn't just want to be a barman or a waiter or a chef or whatever and that I wanted to expand that and start managing people, the idea of leading people and managing people* (George).

Throughout the interview, George advocated the importance of international work experience as a key career success factor in tourism and hospitality. However, when questioned about the negative image of the industry as an employer, both acknowledged the challenges of the industry's reputation. George intimated:

> *We're not holding on to the great talent that we're producing. Yes, I think, the industry has unfortunately, between you and I, I think, it has a somewhat tarnished reputation* (George).

Whilst George conveyed, a number of times in the course of the interview, that the organisation he manages:

> *cares about people and we care what people say about us,*

168

and that he '*takes great pride*' in his organisation's approach to employee development, he cited a recent example of a family friend whose daughter had been required to work 16 hours, without a break, in an hotel. He noted that her parents had suggested to him that:

> *this industry you're in and all that, that this is ridiculous* (George).

Such anecdotes of '*nonsense hours*' made George '*very annoyed*' and he viewed such behaviour on the part of hoteliers as '*an absolute disgrace*'. In a broader context, he noted that:

> *Government get very excited when they talk on Morning Ireland (a prime-time morning radio show on ROI radio) about Google or pharmaceutical companies coming to Ireland and opening up and creating jobs. It's all about the quality of jobs, that's what government focuses on. So, when we generate hundreds of thousands of jobs in tourism, unfortunately they're not valued. And, one of the reasons they're not valued by the government is because they're low scale, low paying jobs* (George).

George reiterated the value of working for large tourism or hospitality businesses that have standards and structures in place with regard to the treatment of their human resources. Candidly, he conveyed '*they won't abuse people*'. The new generation of young adults joining the industry have higher expectations with regard to work-life balance and George believes that to be a good thing and that progressive employers '*respect*' and '*develop*' these employees and that, unlike the past, the industry is no longer just about '*manual labour*'.

In general, Edgar did not discuss the negative industry image, to the same extent as George. He noted that, at the outset of his career in the industry, he was not fully aware of the hospitality's negative image as '*he enjoyed it so much*'. Edgar did not provide examples of poor practice, or employ the type of language used by George when discussing the down side of working in tourism and hospitality:

> *So, it was probably more in later years, as time went on, that I began to realise that it is actually a very demanding business. And it is, I feel, in some cases almost a vocation as opposed to just a job and you are, I feel, either cut out for it or not. And, if you're cut out for it and willing to work and not be a clock-watcher, you can actually do very well and very quickly at a young age* (Edgar).

Edgar acknowledged that hotel work is '*difficult*' but that conditions and work-life balance had improved as a result of working time legislation and, in his opinion, improved pay rates. However, Edgar also identified the '*onus*' on industry leaders, himself included, to manage '*working practices* and *quality of life*' for staff to

counteract the ongoing '*drain*' of employees from the industry. In line with George, he acknowledged the role of tourism in the Irish economy and that this could auger well for the industry, as more people will join its ranks.

Similar to George, Edgar noted his organisation's commitment to developing employees and internal promotion. However, he recognised that, in particular, management development had suffered because of budget constraints during the recessionary years. Edgar accepted that it is a challenge:

> *Finding those people that are really cut out for the business and then nurturing them, developing them, rewarding them, promoting them and trying to keep them in the business and to treat them fairly really, with respect* (Edgar).

Having scoped the landscape of tourism and hospitality from the employer perspective, the next section outlines the employers' views on tourism and hospitality education.

Tourism and Hospitality Education – The Employer Impressions

Tourism and Hospitality Education in General

Both interviewees have maintained links with their alma mater where they studied at undergraduate level. In that sense, George and Edgar appear enthusiastic to give something back to hospitality education. They participate in student-centred initiatives and act as role models for current students. They did not appear to be very familiar with the academic content and structure of either undergraduate or postgraduate tourism and hospitality programmes. When asked about the academic versus experience debate in the field of tourism and hospitality, two slightly different perspectives were presented. George expressed strong support for formal education in tourism and hospitality:

> *Qualifications are crucially important. I think, sure, work in the industry, get the knowledge, but there's nothing to beat qualifications. And I think it shows a commitment. ...It's very hard to develop people unless they have some form of qualification. When you talk about leadership, motivation, controlling, planning, all of the basic tools that any manager would have, if you don't have some form of qualification, it's very hard to develop them into a more senior leadership role* (George).

However, George did strike a note of caution in respect of undergraduate education and the academic versus practical balance. He recalled an industry colleague expressing concern that new hospitality graduates did not have the '*basics*' but were '*very good at academia and that type of thing*'.

170

It was noted by Edgar that the experience / education mix was contingent upon the level within an organisation at which an individual worked. He revealed that if he is interviewing someone for a management position:

> *I like to see that they have some form of qualification or that they're interested in developing themselves. ...And that could be in the form of, you know, courses, just learning, attending seminars* (Edgar).

Edgar also indicated that he was of the view that a '*healthy mix*' between experience and qualification was good. He recalled working with '*fantastic people*' who did not hold any third level qualifications, yet they were '*hard-working*' and '*dedicated*' and, in that sense, '*crucial*' to the organisation. On the other hand, he had the experience of working with people who had '*all the qualifications*' and he felt were almost '*too academic*', as they lacked '*know-how on the floor*' or were '*not switched on*'.

In respect of their views on the career academics who deliver modules on tourism and hospitality programmes, both George and Edgar were very diplomatic. The researcher was conscious that this would prove a difficult topic for discussion, given her role as a career academic. George initially mooted that he was not '*probably qualified enough to answer*' but added that, from his experience of interacting with a number of named tourism and hospitality academics, he felt that '*academics generally do a great job and are very clued in*'. George also noted that industry needed to become more involved with academics with regard to education, rather than '*standing at the sidelines and criticising*'. Edgar suggested that it is beneficial if the academic has industry experience, but did not view it as essential, as long as students have some opportunities to make linkages with industry.

This part provided an overview of employer opinions on tourism and hospitality education in general; the next section examines employer views on postgraduate education in particular.

Tourism and Hospitality Postgraduate Education

Edgar had participated in a management development programme, focusing on strategy and leadership, linked to a leading USA hospitality school. He was glowing in his review of this programme, as it offered the opportunity to have face-to-face lectures in the Republic of Ireland with the foremost academics from two Irish universities, online classes with leading US academics and a week of lectures at the US University. The modules covered were cutting edge, and the programme provided a valuable networking

opportunity with other Irish hoteliers, and the chance to learn from each other as well as those delivering the modules. Edgar commented that:

> *I think the (named US University) is up there in terms of, you know, hospitality management and education* (Edgar).

In the course of the interview, it became apparent that Edgar had considered embarking on an MSc programme outside of ROI; however, work commitments and the financial costs dissuaded Edgar from commencing this course of study. This particular programme appealed to Edgar as it had linkages with leading US and Swiss hotel schools, and it was delivered in blocks of modules, rather than weekly lectures. Such an MSc would assist Edgar to stay up to date '*with the times*' and, also, open up further opportunities in academia in years to come. Edgar noted that he and his contemporaries could be enticed to join such a programme that included external international links, were such a programme to be developed in the Republic of Ireland.

George had attended a management development programme at a specialised private management college and he would advocate this route for others who had completed an undergraduate qualification in a specialised hotel school. In George's view, and he acknowledged that he was generalising, hotel school graduates are '*excellent at execution*' of tasks but may be '*too humble* and *self-serving*'. However, he is also of the opinion that:

> *What they're not good at is thinking. You know, staying in that space of reflecting and planning and thinking about strategy and what is it we want to do as a business* (George).

It is George's viewpoint that this more strategic and reflective competence could perhaps be achieved in a non-specialist education environment, such as in general management programmes.

Having established the interviewees' own experiences of education beyond undergraduate studies, both interviewees were asked if they actively recruited MSc graduates.

Edgar identified that, when he is recruiting, he is looking for someone who is '*passionate*' about the hotel industry, who knows the business, which is '*about the customer, the team and making a profit*'. He looks for commitment, dedication and a certain personality type. He does not necessarily look for an MSc qualification. In fact, Edgar expressed the view that a person may pursue an MSc as part of a plan to exit the industry. He used the example of some of his undergraduate peer colleagues who had

completed master's with a view to entering academia or to work elsewhere outside of the hospitality industry. Edgar noted that on that basis he would not be:

> *Too hot up on somebody having a master's. I think, you know, sometimes if somebody has a master's and they're coming in, they're probably looking to, maybe, just gain experience, which is helping them for their CV, but they may not necessarily be committed to a career in hotel life. So, I don't necessarily, I'd be wrong to say I see it as a negative thing. But, I suppose, when I'm interviewing somebody, I'm trying to see that they're coming to us for the longer term and that it's not just a quick fix and that they're committed to the hotel industry* (Edgar).

George noted, with regard to selection criteria, that his organisation looked for '*authenticity*', people who are committed and confident. Problem solving is also important, people who could see past the problems and identify solutions. A track record of delivering a '*great performance*' is another selection criteria. Applicants who are interested in continuous professional development and growth are looked upon favourably.

In that context, George had a positive attitude to qualifications, be they undergraduate or postgraduate. He concluded that when he is interviewing job applicants, personality and experience '*counts an awful lot*', but he also looks for a qualification and a desire to continue to learn. George mentioned a leading Irish university's graduate business school and commented that he would have '*huge respect*' for someone who completed a postgraduate qualification there. He commented that it would bring '*fresh thinking*' to a hospitality or tourism business. However, having said that, he did make reference to a member of his staff who had attended one of the case study MSc programmes and noted a dramatic change in that individual's strategic thinking. George noted that the higher education institute in question '*must be doing something right*'.

When asked about what modules they considered should be included on an MSc programme, both Edgar and George were quite similar in their views. Edgar noted the importance of strategy, leadership, revenue management and information technology. Similarly, George suggested that a strategy module is imperative, in addition to a focus on the evolving '*digital world*' and customer management.

Summary of Employer Interviews

George and Edgar have had very similar career paths, in that they both achieved the same undergraduate qualification, completed programmes at the same well-recognised

international university, albeit at different times, and acquired international experience, before settling back into tourism and hospitality jobs in the Republic of Ireland.

Both acknowledge issues exist with regard to the image of the tourism and hospitality industry, however, George is more explicit in his discontent with the treatment of human resources in the sector compared to Edgar. Both have continued to retain links with their alma mater and an interest in tourism and hospitality education but, in general, they are quite vague on the current education provision provided at MSc level in the field of tourism and hospitality.

They both hold views on the experience versus education debate and both appear to favour applicants that have a balance between experience and a formal qualification.

Neither of the interviewees had considered completing one of the MSc qualifications under review. However, both interviewees were glowing in their accounts of the management development programmes that they had completed and appeared to value the depth and up to date nature of the material covered. This leads the researcher to believe that reputation of a programme and high quality academics delivering cutting edge modules are considered to be key factors for managers at Edgar's and George's level when considering embarking on further education.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the educator, graduate and employer interviews. The data from each set of interviews have been reviewed under key themes. The next chapter discusses the similarities and differences between the different elements of the quantitative and qualitative data and, also, compares the primary findings to the secondary literature.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

Introduction

As identified in Chapter 4, Research Methodology and Methods, the quantitative and qualitative primary data are compared and contrasted in this, the analysis chapter. In addition to this analysis of the two types of primary data collected, the primary research is also evaluated in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. Some overall conclusions are then extracted from this discussion of the different elements of the secondary and primary research.

The Context for Discussion – Research Question and Objectives

The research question and objectives have been delineated in Chapter 1. This question and these objectives provide the framework for the primary data and literature review comparisons in this chapter. Before analysis is conducted under each objective, some general areas of analysis are presented.

The Development and Role of the MSc Programmes

The trends identified in the literature (Johanson *et al* 2010; Dale and Robinson 2001; Cooper 2002; Brotherton and Wood 2008; Barrows and Johan 2008), with regard to the development of graduate degrees in tourism and hospitality worldwide, had evidently been part of the impetus to develop the postgraduate degree programmes under review. Educators who had been involved at the programme development stage had noted the impact of these worldwide trends. In addition to responding to worldwide tourism and hospitality education trends, one of the educators, Laura, reiterated the view of Knight (1997) that providing an MSc programme creates a sense of prestige for an institution.

One of the educators involved in the development of the MSc offerings acknowledged that the hotel groups had been more supportive of the programme development than the independent operators. This coincides with the graduate interviewees and employers who both extolled the progressive human resource development initiatives of the large multinational chains. It also reiterates Baum's (2007) argument that larger tourism and hospitality businesses have adopted a professional, proactive and strategic approach to the management of people.

While the literature (Tribe 1997; Brotherton and Wood 2008) discussed tourism and hospitality in the context of a discipline or field, this distinction did not appear to be of

concern to the educators, graduates or employers interviewed. However, the issue of a 'professional industry' that required 'professionals' with 'professional qualifications' and the 'professionalisation' of the industry was discussed by some of the educators. These educator observations are in line with the views expressed in the literature (Hjalager 2003; Hsu 2005) about the need for qualified employees. Professionalism was also listed in the contextual literature (Baum 1990) as one of the competencies required by the industry.

Yet, Eraut (1998, p.130) did note that there is a difference between 'being qualified and being competent'. The idea of improving one's 'professionalism' was also alluded to in the exploratory interviews. It is interesting to note that the terminology 'professional' and 'professionalism' is straightforwardly linked to the industry by educators and students yet, from the conceptual literature review, it is evident that tourism and hospitality do not fit into the mould of a traditional profession and industry professionalisation was questioned by Wood (1997). The industry is included, based on Eraut's (1994) proposition that the boundaries of what is a profession are ill-defined.

The literature (HEA 2012a) identified the small numbers of students enrolled on taught master's programmes in travel, tourism, leisure or hotel, restaurant and catering in ROI. In addition, Central Statistics Office census data (2011) suggests a low rate of third-level qualifications in leisure, travel and related service occupations. This begs the question as to why there is such a low level of participation on these specialist master's programmes, given the number of people employed in the tourism and hospitality industries (European Industrial Relations Observatory 2012, Fáilte Ireland 2011) in ROI. Research with graduates from specialist tourism and hospitality undergraduate degrees may shed further light on what, if any, postgraduate education they pursue. In the absence of this data, the research for this thesis highlighted some issues that may contribute to a low level of participation in postgraduate study.

Whilst the MSc in hospitality management initially sought to meet management development needs of managers in industry, some educators were of the view that this market had become saturated. The exploratory and graduate interviewees noted that, in recent recessionary times, managers in the hospitality industry were focused on business survival, and did not have the time to participate in study. It was also apparent from graduate interviews that a blended delivery executive development programme run by a ROI state agency in conjunction with an international hotel school, was highly thought of in industry as a management development option. There is also the issue of the value

placed on experience as opposed to education by the industry and this theme will be further developed later in this chapter.

The low participation levels also pose the question as to the need for such specialised postgraduate programmes. In spite of the negative comments in respect of workload, module content and module delivery recorded on the questionnaires and discussed in the graduate interviews, there was a high level of satisfaction noted, in general, by the graduates, and they would recommend the programmes to a friend. Similarly, the educators, while acknowledging that the MSc programmes were not without challenges and areas for improvement, were all positive that there was a future for the programmes. This positivity is in contrast to the concerns noted in the literature (Brotherton and Wood 2008; Powers and Riegel 1993) about the future of hospitality education.

It is evident from the literature review that the benchmark statements for hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism provides guidance for undergraduate degree programmes in the UK yet, in ROI, this is dependent on the individual programme providers. The content of both MSc programmes appeared to be in line with the types of indicative modules contained in the UK benchmark statements (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2008). However, there was an absence of international focus within the programmes, as advocated by Baum (2005). Also, it is evident from the literature (Morrison and O'Mahony 2003; Petrova and Mason 2004; Airey and Tribe 2000; Lashley 2007) that the debate on tourism and hospitality education has a more substantial research base in the UK compared to ROI. In general, there is a dearth of academic research conducted on the area of tourism and hospitality education in ROI.

Having conducted some general analysis on the development and role of the MSc programmes from the perspective of the literature and the primary findings, the next section analyses the class profile of these programmes.

The MSc Class Profile

The gender breakdown of the total number of graduates from 2000 to 2010, and the questionnaire respondents, identifies a preponderance of females. However, the Fáilte Ireland material (2011) referenced in the literature indicated that the hospitality and tourism industries employ reasonably equal numbers of males and females in ROI, unlike the scenario in other countries (Brownell and Walsh 2008; Hjalager 2003). Whilst the cultural diversity of the MSc class had increased over the time period investigated, in line with the cultural diversity of the Irish tourism and hospitality

177

industry (Fáilte Ireland 2011), this cultural mix lagged very much behind the composition of similar programmes in the UK (Botterill & Gale 2005). One educator noted that it was important to maintain an intercultural balance, rather than become like some of the aforementioned UK programmes that were populated only by international students. This educator advocated that a richer learning environment was created by a diverse, rather than homogeneous, class profile. Botterill and Gale (2005) suggested that a lack of demand in the UK forced colleges to look to student markets abroad. A similar trend appears to have arisen in ROI, as one Institute of Technology looks to the development of a tourism and hospitality college in China (Coonan 2012).

It could not be said that the questionnaire respondents were indicative of Keep and Mayhew's (2004) profile of postgraduate students, as 46.7 per cent of respondents identified that they were the first generation of their families to progress to higher education. However, the small numbers participating in postgraduate study in this field may well reinforce Brotherton and Wood's (2008) view that the majority of those who participate in higher education in advanced societies are, also, those who are not attracted to study or work in the hospitality industry.

It was also apparent that many of the student interviewees, questionnaire respondents and graduate interviewees could be classified as Generation Y, as discussed by Barron *et al* (2007). Therefore, the concerns of younger respondents about work-life balance and their approach to career management could be linked to this generational categorisation. On the other hand, the concerns expressed, in particular, by part-time respondents about balancing work, life and study, could also be linked to their stage in life and commitments.

Based on the literature (Barrows and Johan 2008), it was expected that students were influenced to pursue the MSc qualification due to family connections with the industry; however, this did not become evident from the questionnaire findings. Only 23.5 per cent of respondents had a family connection with the industry. In the case of seven respondents, they were positively disposed to the industry due to these connections. It was, however, evident that family connections and summer job experience had impacted on the two employers' decisions to embark on a career in the industry.

There is a sense that, in the main, the exploratory interviewees, the questionnaire respondents and the graduates, regardless of their academic ability, approached the MSc with an attitude of working hard for the duration of their studies. Ironically, those who had experienced the gruelling work schedules and demands of jobs in industry, as

identified in the aforementioned literature, looked upon the MSc as a 'break' or a 'luxury'.

Having analysed the profile of MSc students, the next section of this analysis chapter discusses the industry / education dialogue.

The Industry / Education Dialogue

Smith *et al* (2010) and Park (2007) had identified the opportunity created by taught postgraduate programmes to make linkages or partnerships between academia and industry. Such partnerships supported industry's need for certain knowledge and skills. Some authors (Barrow and Johan 2008; Solnet, Robinson and Cooper 2007; Littlejohn and Watson 2004; Nolan *et al* 2010) had noted the importance of the industry / education relationship in the context of education in applied fields such as tourism and hospitality. These education / industry linkages appear to have occurred to a limited extent in the case of the two programmes under review but, certainly, did not extend to a formal partnership. This is in line with Stuart *et al's* (2008) findings in respect of industry and education links in the design and development of tourism programmes in the UK.

It was noted in the educator interviews that industry had been consulted at the initial stages of the MSc development and this industry input continued over the life cycle of the programmes, in the form of industry involvement on the five-yearly quality assurance programme review panels. The two employers who were interviewed, whilst enthusiastic about tourism and hospitality education, were not familiar with programme content at either undergraduate or postgraduate level. The employers did suggest that the responsibility also rests with industry to actively get involved with education rather than just comment from the sidelines. Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996), with their sample of 106 hotel executives, also found that these had limited knowledge of what was entailed in master's programmes. It was acknowledged by the educators that industry probably knew very little about the programmes, as the dialogue with industry was marginal and issue specific in the respect of the quality assurance programme reviews, site visits or guest lecturers.

Having said that, one educator was adamant that academia should take the leadership role in programme development rather than just responding to industry needs. This is somewhat in line with the views of Lashley (2007, p.216) with regard to industry relevance being 'an intellectual cul-de-sac'. This comment by Lashley (2007) forms

part of the literature that examines what should be the focus of hospitality and tourism education. In the contextual literature chapter, different opinions (Mandelbaum 1980; Morrison and O'Mahony 2003; Petrova and Mason 2004; Airey and Tribe 2000; Lashley 2007) became evident in respect of the importance of liberal, reflective education or vocational, goal-focused professional training. Lashley (2007, p.216) noted that the 'preoccupation with management', in addition to relevance to industry, created intellectual constraints. Whilst the modules contained in the MSc programmes reflect Lashley's (2007) concern about 'management', the limited involvement of industry in the design and delivery of the MSc programmes does not indicate an over-focus on relevance to industry needs. In fact, it would appear that the MSc programme content is in line with Botterill and Tribe's (2000, p.4) 'pre-paradigmatic' argument and that the programme tutors and teaching team have complete control over the curriculum content. Yet, as Airey (2008) noted, tourism as a programme of study lacks a theoretical framework and preparation for employment remains a key aspect of education in this field. The evidence analysed later in this chapter suggests that education alone is not sufficient preparation for employment in the tourism and hospitality industry.

The contextual literature (Barber *et al* 2004) identified that graduates felt that employers had little understanding of the outcomes of postgraduate study. This coincides with the views expressed in the questionnaire findings and the graduate interviews. The student interviewees were positive about their future as MSc graduates in industry or academia; however, the graduates were more realistic about the actual significance of a formal qualification in comparison to industry experience. The issue of mismatched expectations between employers, educators and graduates, as to what to expect in the world of work subsequent to education, has been well documented (Johanson *et al* 2010; O'Leary and Deegan 2005; Raybould and Wilkins 2005; Nolan *et al* 2010). This is discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Having conducted some general areas of analysis, the next section presents analysis in line with the research objectives.

Why Students and Graduates Chose to Complete a Taught MSc Tourism or Hospitality Programme

The majority of the exploratory interviewees and the questionnaire respondents had worked in some aspect of the industry prior to commencing study, so it could not be

said that they had embarked upon their studies without some insight into the reality of the industry, as identified in the literature (Kusluvan and Kusluvan 2000; O'Mahony *et al* 2001). The literature review (Baum 2007; Kusluvan and Kusluvan 2000; Christensen Hughes and Rog 2008; Leslie and Richardson 1999; Lam *et al* 2002; Scott and Revis 2008; Walsh and Taylor 2007; Davidson *et al* 2010; D'Annunzio-Green 2008; Fáilte Ireland 2005; Solnet and Hood 2008) identified the importance of good people and good people management within hospitality and tourism. However, the literature review (Barron 2008; Wood 1997; Brotherton and Wood 2008; Littlejohn and Watson 2004; Baum 2007; Fáilte Ireland 2000; Fáilte Ireland 2005; Fáilte Ireland 2010a; Marchante 2007; Lashley 2011; O'Leary and Deegan 2005; Powers and Riegel 1993; Cleveland *et al* 2007) also documented the negative image of the industry as an employer.

Surprisingly, given some aspects of the picture painted in the literature review, including long hours, low pay, hard work, limited opportunities for training and development and scant attention to work-life balance, neither the students nor questionnaire respondents were overly negative about their experiences in industry operations. Only 33.4 per cent of questionnaire respondents deemed life style change to be very important or important as a motivator for study. However, a number of the graduate interviewees were more forthright in their examples of '70 hour weeks', 'shoddy employers' and 'slave labour' experienced in the industry prior to commencing the MSc; yet, this did not dissuade them from embarking on a specialised qualification.

It is interesting that one of the employers also acknowledged similar concerns about 'nonsense hours' and the tarnished reputation of the industry. However, even in the context of the negativity that surrounds the industry from an employer brand perspective, the students, graduates and employers all used emotive language such as 'dream' 'passion' and 'love' to describe their attraction to the tourism and hospitality industry.

Similar to the exploratory research, the majority of the graduate interviewees had not investigated alternatives to the specialised MSc prior to commencing the programme. For those who had investigated a general business alternative, the cost was deemed to be prohibitive or it was felt that an MBA was something to do later in one's career. It is worth noting that 39.4 per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire had studied for their undergraduate qualification at an Irish institute of technology, and it may reasonably be inferred that these students preferred to return to the institute of technology model of education with which they were familiar, rather than embark on

postgraduate study in the unfamiliar setting of a university. Only 7.4 per cent had previously studied at an Irish university.

It has already been identified in the literature review (Brotherton and Wood 2008; O'Connor 2002) that, in general, tourism and hospitality higher education programmes are delivered by the HEI sector. This is, possibly, an interesting area for further research as to whether students who have studied a vocationally based programme are comfortable studying in what may be deemed to be the more academic setting of a university. A small number of questionnaire respondents indicated that, with hindsight, a business master's qualification may have been more appropriate to their needs. This is not surprising as, in the literature, Powers and Riegel (1993) and Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996) had noted that hospitality education competes closely with business education.

The motivators for further study, identified in the contextual literature, (Brown 2003; Smith *et al* 2010; Garner and Wallace 1997), were all reiterated in the exploratory research and graduate questionnaires and interviews. Similarly, the conceptual literature (Chivers 2007; Eraut 1994) examined the rationale for postgraduate study among professionals and it, too, coincides with the primary findings. Smith *et al* (2010) had noted that, in the UK, in excess of half of postgraduate research students embarked upon their studies with a view to an academic career. In the context of hospitality, Barrows and Johan (2008) had identified opportunities for careers in education, research and consulting, in addition to advancement in industry operations as a result of graduate education. This appears to have a resonance with the student and graduate interviewees. A short- or long-term career goal of moving to academia or consultancy, away from industry operations, had been identified as a driver for postgraduate study in both the exploratory and graduate interviews. One of the educators also noted that the MSc was viewed as a feeder degree to secure or maintain a position in academia.

Garner and Wallace (1997, p.57) had commented on how 'even the meaningless piece of paper' could impact on a postgraduate's 'professional prospects'. This need for the 'piece of paper' was identified by the exploratory research, the questionnaire respondents and the graduate interviews. 55.6 per cent of the questionnaire respondents had suggested that the need for a formal qualification was important or very important, and coincides with the view expressed in both the exploratory and graduate interviews by some respondents of their need for a 'piece of paper' to add to their work experience in the industry. In the graduate interviews, the 'degree seekers' was a categorisation

created to describe this 'piece of paper'-seeking MSc student. Indeed one of the 'degree seekers', Noel, was very much of the Garner and Wallace (1997) mindset, in that he was focused on getting the '*bit of paper at the end... with learning along the way*'.

There were mixed views on whether or not an MSc qualification is a source of competitive advantage in the labour market, as suggested in the literature (Wolf 2002; O'Donoghue and Maguire 2005). The questionnaire data put significant emphasis on the personal motivators for embarking on MSc study and subsequent outcomes, whilst the exploratory research had highlighted the career and earning motivators. Career advancement was an acknowledged benefit by only 47 per cent of questionnaire respondents, yet 84.4 per cent of questionnaire respondents had identified (very important or important) the desire to manage their own career as a motivator for study; and, similarly, 85.5 per cent had suggested career enhancement was very important or important. Despite the earning potential hopes of the students and some of the graduates interviewed, financial motives was deemed a motivator for study (very important or important) by only 38.5 per cent of questionnaire respondents; in line with this, improved financial reward was considered a benefit by 31.9 per cent of the questionnaire respondents. This data is in line with Barber *et al* (2004). It may be that the students, who were caught up in the day-to-day reality of study, did not have, as Delaney (1997, p.253) described, the benefit of assessing their education 'thorough the lens of experience'.

As identified in the literature (Smith *et al* 2010; Barber *et al* 2004; Park and Wells 2010), the exploratory interviews, graduate questionnaire and graduate interviews indicated that both new graduates and those who wanted to change or advance their careers had participated in the MSc programmes. The exploratory research indicated that students had embarked on MSc study with a view to advance their careers in industry or to change career and move into academia. The questionnaire findings suggested that this was also an aim of 48.7 per cent of respondents, as they identified career change as a driver for postgraduate study, with 85.5 per cent of respondents suggesting that they wanted to advance their career in hospitality and tourism. Five of the ten graduate interviewees identified that they had experienced career progression in industry or a related field subsequent to their graduation.

In the exploratory research, three students had suggested that they pursued an MSc in order to prolong the inevitable entry to the workforce. Yet, this did not materialise as a theme in the subsequent quantitative or qualitative research with graduates.

It was evident, from the exploratory, graduate and educator interviews that those who chose to study for an MSc were motivated and enthusiastic about learning. This is further reinforced by the fact that 30.3 per cent of the questionnaire respondents had continued to acquire qualifications subsequent to their MSc graduation, and that 80.1 per cent of the questionnaire respondents had indicated a commitment to lifelong learning. While it was not doubted by the educators that the MSc students were enthusiastic about their studies, it was noted that this did not necessarily translate into a high calibre of students and good grades.

Given the work-life balance concerns alluded to in the literature review, it was not surprising that 33.4 per cent of questionnaire respondents were driven to embark on postgraduate study to achieve a lifestyle change and 47.4 per cent were influenced by a desire to achieve improved work-life balance. In fact, the expectation at the outset was that these figures would have been higher; however, it needs to be noted that 25 per cent of part-timers worked in education and 12.5 per cent were employed by a state agency during the course of their studies. Therefore, work-life balance issues may not have held the same significance for these respondents, compared to those who worked in hotels (25 per cent) or to those who held tourism positions (14.3 per cent). In any case, only 24 per cent of respondents indicated that they had improved work-life balance subsequent to graduation.

This section analysed the primary and secondary data as to why students and graduates chose to pursue postgraduate study. The next section discusses their experience during the course of their studies and, also, educator views on the MSc experience.

The Graduate and Educator Experience of a Taught MSc Tourism or Hospitality Programme

In line with Barber *et al's* findings (2004) and Smith *et al* (2010), the graduate interviewees suggested that they had high expectations at the outset of their postgraduate experience and, whilst their experiences were not without criticism, 92.5 per cent of questionnaire respondents deemed themselves very satisfied or satisfied with the MSc programme. An overwhelming 94.8 percent would recommend the programme to a friend.

The questionnaire respondents identified a number of general knowledge, skills and competences that they considered to be outcomes of having completed the MSc programmes. This question in the questionnaire was based on the national framework

for qualifications level 9 descriptor referenced in the literature review (www.nfq.ie) and, therefore, produced a very general list of outcomes that could have resulted from any MSc qualification. This suggests that, according to the graduates, the programmes are in line with the national framework of qualifications descriptor. It also reiterates the view of Brotherton and Wood (2008) that that hospitality programmes develop transferable skills that may be utilised in other industries.

However, it also needs to be acknowledged that competency based approaches, such as the national framework of qualifications' descriptors, are not without criticisms (Collins 1983; Jessup 1991; Hyland 1993; Hyland 2006). Some of these criticisms centre on the issue of reductionism (Collins 1983; Hyland 2006) and others on the achievement of competence and performance to the detriment of knowledge and understanding (Jessup 1991). The question also arises, in line with the work of Bore and Wright (2009), as to whether the MSc programmes under review should be producing graduates who have capability, rather than the competencies outlined in a national framework.

The top ten areas identified in the questionnaire, of knowledge and skill acquired as a result of MSc study included very general transferable skills, such as research skills, planning and organising, and working at a variety of professional levels. It is apparent from the programme structure that both MSc programmes, whilst marketed as specialist qualifications, are based on core business modules, and some questionnaire respondents enjoyed this, while others bemoaned this business focus. This business focus is in line with Tribe's (1997) view that tourism is not a discipline but two fields, specifically, the business of tourism and the non-business aspects of tourism. The more industry-specific knowledge and skills gleaned included the acquisition of new insights and knowledge at the forefront of industry. This was interesting in light of the fact that the questionnaire results and graduate interviews questioned the dynamic and up-to-date nature of material covered in some MSc modules.

As indicated in the literature review (Knight 1997), a taught master's may include a research thesis, and this is the case for the two MSc programmes in question. In fact, this research thesis appears to have greatly influenced the respondents to the questionnaire and the graduate interviewees. All the graduate interviewees enjoyed the opportunity to complete the thesis, even though it was hard work. In line with this focus on the thesis, improved research skills topped the list in the graduate questionnaire as the most popular knowledge and skill acquired. It became apparent that, whilst MSc students embraced the idea of the thesis, educators, unfortunately, did

not see the thesis, due to the general standard of the end product, as an opportunity to create synergies with their own personal research and to produce publications.

The literature (Knight 1997, Department of Education and Skills 2011) discussed the importance of learning methods best suited to taught master's study, in order to enhance innovation, creativity and problem solving. In the course of the graduate and educator interviews, the issue of the quantity of course work was aired, and there was a suggestion that the quantity of assessments may have had a detrimental impact on the learning achieved by participants. Part-timers, in the exploratory interviews, the questionnaires and the graduate interviews, acknowledged the strains of the MSc workload in addition to their day job and home life. The educators also appreciated the challenging and 'busy' nature of the programmes. One of the educators went as far as to suggest that it was unlikely that participants had the opportunity to reflect, given the work demands of the programmes. Yet Lashley (2007, p.219) had noted the importance, in hospitality education, of the development of 'reflective practitioners' and Tribe (2000, p.1) had discussed the role of 'philosophical practitioners'. On the other hand, one graduate interviewee noted that his ability to juggle work and study had been recognised by employers as a strength. This theme does raise the question as to whether the learning achieved was deep or just surface, as suggested in the literature (Garner and Wallace 1997). In a similar vein, Chivers (2007) had suggested that deep learning was required for the embedding of professional competencies.

It was suggested in the exploratory research, the questionnaire data, the graduate interviews and the educator interviews, that the composition of the MSc class was very important. All emphasised the importance of a mix of student experiences and a reasonable class size to generate a melting pot of exchange of ideas and knowledge, creating opportunities to learn from each other as well as from the lecturers. It became evident that, in recent years, educators viewed the MSc tourism groups as more dynamic and having a better classroom atmosphere than the MSc hospitality cohorts. Whilst the MSc programmes fit the characteristic of formal learning, as elucidated by Eraut (2000, p.1), and 'codified academic knowledge' or the visible part of the iceberg (Eraut 2009) is the focus of module content, it is evident that groupings such as 'learning communities' (Benckendorff *et al* 2009, p.87) were formed amongst a number of the cohorts that progressed through the MSc programmes. These communities were stronger and more cohesive in some years than others and were dependent on the class profile and engagement that occurred in the classroom and outside, for example, in the

course of the field trips. The field trips, which were a resounding highlight of the programmes, could also be considered within the boundary of Brown *et al's* (1989, p.34) 'authentic activity'. Eraut (2009) also noted the importance of tacit knowledge in the interpretation of theoretical knowledge in the workplace and this will be discussed later in this chapter.

Educators appear to be of the view that, other than the quality assurance reviews, a root and branch review of the programmes had not taken place since their inception and that the initial lines of differentiation between the programmes had become blurred. The marketing of the programmes had suffered and the recruitment to the MSc hospitality had been particularly poor in later years and that had had a detrimental impact on the learning environment created. The educators asserted the importance of a sharing of experiences approach to teaching in the postgraduate classroom so, of course, this was impacted by the number and calibre of students in the classroom.

It had been intimated in the literature review (Garner and Wallace 1997) that mature students may lack in confidence and, accordingly, may overwork. Whilst the 'degree seekers' and those 'seeking a new direction' expressed concerns about returning to education, indicating, for example, that they were out of touch with the system of assignments and exams, it did not appear that they lacked confidence in the class room. Indeed, the three direct entry students noted the contributions of mature students in classroom discussions; it appeared that the direct entry graduate interviewees were somewhat in awe of the mature students' experiences, life histories and career networks.

In the course of the three phases of this research, it became apparent that, in the main, both the students and graduates were very satisfied with their MSc experience. The concerns identified by the graduates, in both the questionnaire and the interviews, in respect of the quality of lecture material and delivery, were not highlighted in the exploratory research. Unsurprisingly, none of the educators identified any issues in respect of the content or delivery of their modules; they were similarly reticent about commenting on the general quality of the programmes. One staff member, who had the shortest association with the programme, suggested that staff up-skill themselves to be in a position to deliver cutting-edge modules. This view is in line with the concerns expressed by Lewis (1982) about faculty continuing to teach material with which they are comfortable. Some of the educators did bemoan the fact that there were not enough synergies between their personal research and the modules delivered at MSc level.

As identified in the findings chapters, some respondents to the questionnaire and the graduate interviewees, in particular the part-timers, expressed negative comments about the lack of, or outdated, 'industry' or 'field' experience of the academics who delivered the MSc modules. This is a topic that was addressed in the literature by Weber and Ladkin (2008). It is also worth noting that Knight (1997, p.7) had suggested that students who are 'living careers' could be more discerning and demanding. This graduate opinion on industry experience was a very different view to that of the educators, who did not, in the main, consider a lack of industry experience as an impediment to the delivery of their modules or their professional credibility. It is worth noting that the sentiments expressed in the questionnaire with regard to lectures and lecturers were more candid than those views conveyed in the face-to-face interviews.

The issue of lecture content and delivery was also identified in the literature review (Garner and Wallace 1997; Botterill and Gale 2005; Stuart 2002). In addition to the negative comments conveyed, in particular, in the questionnaire, there were positive aspects of the relationship with lecturers and the lecturers' academic achievements and research outputs; these were also highlighted in the graduate interviews.

At no point did educators give the impression that they felt like 'orphans of the academic world' (Hemmington 2007, p.7), even though they were from a variety of academic backgrounds, or that research conducted in tourism and hospitality could be considered light on theory (Brotherton and Wood 2008). While the educators were forthcoming with information, it still has to be borne in mind that they were being interviewed by a peer colleague, and views relating to lecture content, delivery, their own research or the status of tourism and hospitality in the broader academic picture may be easier to admit to a stranger or in an anonymous questionnaire.

While the literature (Barrows and Johan 2008; Baum 2000) noted the trend towards online and distance delivery of tourism and hospitality programmes, this was not something that was supported by educators and graduates in respect of the MSc programmes.

This section discussed the student, graduate and educator experience of the MSc programmes; the next section analyses the world of work subsequent to graduation.

Post-Graduation Life Chances - The Experience in the World of Work Subsequent to Graduation: the Perspectives of Graduates, Educators and Employers

As stated in the contextual literature review chapter, this thesis sought to investigate the 'adult life chances' (Economic and Social Research Institute 2009, p.1) of those who had successfully completed a postgraduate qualification in tourism or hospitality. The findings chapters described the hoped for 'life chances' from the perspective of the exploratory interviews with current students, and the actual 'life chances' from the lived experiences of the graduates by way of questionnaires and interviews. The educator and employer interviews shed some light on this post-graduation phase also. Both literature review chapters acknowledge the difference between what is viewed as important by educators and industry (Garner and Wallace 1997; Barron 2008; Ramakrishna and Nebel; O'Leary and Deegan 2005; Johanson *et al* 2010; Eraut 2009).

Hjalager (2005, p.34) discussed the fact that the 'preprogrammed tourism career' does not exist and, similarly, Botterill and Tribe (2000) had discussed the notion of imprecise career paths for tourism graduates. Therefore, it is not surprising that graduate destinations included hotels, tourism, education, state agencies and other industries, including pharmaceutical, manufacturing and consultancy. One of the graduate interviewees had completed an MSc in tourism management, yet held a general management role in a hotel, and one of the MSc hospitality graduate interviewees held a senior role in a tourism organisation.

From the exploratory interviews, it was apparent that those who studied on a full-time basis had higher expectations as to the value of their MSc qualification in industry yet, as identified by the full-timer questionnaire respondents, the importance of experience versus qualifications became more evident when they commenced their job searches. These inflated expectations of students are in line with the findings of Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996). 90.2 per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire identified (strongly agreed or agreed) that experience was important in acquiring their job, whilst a much smaller number, 58.5 per cent identified (strongly agreed or agreed) that their MSc was important in securing their job.

Similar to the literature (Barber *et al* 2004), graduates were positive about the impact that the MSc had on their lives, in particular the sense of personal confidence and accomplishment. Likewise, in line with the literature (Barber *et al* 2004, p.32), the

respondents to the questionnaire and the graduate interviews suggested, in the main, that they secured 'relevant and rewarding' work subsequent to graduation. On a positive note, 92.5 per cent of the questionnaire respondents were in employment and 84.3 per cent indicated that the MSc was relevant to their job, and 75 per cent suggested that they used their MSc in their jobs. However, only 35.8 per cent indicated that theirs was the type of job that should be held by an MSc graduate. The part-time respondents to the questionnaire wrote more positive qualitative comments about the usefulness of their MSc in their jobs, compared to those who had studied on a full-time basis. These sentiments are in line with the comments part-timers previously conveyed, in relation to the applicability of the programme to the job they held whilst they studied. This is in line with the work of Smith *et al* (2010).

Whilst the majority of the full-timers secured relevant employment after graduation, some bemoaned the lack of career advice and industry links provided on the MSc programmes. The full-timers, in particular, also expressed trepidation as to the level of knowledge and value of their qualification amongst employers in industry operations. This is in line with concerns expressed in the literature review (Chuang 2007).

There were mixed views between the graduate questionnaires and interviews as to the value of an MSc qualification. Phelim had discussed the idea of an MSc differentiating him from those who held undergraduate qualifications and increasing his earning power, yet some respondents to the questionnaire did not agree that employers acknowledged, understood or rewarded this differentiation. Increased 'attractiveness to employers' was deemed a benefit by 41.7 per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire and 'improved financial reward' was deemed a benefit by only 31.9 per cent. These findings could be seen to be in line with the research of Brotherton and Wood (2008) and the Higher Education Academy (2007), however, it is important to note that both of these pieces of research relate to undergraduate education.

From a more optimistic perspective, 66.6 per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire identified a positive attitude on the part of employers to their MSc qualification, and it appears that MSc hospitality graduates encountered a more favourable attitude than MSc tourism graduates did. This could be seen to reinforce the previous research conducted by Fáilte Ireland (2010a), where more hospitality graduates deemed their credential more essential and relevant to their jobs than tourism graduates did.

On the other hand, the importance of experience was highlighted by those questionnaire respondents and graduate interviewees who had studied on a full-time basis and who had embarked on their search for full-time employment upon graduation. The comments made on the questionnaires and in the interviews identified the value placed on experience by the industry, and questioned the knowledge of and importance placed on postgraduate qualifications in the industry. While 41.7 per cent of questionnaire respondents viewed increased attractiveness to employers as a benefit, only 30 per cent were of the view that employers valued their new MSc skills and qualities. Some authors in the contextual literature (Jameson and Holden 2000; Nolan *et al* 2010; Jackson 2008; Connolly and McGing 2006) questioned the actual value placed on formal credentials in hospitality and tourism. One of the educators, who held numerous years' industry experience, acknowledged the importance of experience in the employer mindset. However, it is important to differentiate between the experiences of those graduates who studied on a part-time basis and those who studied full-time. The part-timers held full-time jobs over the course of their studies; 68.5 per cent of the part-timers described their employer's attitude to their studies as very supportive or supportive. In a similar vein, 69.8 per cent of part-timers believed that their employer valued their MSc credential.

The employer interviewees were positive about qualifications, yet also emphasised the importance of experience. One employer suggested that a general management postgraduate qualification may be more impressive than a specialised hospitality or tourism credential, similarly, one of the educators expressed the view that industry may be more impressed by an MBS or MBA qualification, rather than the industry specific credential. In a similar vein, another educator noted that other institutes of technology recognise the value of the postgraduate degree more so than industry. This educator was alluding to the anecdotal trend that students used the MSc qualification as a medium to maintain an academic post or move from operations into academia. This was a sentiment that became evident in all forms of student and graduate data, as some students and graduates saw the MSc credential as a gateway to academia at some point in the near or distant future. One employer questioned the relevance of an MSc for those who wanted to remain in industry operations. Both of the employer views are not dissimilar to those expressed in the work of Ramakrishna and Nebel (1996).

This section examined the graduate experiences in the world of work following graduation; the next section analyses the issue of competencies and knowledge in tourism and hospitality.

Competencies and Knowledge in Tourism and Hospitality

In the broader conceptual literature chapter, the human capital hypothesis (Becker 1983; McNabb 1987) contends that human beings acquire skills or competencies in the course of their education, which are then applicable in their future employment. This concept of human capital is also alluded to in the tourism and hospitality contextual literature review, where Maggi and Padurean (2009) noted that investment in human capital significantly enhances competitiveness of all industries, including tourism.

With this backdrop of the importance of human capital, the contextual and conceptual literature chapters outlined numerous studies that have been conducted on the themes of competencies and knowledge. Specifically, in respect of tourism and hospitality, a significant number of studies have been conducted worldwide on the area of competencies. In the first instance, Barrows and Johan (2008) identified that tourism and hospitality programmes of study were attempting to develop management competencies required for managers to operate successfully. The challenges of developing certain skills in a college environment that could be more easily developed in practice were also noted. In particular, competencies such as people management, interpersonal skills and communication skills had been noted in the literature (Cecil *et al* 2010; Nolan *et al* 2010; Brophy and Kiely 2002; HEFCE 2001; Raybould and Wilkins 2006) as important for those who worked in tourism and hospitality.

The list of knowledge, skill and competencies used for the level 9 NQF descriptor was adapted and reproduced in the questionnaire. The questionnaire respondents identified improved research skills (84.8 per cent) as top of the list of knowledge and skills acquired in the course of their MSc studies. This is similar to the work of Park (2007). Whilst improved communication skills (58.9 per cent) appeared in the top ten listing, interestingly, improved interpersonal skills was deemed to be one of the lower ranking skills acquired (42 per cent). This is in line with the Nolan *et al* (2010) findings. However, this is an important skill which had been noted by Barrows and Johan (2008, p.154) as something which needed to be 'practised in the field' rather than developed in college. Baum (2007) had also commented on the mix of technical skills and emotional intelligence developed in formal education and compared with those required by

industry. Indeed, the related areas of employee relations, customer service, people management, teamwork have all been acknowledged in the literature (Baum 1990; Nolan *et al* 2010; Brophy and Kiely; Cecil 2010; HEFCE 2001; Raybould and Wilkins 2006) as important competencies for the industry.

Other competencies that have been noted in the literature as important include problem-solving; in line with this, critical awareness of problems was ranked in the top ten listing. However, only 43.8 per cent of respondents suggested that their problem-solving has improved as an outcome of their MSc studies. Enhanced planning and organising skills (61.8 per cent) was listed in the respondents' top ten, and also feature in the literature (Raybould and Wilkins 2006; Brophy and Kiely 2002). When the competencies identified as relevant for the tourism and hospitality industry are compared to the general competencies as identified by Eraut (1998), it is apparent that there is overlap, particularly in the areas of relationship building, teamwork and interpersonal understanding. The transferable skills gained from MSc study reiterate the work of Park (2007).

Similarly, the contextual literature (Lashley 2007) draws on Schön's (1983) work about 'reflective practitioners' and tacit knowledge, which is also discussed in the conceptual chapter by Cheetham and Chivers (2005). One of the employers, George, who appears to be forward thinking and progressive, had noted the importance of graduates being able think strategically but also, to be reflective.

It is evident that tourism and hospitality education could benefit from the exploration of research and models developed outside of its specialist sphere. In particular, the work of Eraut (1998) appears relevant to the challenges highlighted by questionnaire respondents, graduates and employers with regard to the education / experience debate. It was also alluded to in the literature that, nowadays, tourism and hospitality programmes attempt to enhance the students' corporate and strategic skills, and that there is decreased emphasis on operational and technical skills (Raybould and Wilkins 2005; Chathoth and Sharma 2007). In line with this, it was interesting to note that questionnaire respondents indicated that they could work at a variety of professional levels and had greater business awareness. Yet, only 46.4 per cent of respondents suggested that they were a more competent leader and had become an analytical thinker; 41 per cent of respondents believed that they had improved their decision-making. Mandelbaum (1980) had noted the role of liberal rather than goal-orientated education in equipping people for leadership roles.

Perhaps, as suggested by Eraut (2009), greater cognisance needs to be paid to the tacit knowledge that assists the transfer of theoretical knowledge acquired in an academic setting into a work environment. One of the educators, Evie, talked about '...*learning as you go...*' in industry being equally important as the formal qualification. As suggested by graduates, employers and the literature, tourism and hospitality are people-focused businesses, and those people include employees, guests and suppliers. Yet, as Eraut (2008, p.9) noted, 'much knowledge of other people is tacit'. Anthony, one of the graduate interviewees, summarised the people-centred nature of industry very well:

> *...you can have all the qualifications in the world, if you can't actually get out there and meet, greet, manage people, sell to people, you know, you're not going to make it* (Anthony).

Similarly, Edgar, one of the employers, noted that he had experience of working with people who had formal qualifications, yet he deemed them to be almost '*too academic*' and they lacked '*know-how on the floor*'. This view is very much in line with Eraut's (2009, p.1) concerns about the transfer of 'codified academic knowledge' into the workplace. These sentiments are further reinforced by the work of Polanyi (1969), who discusses the art of knowing and doing, and Brown *et al* (1989), who highlight the contribution of workplace culture to the effective use of knowledge beyond education.

This section explored how the competencies and knowledge discussed in the primary findings related to the contextual and conceptual literature review chapters. The next section provides a summary of this chapter.

Summary

This chapter has compared and contrasted the various phases of the primary research and, also, has analysed the findings in the broader context of the literature review chapters. The chapter commenced by discussing the development of the MSc programmes in the context of trends identified in the literature. The role of a taught MSc in the field of tourism and hospitality education was also analysed.

The gender and cultural profiles of the MSc graduates were evaluated in relation to the make-up of the industry in general. Similarly, the views of industry and education on the role of formal education in tourism and hospitality were explored and gaps in opinion identified.

In line with the objectives established at the outset of this thesis, this chapter analysed why students and graduates embarked upon an MSc programme of study, particularly in light of the image of the industry and the role of education in the industry.

The MSc experience was examined from the perspective of the students, graduates and educators, and the highs and lows of MSc study were linked to secondary research. The post-graduation work and life experiences were explored from the perspective of graduates, employers and educators, in order to establish an insight into the world of work for those with an MSc qualification. This objective was further analysed in the context of the competencies and knowledge for tourism and hospitality previously written about in the literature and highlighted in the primary research for this thesis.

The next chapter provides a conclusion and some recommendations in respect of the thesis topic.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides some overall conclusions to this thesis. The conclusions are presented in line with the research question and objectives identified at the outset of this research. The contribution of this study to the field of tourism and hospitality education is also discussed. Subsequent to this restating of the objectives and the study's contribution, some recommendations are identified for future research. The limitations of this research are also reconsidered in this chapter.

The question that guided this research was 'what is the perceived value of a taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality and tourism?' The rationale for this research was based on the dearth of existing literature and empirical research on this topic. The researcher's positionality as an educator who has taught on tourism and hospitality management MSc programmes for over ten years also influenced the selection of this research area. In line with Crotty (1998) and Gorard and Taylor (2004), this research had a pragmatic basis and was influenced by the real life experiences and questions that resulted from the researcher's involvement in two MSc programmes.

The overall intention of this research was to incorporate the views of a variety of stakeholders, and, hopefully, to avoid 'empty conclusions', as cautioned by Mandelbaum (1980, p.9) in Chapter 4. The next section revisits the research question and objectives for this thesis.

Research Question and Objectives

The Research Question Revisited

In the view of the researcher, the research question has been addressed, within the confines of this thesis, albeit, there is scope for further research in this area. The value of a taught postgraduate qualification has been assessed from the perspective of students, graduates, educators and employers. The use of mixed methods produced both a quantitative overview and qualitative insights into the perceptions of the stakeholders included in this research. The combination of methods also enhanced the validity and credibility of the research. Having reviewed the research question, the next section will examine the research objectives.

Objective One – Scoping the Secondary Research

The first objective sought to review secondary research in the area of taught postgraduate qualifications, scope the context of the tourism and hospitality industry and examine literature on the value of education in the field of tourism and hospitality. The first contextual chapter attempted to address all aspects of this first objective. In doing so, it drew on a breadth and depth of literature from a variety of sources including industry reports and academic journals.

It was evident from the initial stages of the literature review that postgraduate education in hospitality and tourism had not been researched to the same extent as undergraduate education. In that sense, the contextual chapter drew on a broad constituency of general postgraduate literature and general tourism and hospitality education literature. The picture painted was of an industry associated with low level work, long hours and low pay. Yet, it is an industry that makes a significant contribution to economies worldwide and has huge potential from a job creation perspective.

Formal education in the field of tourism and hospitality is relatively new, compared to the well-established and respected disciplines and professions dating back centuries. It was noted that industry grappled with the idea of undergraduate education in the field, and that begged the question as to how employers have responded to postgraduate education. The operational and vocational focus of the industry has created differences of opinions between graduates, educators and employers as to the relevance and value of formal tourism and hospitality education.

While educator / industry partnerships and dialogue have advantages, preparing graduates purely for industry has also been criticised, and Lashley (2004) has identified the importance of 'reflective practitioners' and Tribe (2002) the relevance of 'philosophical practitioners'. The ongoing debate of which is more important, experience or education, still rages in the tourism and hospitality education literature. Some of the research included in the contextual chapter may, indeed, fit into Brotherton and Wood's (2008) 'light on theory' categorisation and that created the impetus to produce a broader theoretical framework for this thesis.

The second, or conceptual, literature chapter attempted to do just that. This conceptual chapter used, as its basis, the idea of competencies, a topic that has been the focus of much research in the tourism and hospitality research. The objective of a great deal of this tourism and hospitality competencies research attempted to examine the

competencies required by industry, and determine whether or not they had been nurtured in formal education. From the conceptual chapter, it became apparent that competencies and competency frameworks are not without criticism, in particular with regard to the notion of reductionism. However, what also came to light in the course of researching the competencies literature, was the relevance of tacit knowledge in the transfer of knowledge from an education to a work setting. It transpired that this is a theoretical angle that bore relevance to the lived experiences of employers and graduates in tourism and hospitality.

Objective Two – Exploratory Scene Setting

The second objective was to conduct exploratory research with current students to explore their experiences of MSc study. This research proved insightful and interesting and, in hindsight, it would have been an informative piece of longitudinal research to track these participants' careers, subsequent to graduation. From the exploratory interviews, it was apparent that the MSc students were of the opinion that their taught postgraduate qualification would enhance their value in operations or in academia.

Objective Three – The Impetus for MSc Study

The third objective of this study was to investigate why graduates chose to complete a taught MSc Tourism or Hospitality Management programme. Both the questionnaire and interview data coincided with the general literature reviewed as to the rationale for embarking on postgraduate study. Despite the negative image of the industry or, indeed, their prior experience of harsh working conditions, the graduates had been motivated to embark on this specialist MSc journey, without giving any significant thought to alternative types of postgraduate degrees. These graduates, similar to the literature, were motivated by the idea of personal development, career advancement within the industry and / or a change of career to work in academia or areas away from industry operations.

It was evident that the graduates anticipated a challenging one or two years of study, but they were not dissuaded by the level of commitment that college demanded. It was, indeed, a sobering thought that some of the interviewees considered MSc study as a 'break', compared the intensity of work in industry operations.

It is unusual, given the balanced industry gender profile, that more females than males have been attracted to study on the programmes. It was, also, insightful that graduates

and employers discussed the attractiveness and status of the blended learning management development programme run by a state agency in conjunction with an international hotel programme. It became apparent, through the course of the research, that this programme has created serious competition for the two MSc programmes amongst potential students who are seeking a management development experience.

Overall, it was evident from the graduate interviews that a taught MSc qualification fitted into their individual careers paths, be that in industry operations or elsewhere.

Objective Four – The Taught MSc Experience

There was an incredibly high level of satisfaction with the MSc experience; this was unexpected but, perhaps, those who were very unhappy with the programmes did not complete the questionnaire or volunteer to be interviewed. Having said that, the programme management team could learn from the issues identified as areas for improvement.

The opportunity to learn from others was a reoccurring positive theme, yet it was also apparent that the opportunities for exchange of knowledge were dependent on the class profile. The field trip was another popular element of the programmes, both from a learning and class culture perspective. As the literature indicated, part-time students, in particular, are discerning customers and it was evident that more of those who studied on a part-time basis questioned the industry experience of lecturers, the cutting-edge nature of modules and the delivery of lectures. These are all issues that had previously appeared in the contextual literature review and have been researched at undergraduate level.

Objective Five – The World of Work

The fifth objective was to assess the graduate experience in the world of work after obtaining the MSc credential. On a positive note, whilst some of the graduates indicated that they had outgrown the MSc at this point in their careers, they still provided examples of when they had referred to material from the MSc programmes. Whilst the majority of graduates had acquired 'relevant' work and indicated that their job utilised their MSc, only 35.8 per cent had identified that they currently held a job that, in their view, is typically held by an MSc graduate.

The education / experience debate that played out in the literature review was also evident in the primary research. It was evident from the questionnaires and interviews

that, while the MSc qualification was important in acquiring graduates' current jobs, their MSc qualification was very much overshadowed by the significance placed on previous experience. It also became apparent that some of the competencies noted in the literature as important for work in the industry did not appear in the top ten list of competencies, knowledge and skills, acquired by questionnaire respondents. The transferable competencies, skills and knowledge rated by the graduates could have been acquired in any general business qualification, and this was reiterated by graduate job destinations, which included industry, education and other industries as diverse as manufacturing and pharmaceuticals.

The different experiences of those who had studied on a part-time and those who studied on a full-time basis also need to be acknowledged. Those who held full-time jobs while studying received, in the main, employer support during study and felt that their employer valued their MSc. However, those who studied on a full-time basis suggested that, in some cases, at the job search stage, they were deemed to be overqualified and they became acutely aware of the importance of experience. It may be the case that, while in line with Airey (2008), tourism education's main focus is to still prepare graduates for employment, yet those graduates who do not have extensive industry experience before embarking on their MSc are more likely to encounter problems sourcing work in industry operations.

From the literature and the primary research, it became more apparent, as the research phases progressed, that educators and the formal education system may be focussed on National Framework of Qualifications competencies and the attainment of programme learning outcomes, yet the issues of experience and tacit knowledge are imperative for success in industry. In the case of undergraduates, tacit knowledge and emotional intelligence are given the opportunity to flourish during the internship. There is no such internship in the MSc programmes and, on that basis, some students may have limited exposure to the industry before they graduate and then encounter the experience and tacit knowledge gap.

Objectives Six and Seven – The Educators' Views

Objective six sought to explore the views of educators with regard to the teaching experience on the MSc Tourism and / or Hospitality Management. The educators did not hold the same concerns as the graduates with regard to their own industry experience, or with regard to the quality of material delivered. In general, they felt that

it was important that industry practitioner participants on the programmes were exposed to new ideas and research delivered by specialists in their field. In that sense, they appeared to be happy with their involvement in the programmes and did not seem to hold any of the concerns expressed by Stuart (2002, p.13) about 'respectability' in academia or, indeed, the quality of their research as alluded to by Brotherton and Wood (2008).

Objective seven examined educator views on the value of a taught postgraduate qualification in the tourism and hospitality industry. In the opinions of the educators, the MSc programmes contributed to the professionalization of industry. Yet, they did not naively assume that industry was familiar with the content of the programmes or acknowledged the value of the qualification above the role of experience.

Objectives Eight and Nine – The Employers' Views

Objective eight examined employer views on the value of a taught postgraduate qualification in the tourism and hospitality industry. The researcher was pleasantly surprised that the employers interviewed held realistic opinions on how the industry was viewed as a career choice. Similarly, it was encouraging that these employers acknowledged the importance of good people management practices and invested in their human resources. It was apparent that, whilst the employers appreciated the importance of formal education, they held different views on the role of postgraduate education in industry operations. They advocated a balance between education and experience, but they also emphasised the people-centred nature of the industry and the importance of attitude, interpersonal skills, leadership, reflection and a strategic focus, traits that cannot be nurtured in the classroom alone. The researcher could not but feel that opportunities had been lost, as the MSc programme teams failed to build ongoing linkages / partnerships with these forward thinking and enthusiastic employers. Such partnerships need not go down the 'intellectual cul-de-sac' noted by Lashley (2007), but could operate on the basis that the benefits of employer / education interaction and dialogue outweigh the disadvantages. It was interesting to note that the employers had looked elsewhere, other than the institute of technology in question, for their own further education.

Having reviewed and drawn some conclusions based on the research question and objectives, the next section examines the contribution of this study.

Contribution of this Study

On a macro level, this study provides an initial scene-setting picture of the experiences of those who pursued a taught postgraduate qualification in an institute of technology in ROI, in addition to educators' and employers' views about this qualification. Given the dearth of existing literature on postgraduate education in tourism and hospitality, it is hoped that this research has at least created one piece of a much bigger jigsaw that is deserving of further exploration.

On a more micro level, this study has produced data that has contributed to the review of both MSc programmes in the institute of technology where they are delivered.

The next part of this chapter looks at the limitations of this study.

Limitations of the Study

This study attempted to include the voices of all stakeholders and, with hindsight, that proved to be too ambitious for the parameters of this thesis. This meant that in the final phase of the research a decision had to be made to limit the number of employer interviews. While the employers interviewed provided invaluable insights into the employer perspective on education, and its relevance to the industry, it would have been preferable to include more employer voices in this study.

Concerns were documented in the research methods chapter about the use of a postal questionnaire and the fact that some contact addresses were out of date.

It was also identified in the research methods chapter that the primary research interviews were confined to one geographical location, although two of the interviewees worked and lived in other parts of the country. Had interviews been conducted in other parts of the country, other issues may have come to light.

The next section identifies some recommendations for further research and recommendations for programme development.

Recommendations

In respect of research recommendations, as previously identified, it would be interesting to conduct some longitudinal research that tracked a cohort of students at the outset of, during, and after studying at MSc level. As the employer voice has played a limited role in this research, further research could examine, in greater detail, the views of employers in ROI about postgraduate formal education. Given the limited number of

participants on the MSc programmes, it would also be interesting to conduct research with tourism and hospitality primary degree holders to identify what, if any, postgraduate study they have undertaken. A further major area of research could be a study that explores the role of tacit knowledge in the application of formal education in tourism and hospitality workplaces.

Possible recommendations for the development of the two MSc qualifications include the improvement in the academic / industry dialogue. Greater ongoing industry involvement, other than only at programme development and quality validation stage, could create a qualification that has an enhanced profile, value and relevance in industry operations. In the course of such dialogue, the education / experience balance, and the role of tacit knowledge could be discussed and addressed in a forthright manner to the benefit of all stakeholders.

At a very basic level, given the response rate to this researcher's questionnaire, a huge amount of untapped goodwill exists in respect of graduates from both programmes and that could prove invaluable from a marketing perspective but, also, in the context of guest speakers and alumni networks. An issue that is more challenging to tackle, particularly in current times when colleges are focused on the financial viability of programmes, is the selection of a mix of experience among MSc participations. Such a mix would have the potential to create the melting pot of knowledge exchange extolled by the graduate interviewees. This thesis should also, hopefully, create an awareness amongst the programme teams of the importance of the cutting-edge nature of module content and delivery.

Having examined the research objectives, the contributions and limitations of the study and proposed some recommendations, the next section provides an overall conclusion.

Conclusion

This chapter revisited the research question and objectives and made some general overall conclusions on this piece of research. The research objectives have been individually reviewed in the course of this chapter and conclusions drawn. Whilst every research project creates further questions for future exploration, in the opinion of the researcher, the research question and objectives identified at the outset of this thesis have been addressed and achieved.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Exploratory Interview Protocol

EXPLORATORY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

<u>**Introduction**</u>

- ➢ Information sheet
- ➢ Consent form

<u>**Questions**</u>

- • What is your primary degree & college?

- • Did you work in hospitality/tourism prior to joining this course?

- • Role held?

- • How would you describe your work experiences in the hospitality / tourism industry?

- • Are you currently working – if yes where, p / t, f / t?

- • If yes, is your employer supporting you?

- • Why did you decide to do this master's programme?

- • Key motivators, self-development, financial, job prospects?

- • What impact do you think this credential will have on your employability?

- • What are your career plans after completing this programme?

- • Are there any particular inhibitors in respect of your participation on this programme e.g. family, employer?

- • Highlights and low points of the postgraduate experience?

Thank you for your time and input to this research.

Appendix B: Sample of Questionnaire – Version distributed to those who Studied on a Part-Time Basis

POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM: AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEIVED VALUE AND OUTCOMES

SURVEY OF GRADUATES

PART A: Motivation for Postgraduate Study

1. Please indicate which postgraduate programme you completed at XXX:

M.Sc. Hospitality Management ☐   M.Sc. Tourism Management ☐

2. In what year did you:

(a) Commence the M.Sc. programme?   _____

(b) Complete the M.Sc. programme?   _____

3. What was the qualification that you held prior to commencing the M.Sc.?

B.Sc. Hospitality Management	☐	BA Hotel & Restaurant Management	☐
B.Sc. Tourism Marketing	☐	BA Tourism	☐
BA	☐	Other	☐

If other, please specify_____

4. Where did you complete this qualification?

Name of College/University: _____

5. When did you complete this qualification?

Year: _____

6. Have you acquired any further qualifications **since** completion of your M.Sc.?

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

If yes, please specify

7. Are you **currently** pursuing further qualifications?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please specify

8. Please indicate the importance of the following issues in motivating you to pursue a M.Sc.? (Please circle as appropriate)

	Very Important	Important	Neither important or unimportant	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Personal development	1	2	3	4	5
Commitment to lifelong learning	1	2	3	4	5
Desire to reach my full potential	1	2	3	4	5
Desire to manage my own career	1	2	3	4	5
Enhancement of career prospects in hospitality/tourism	1	2	3	4	5
Enhancement of career prospects in general	1	2	3	4	5
Enhancement of career prospects internationally	1	2	3	4	5
Need for a formal qualification	1	2	3	4	5
Financial motives	1	2	3	4	5
Change career direction	1	2	3	4	5
Change lifestyle	1	2	3	4	5
Improve work-life balance	1	2	3	4	5
Postpone career choice	1	2	3	4	5
Dissatisfaction with experience in the labour market	1	2	3	4	5
Gain competitive edge in the labour market	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

If other, please specify

PART B: Combining Part-time Study & Full-time Work

9. In what industry (ies) were you working while you were on the M.Sc. programme?

Hotel	☐	Restaurant	☐
Tourism	☐	Financial Services	☐
Education	☐	Bar	☐
State Agency	☐	Other	☐

If other, please specify

10. Did you change jobs during your time on the M.Sc. programme?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, what motivated the change?

11. Did your participation in the M.Sc. influence your decision to change jobs?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Please comment on your answer

12. Please specify the number of job changes you had during the M.Sc. programme?

_____

13. What was your job title:

(a) Before you **commenced** the M.Sc.?

_____

 (b) When you **completed** the M.Sc.?

_____

(c) Two years after completing the

M.Sc.?_____

14. Did your employer provide any assistance (e.g. paid study leave, fee support) to you in respect of your studies?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, please comment on the level and type of assistance offered by your employer

15. Were there any stipulations attached to this assistance?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, please comment

16. How would you describe your employer's attitude to your studies?

Very Supportive ☐   Supportive ☐

Neutral ☐   Unsupportive ☐

Very Unsupportive ☐

17. Do you think that your employer valued your postgraduate qualification in hospitality/tourism?

Yes ☐   No ☐

PART C: Your Work-Life Following Completion of your M.Sc.

18. Are you currently employed?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, what is your current job title?

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If no, please go to part D, page 9.

19. In what industry are you currently employed?

Hotel	☐	Restaurant	☐
Tourism	☐	Financial Services	☐
Education	☐	Bar	☐
State Agency	☐	Other	☐

If other, please specify

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20. Is your M.Sc. relevant to your current job?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Please comment on your answer

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21. From your experience, since completion of your M.Sc., how would you describe employers' attitudes to your M.Sc.?

Very Positive	☐	Positive	☐
Neutral	☐	Negative	☐
Very Negative	☐		

Please comment

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22. Please circle as appropriate the relevance of the following statements with regard to your **current** job.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Previous work experience was important in acquiring my job	1	2	3	4	5
My M.Sc. was important in acquiring my job	1	2	3	4	5
My job utilizes my M.Sc. knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
My job provides opportunities for lifelong learning	1	2	3	4	5
This is the type of job usually held by a M.Sc. graduate	1	2	3	4	5
I have had to convince my employer of the value of my M.Sc.	1	2	3	4	5

23. If you are no longer in the hospitality / tourism industry why did you leave? (please tick as appropriate). If you are still employed in the hospitality / tourism industry please go to question 24.

Unsociable working hours	☐	Poor work/life balance	☐
Poor remuneration	☐	Poor career opportunities	☐
Lack of training & development	☐	Work stress	☐
Unchallenging work	☐	Lack of job satisfaction	☐
Industry employers did not value M.Sc.	☐	Other	☐

If other, please specify

24. If you had worked prior to commencing the M.Sc., what **was** your annual income range, in euros, before tax and other deductions?

Under €30,000	☐	€45,001-50,000	☐
€30,001-35,000	☐	€50,001-55,000	☐
€35,001-40,000	☐	€55,001-60,000	☐
€40,001-45,000	☐	Over €60,000	☐

25. What is your **current** annual income in euros, before tax and other deductions?

Under €30,000	☐	€45,001-50,000	☐
€30,001-35,000	☐	€50,001-55,000	☐
€35,001-40,000	☐	€55,001-60,000	☐
€40,001-45,000	☐	Over €60,000	☐

26. Please identify which of the knowledge and skills, listed below, that you have acquired by completing the M.Sc. qualification? (Please tick as appropriate)

I have a good understanding of knowledge at the forefront of hospitality/tourism	☐	I have learnt to self evaluate	☐
I have developed critical awareness of problems	☐	I have learnt to take responsibility for my own continuing academic / professional development	☐
I have gained new insights into hospitality/tourism	☐	I have become an agent of change	☐
I have improved research skills	☐	My communication skills have improved	☐
I have the competence to work at a variety of professional levels	☐	I have become an analytical thinker	☐
I have the ability to work independently	☐	My initiative has increased	☐
I have improved IT skills	☐	My problem solving skills have improved	☐
I have improved literacy skills	☐	I have greater business awareness	☐
I have improved numeracy skills	☐	I have improved my decision making	☐
I have improved research skills	☐	My interpersonal skills have improved	☐
I have the competence to work in ill defined contexts	☐	My planning and organizing skills have improved	☐
I am able to take significant responsibility for the work of others, both individuals and groups	☐	Other, please specify	
I am a more competent leader	☐		

Other, please specify

_____

_____

27. Please identify what benefits you have experienced as a result of completing the M.Sc. qualification? (Please tick as appropriate)

Career advancement	☐	Relevant and rewarding work	☐
Improved financial reward	☐	Increased job satisfaction	☐
Increased professional confidence	☐	Personal development	☐
Increased personal confidence	☐	I am more independent	☐
Increased self esteem	☐	I have a sense of personal achievement	☐
Increased self confidence	☐	Employers value my new skills & qualities	☐
A new career direction	☐	Increased attractiveness to employers	☐
A new network of friend	☐	Improved work life balance	☐
I am more reflective	☐		
Other, please specify			

28. Has the current economic climate had an impact on your job?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Please comment on your answer

Thank you. You are nearly finished. Please go to the final part E, question 34 on page 11.

PART D: For Those Who Are Not in Paid Employment

29. Did you work in paid employment after having completed your M.Sc.?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If no, please go to question 33.

If yes, in what industry were you employed?

Hotel ☐   Restaurant ☐
Tourism ☐   Financial Services ☐
Education ☐   Bar ☐
State Agency ☐   Other ☐

If other, please specify

30. What was your job title?

31. When did you stop working in paid employment?

Year _____

32. Why did you stop working in paid employment?

33. If you have not worked in paid employment what have you done since the completion of your MSc?

PART E: About You

34. Please indicate √ your gender.

Male ☐   Female ☐

35. Please indicate √ your age.

20-25	☐	41-45	☐
26-30	☐	46-50	☐
31-35	☐	>50	☐
36-40	☐		

36. Please indicate √ your nationality.

Irish	☐	English	☐
Polish	☐	Chinese	☐
French	☐	Other	☐
Italian	☐	Please specify_____	

37. Do you have children under the age of 18?

Yes ☐   No ☐

38. Have family commitments ever restricted your opportunity for study?

Yes ☐   No ☐

39. Have family commitments ever restricted your opportunity for career progression?

Yes ☐   No ☐

40. What is your marital status?

Single	☐	Divorced	☐
Married	☐	Widowed	☐
Co-habiting	☐	Separated	☐

41. Do you have family connections in the hospitality/tourism industry?

Yes ☐　　　　　　　　　No ☐

If yes, did this influence your career choice?

Yes ☐　　　　　　　　　No ☐

Please elaborate on your answer

42. Are you the first generation of your family to pursue higher education?

Yes ☐　　　　　　　　　No ☐

43. How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the XXX M.Sc.?

Very Satisfied ☐　　　　　　Satisfied ☐

Neutral ☐　　　　　　　　Dissatisfied ☐

V. Dissatisfied ☐

Please comment on your answer

44. Given what you know now would you recommend the XXX M.Sc. to a friend?

Yes ☐　　　　　　　No ☐

If no, please specify

45. What award classification did you achieve in your M.Sc.?

First Class Hons ☐
Second Class Hons, Upper Division ☐
Second Class Hons, Lower Division ☐
Pass ☐

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

If you are willing to be contacted to participate in a one to one interview, of 30 minute duration, at a date and time convenient to you, please email geraldine.gorham@xxxxx.ie with your name and phone contact details.　Alternatively complete the section overleaf and enclose with your questionnaire.

Expression of Interest to Participate in One-to-One Interview

First Name:	
Surname:	
Contact Number:	
Email Address:	

Please enclose this page with your questionnaire.

Thank you.

Appendix C: Questionnaire Covering Letter to Graduates

Geraldine Gorham

Address

5 August 2010

Dear

I hope all is well with you since you graduated from the MSc. Programme. You may remember that I am a member of the teaching staff on the MSc. Programme here at XXX. I am currently undertaking doctoral research at the University of Sheffield, and I have just commenced primary data collection. The main focus of this research is to examine higher education learning and employability. Needless to say, as you have received this letter I am asking for your help with my primary data collection!

I know that you are very busy, but I would really appreciate it if you could participate in this research and complete the attached questionnaire, it should take less than ten minutes to complete. All information volunteered in the course of this research will be kept strictly confidential, all responses will be anonymised before analysis, and you will not be identifiable in any written outputs of this research. It would be great if you could return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope before Friday 20 August. If you studied on the MSc on a full-time basis, please complete the version of the questionnaire printed on blue paper; if you studied on a part-time basis, please complete the questionnaire printed on white paper.

If you require any further information about my research, or if you would prefer me to email you an electronic version of the questionnaire, please contact me at geraldine.gorham@xxxxx.ie or 01 999 9999. If after having completed the questionnaire, you are willing to participate in a short one to one interview, for the purpose of this research, please indicate your agreement to be contacted at a later date by completing the form at the end of the questionnaire.

I appreciate that you are very busy, so thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and I hope to hear from you in the near future.

Kind Regards.

Geraldine Gorham

Appendix D: Email to Educators

Text of Email to Educator

Message Title**: Assistance with Research**

Dear NAME

As you may be aware, I am undertaking a doctorate in education at the University of Sheffield. The purpose of my research is to investigate the views of key stakeholders with regard to the value and outcomes of a taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality and tourism. The key stakeholders included in this research are students and graduates of two case study MSc. programmes, educators who teach on the MSc. programmes, and employers in the tourism and hospitality industry.

The two case study programmes are the MSc. Tourism and MSc. Hospitality here at XXX. As you teach on these programmes, I wonder would you be willing to participate in an interview to discuss your teaching experience on these programmes, and the value of a taught postgraduate credential in the tourism and hospitality industry? I know that you are about to start your summer holidays, but I would really appreciate it if you could participate in this research. The interview should take no more than fifty minutes and can take place at a location and time convenient for you.

All information volunteered in the course of this research will be kept strictly confidential, all responses will be anonymised before analysis, and you will not be identifiable in any written outputs of this research. If you require any further information about my research, please contact me at geraldine.gorham@xxxxx.ie or 087 999 9999.

I appreciate that you are tired after a long academic year, so thank you for taking the time to read this email, and I hope to hear from you in the near future.

Kind Regards.

Appendix E: Educator Interview Format

Educator is thanked for agreeing to participate in this interview. Educator is briefed on the research purpose and objectives. It is stated that the interview should take no longer that fifty minutes. Confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed. A request is made to use a digital recorder for the duration of the discussion.

The proposed sequence of questions is as follows:

Note: Background questions to get some understanding of the respondent's length of involvement with the programme. These questions will also identify if the respondents are coming from an academic or industry operations background.

Question: Could you give me a brief overview of your education and career history?

Question: How long have you been teaching on the MSc programme(s)? (Botterill and Gale wrote about the lack of experience of those teaching on MSc programmes)

Note: The following questions will explore the 'teaching experience' as identified in the research objectives.

Question: In your opinion, what is the purpose of the MSc programme(s)? (rationale for this question - Is it another attempt to move a vocational field of study into the realms of a more strategic and academic focus. Is it to give graduates the opportunity to embark on an academic career as identified in the exploratory research or is it to progress their careers in industry?)

Question: What do you think XXX is trying to achieve with this/these programme(s)? (rationale for this question - Meet student needs, industry needs, make money, adhere to LLL and mature student policy objectives)

Question: What are your views on the calibre of student who participates in the programme(s)? (rationale for this question - In line with UK research the increased influence of international students on such programmes)

Question: In your view, are there any key differences between teaching on the MSc Hospitality and MSc Tourism?

Question: What are the differences between MSc teaching and undergraduate teaching here at XXX?

Question: What changes have you seen in the programme(s) since its/their inception?

Note: The following questions will explore the perceived value of the credential as identified in the objectives.

Question: In your opinion, how do MSc students view the programme(s)? (Rationale for question - An exit strategy from the industry into teaching?, An opportunity for LLL, personal development? An opportunity to change career?)

Question: In your view, what do MSc graduates do upon completion of the programme? (this will identify if educators have any anecdotal evidence of where students go or if they view the programme as a gateway to an academic career)

Question: In your opinion, how do tourism and hospitality employers and industry representative groups (e.g. Irish Hotels Federation, Fáilte and Tourism Ireland) view the programme(s)? (Unnecessary and irrelevant to the industry as some of the research would indicate in respect of undergraduate qualifications?, good but must be combined with solid practical experience?)

Note: The following questions will address the final objective.

Question: What future do you see for the MSc programme(s)?

Question: What changes would you like to see happening with the programme (s)?

Interview ends and the educator is thanked once again, and offered the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview.

Appendix F: Graduate Interview Protocol

In advance of each graduate interview, the questionnaire completed by the graduate will be reviewed, to ensure that any issues specifically identified by the graduate will be addressed in the course of the interview. This may mean some variance in the actual issues covered.

Graduates will be thanked for agreeing to participate in this interview. Graduates will be briefed on the research purpose and objectives as per the information sheet. It will be stated that the interview should take no longer that fifty minutes. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed as per the information sheet. A request will be made to use a digital recorder for the duration of the discussion. Graduates will be asked to read and sign the consent form.

Note: The information sheet and consent form used are the same as those used for the educators.

QUESTIONS FOR GRADUATES

- **Investigate why graduates chose to complete a taught MSc Tourism or Hospitality programme.**

Question: Why did you decide to complete a taught MSc degree? (probe - what was your career history prior to completion of the MSc, where did you hear about the programme? Link with literature on motivation for completion of master's programmes. Link with questionnaire findings re: personal development and career enhancement/management). Was there any specific factor/experience that provided the impetus to register for the MSc? Why a taught MSc rather than a master's by research?

Question: How did a postgraduate qualification fit into your career plans? Were you looking for an academic career or a career outside of academia?

Question: Why did you decide to come to XXX rather than selecting any other course and institute/university? (probe the issue of specialist versus generic skill development and the applied nature of the programmes and applicability to industry and individual career plans. Reputation of XXX?)

Question: What did people around you say when you made the decision to return to education? (Employers, friends, colleagues, family – this will gauge support for and attitude to the qualification?)

Question: What, if any, concerns or worries did you have about embarking on the MSc programme?

- **Assess the graduate experience of a taught MSc Tourism or Hospitality programme.**

Question: What expectations did you have on commencement of the MSc programme?

Question: Most respondents to the questionnaire expressed satisfaction with the MSc programme. Could you expand on how satisfied you were with the programme? Did it meet or exceed your expectations?

Question: How did the MSc differ to your experience of undergraduate study?

Question: What are your views on the standard of the XXX programme? (up to date/cutting edge material/research, career advice, confidence building, workload, gateway to further studies, networking opportunities, relevance of modules, views on the career academics delivering the modules)

Question: What did you find most (a) relevant and (b) most irrelevant about the MSc experience? (could probe on some of the modules studied and application to current role)

Question: How would you describe your experience of combining work and study? **OR** How would you describe the experience of being a full-time MSc student? (questionnaire results indicate employer support, study leave, fee support, any situational barriers)

Question: Do you think the MSc developed your transferable or industry specific skills?

Question: What changes, if any, would you like to see happening in respect of the MSc (e.g. e-learning, distance delivery, RPL)?

Question: As an international/non Irish student did you encounter any obstacles or difficulties during you time on the MSc?

- **Assess the graduate experience in the world of work after obtaining this credential.**

Question: What have you done since you completed the MSc? What was your experience of finding work related to your qualification? Did you actively look for a particular time of job upon completion of your MSc? Have you moved upwards, sideways or out of the industry, underemployed? If you are no longer in the industry – why did you leave?

Question: How has your life change since you completed the MSc? Do you feel the MSc has made a difference to you or not? Could you give me examples of how your MSc has made a difference to your life?

Question: Over 84% of respondents indicated that the MSc is relevant to their current job, could you give me examples of how this is so in your situation? (for example use of relevant competencies, modules, also affirms identity as graduate)

Question: The questionnaire findings indicate that some of the main benefits of the MSc centre on the issues of personal and professional confidence, personal development and a sense of achievement. Would you agree with this? What other benefits have you experienced? (probe on employment prospects and earnings)

Question: What are your views on the education, over-education versus experience debate that is ongoing in respect of work/promotion in hospitality and tourism positions? (especially for managers)

Question: The questionnaire findings indicate that employers had a positive or very positive attitude to the MSc, with only 32% suggesting a neutral attitude. How are these findings evident in your experiences since graduation? Any experience of mismatch of expectations between graduates and employers? What do you think employers look for from a MSc graduate?

Question: The questionnaire findings suggest that some of the main skills and knowledge acquired as a result of the MSc include research skills, organisation skills, ability to operate at a variety of professional levels, new insights and exposure to knowledge at the forefront of hospitality and tourism. Could you explain how this knowledge and these skills have proven valuable to you. (this will probe the analytical versus operations debate in the literature).

Question: Are you happy in your current job? How are you treated, work life balance, rewards, opportunities for progression and development, talent management in the organisation?

Question: What are your plans for the future? (MSc terminal degree or pathway for further study? Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?)

Any further comments?

Interview ends and the graduate is thanked once again and offered the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview.

Appendix G: Employer Interview Protocol

Employer Interview Format

In advance of each employer interview, the employer organisation / company will be researched. The nature and focus of questioning will depending on the type of organisation, be it private or public sector, large, small or medium sized. This may mean some variance in the actual issues covered.

Employers will be thanked for agreeing to participate in this interview. Employers will be briefed on the research purpose and objectives as per the information sheet. It will be stated that the interview should take no longer that fifty minutes. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed as per the information sheet. A request will be made to use a digital recorder for the duration of the discussion. Employers will be asked to read and sign the consent form.

Note: The information sheet and consent form used are the same as those used for the educators and graduates.

QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

OBJECTIVE: Examine employer views on the value of a taught postgraduate qualification in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Question: Could you describe for me your own career background? (This question is attempting to identify whether the employer followed a formal education route or an experience based pathway to their current position. This question is also used as a scene setter to put the interviewee at ease. The question explores the issue highlighted in the literature that some hospitality and tourism employers have climbed the career ladder without a formal qualification and therefore hold certain views on such qualifications).

Probes for this question will include: Do you hold an undergraduate qualification? Do you hold a postgraduate qualification? Are these qualifications industry specific? What positions have you held since the commencement of your career? Have you had any mentors or role models who have guided your career in the industry?

Note: In some cases, this information may be already available through LinkedIn or other internet sources.

Question: What attracted you to working in the hospitality/tourism industry? (This question is attempting to gain an insight into the interviewees' views on the industry as a whole. This is in line with research that highlights the long hours, low pay, high staff turnover, poor work-life balance and quality of work- life aspects of the industry.)

Probes for this question will include: When did you decide that you wanted to work in the hospitality/tourism industry? Had you worked in the industry during school holidays or held a part-time job in the industry? Did you do a college work placement in the industry? Did anyone or thing influence your decision to work in the industry? Is there a family connection?

Question: What do you think of the published research / public perception that highlights the downsides of working in the industry and the negative images that exist of the industry as an employer? (This question is investigating the interviewees' awareness of and views on the negative publicity and research about the industry)

Probes for this question will include: Are you aware of staff turnover levels/pay levels/treatment of placement students / access to training and development / work-life balance issues within the industry? Do you subscribe to trade journals? Do you get a chance to read them?

Question: Are you aware of, and if so what are your views on experience versus qualifications debate? Which do you feel is more important for employees to hold? (This questions draws on previous research that highlights the importance of experience over formal education)

Probes for this question will include: Would you be familiar with the content and structure of undergraduate degree programmes in hospitality and tourism? Are you aware of the move away from vocational to more strategic and analytical type programmes? What do you think about this change?

Question: Do you see some institutions having high status within the industry/at the forefront of hospitality and tourism education, more so than others? (this draws on the work of Solnet and Robinson 2007 and examines XXX's role in the provision of hospitality education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels)

Probes for this question will include: Do you give preference to graduates from particular institutions?

Question: In the context of your views on undergraduate education, what do you think about the role of taught postgraduate education in the field of hospitality and tourism?

Probes for this question will include: Do you have direct experience of applicants or employees with an MSc in hospitality or tourism? Do you actively seek applicants/employees with an MSc?

Do you have any knowledge of what is involved in the two taught programmes delivered at XXX? What are your views on career academics delivering modules on an MSc programme?

Question: What would you like to see students studying on an MSc programme?

Probes for this question will include: What are your expectations of an MSc Graduate? Are you aware of what XXX is doing in terms of postgraduate education? If yes, do you think XXX is in tune with industry's needs in respect of the MSc hospitality and tourism? Would you like to see a higher level of industry/educator collaboration in order to meet student and organisational needs?

Question: Do you conduct human resource planning and if yes, when you are conducting human resource planning and in advance of recruitment what competencies do you identify as being important for management roles in your organisation? (This question attempts to ascertain if the competencies identified are in line with previous research and/or competencies associated with level 9)

Question: For what type of positions would you seek an MSc graduate? (Hjalager 2002)

Probes for this question will include: Would you be more or less inclined to hire an MSc graduate rather than an applicant with a Master's in Business studies or Master's in Business Administration? Why? Specialist versus generalist candidates.

Question: From an employee development perspective, would you encourage your employees to enrol on an MSc programme? (this draws on the work of O'Mahony and Sillitoe, 2001)

Probes for this question will include: Would you be willing to support your employees pursuing an MSc (time wise and financially). Do you think an MSc is important from a career development perspective? (assist with the reduction of staff turnover, improve staff effectiveness)

Question: Is there any reason why you would be reluctant to hire an MSc in hospitality or tourism graduate?

Probes for this question will include: Feel that they are overqualified for positions within the industry. Are more suited to academic positions than operations? They don't possess the operations know how necessary for the industry.

- **Investigate the future of taught postgraduate credentials in tourism and hospitality.**

Question: Do you see a future for specialist master's education in the field of hospitality and tourism?

Question: What changes, if any, would you like to see in respect of the current provision?

Probes for this question will include: Distance, blended, online presence, geographical or sector collaborative networks to enable greater career opportunities.

Question: Do you have any views on how the current state of the industry, in the context of recent visitor figures and the economic backdrop, will impact on tourism and hospitality education?

Any further comments?

Interview ends and the employer is thanked once again and offered the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview.

Appendix H: Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Research Question

What is the perceived value of a taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality and tourism?

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of key stakeholders with regard to the value and outcomes of a taught postgraduate qualification in hospitality and tourism. The key stakeholders included in this research are graduates of two case study MSc programmes, educators who teach on the MSc programmes and employers in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

All information volunteered in the course of this research will be kept strictly confidential, all responses will be anonymised before analysis, and you will not be identifiable in any written outputs of this research. Information kept on memory sticks and computer will be password protected.

Consent Form

Title of Research: Taught Postgraduate Education in Hospitality and Tourism: an Exploration of Perceived Value and Outcomes

Name of Researcher: Geraldine Gorham

Participant Identification Number:

Please initial boxes where appropriate ☐

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.   ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.   ☐

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.   ☐

4. I agree to take part in the above research project.   ☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   *Date*   *Signature*

_____   _____   _____

Researcher   *Date*   *Signature*

Appendix J: The Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Benchmark Statements

Degrees in tourism often involve the following:

A consideration of the concepts and characteristics of tourism as an area of academic and applied study. An examination of the nature and characteristics of tourists. An analysis of tourism in the communities and environments that it affects. A study of the products, structure, operations and interaction within the tourism industry.

Curriculum may include sustainable tourism, strategic planning and development of tourism, geography of tourism, impacts of tourism, ethics, international tourism, operation of the tourism industry, passenger transportation, research methods, technology in travel and tourism, tourism and the natural environment, tourism economics, tourism marketing, tourism policy, and visitor management. (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008, p.14).

Hospitality degree programmes will often involve the following components:

An examination of the nature of hospitality as an area of academic and applied study. The management of technical operations, such as food and beverage, and accommodation. The management disciplines within the context of hospitality. The hospitality industry and its global environment. The hospitality consumer and the service encounter. The opportunity to participate in a period of supervised work experience in industry.

Curriculum content may include food and beverage production and service, facilities management, design and planning, food safety, quality assurance, food science and microbiology, operations management, events, human resource management, law, services marketing, consumer behaviour, financial management, organisational behaviour, strategic management, small business management, entrepreneurship, information technology, critical thinking and applied research methods. In addition, students will normally be given the chance for specialist study, which might include languages, licensed retail, tourism, leisure management and culinary arts. (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008, p.11).

Appendix K: Cheetham and Chivers (2005) Approaches to Competences

(1) *The technical-rational approach* operates on the notion that everything that a professional is required to do in practice could be 'codified and taught'. This model does not give much credence to 'experiential or post-qualification learning, nor does it seek to integrate informal learning into the development process'.

(2) *The reflective practitioner approach or knowing-in-action* draws on the work of Schön (1983), which suggests that applying theory is not the panacea for professionals when problem solving. Schön (1983) advocated that professionals employed tacit knowledge. According to Cheetham and Chivers (2005, p.56), 'Schön viewed professional practice more as a form of "artistry" than applied theory'. This idea of tacit knowledge is further developed later in this chapter by drawing on the work of Polanyi (1969), Eraut (2009) and Brown *et al* (1989). Both Eraut (1994) and Cheetham and Chivers (2005) contend that Schön's model is lacking in comprehensiveness and applicability.

(3) *The functional competence approach* is based on the work of FW Taylor (1911) and deals with the tasks related to a role rather than the attributes of the jobholder. This operates on the premise of job analysis and the deconstruction of roles to identify the imperative elements. Cheetham and Chivers (2005) illustrate this approach by discussing the UK occupational standards and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). This approach is not without well-documented criticisms as summarised by Cheetham and Chivers (2005). The criticisms of the functional approach include an overreliance on the visible elements of competence, an underestimation of knowledge and personal competence, a neglect of the ethical elements of competence, a myopic view of the current job to the detriment of future roles and a concentration on outcomes, without adequate attention to the personal attributes that contribute to such outcomes.

(4) *The personal competence approach* is the final model discussed by Cheetham and Chivers (2005, p.65). This centres on the 'personal characteristics and behavioural skills' that a job incumbent is expected to bring to the role. Examples provided by Cheetham and Chivers (2005, p.65) include 'self-confidence, stamina, attention to detail, output-orientation and thinking on one's feet'. According to Cheetham and Chivers (2005, p.65), some of the foremost UK and USA businesses favour the personal competence approach over the functional model and this forms the basis of internal 'competency frameworks'.

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