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Recognition of Prior Learning in Irish Culinary Arts

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Chapter 1

The background and aims of the thesis

1.1   Introduction

The emerging agenda for higher education (HE) in Europe promotes lifelong learning, social inclusion, wider participation, employability and partnership working with community organisations. Consequently, higher education authorities are increasingly recognising the significant knowledge, skills and understanding which can be developed as a result of learning opportunities found at work through individual activities and personal interests. The accreditation of learning and prior achievement is now one of the central functions of the Higher Education Authority (HEA, 2007). In exercising this function, higher education providers are increasingly considering how learning that has taken place in a range of contexts, may be assessed and formally recognised through accreditation.

Boud and Solomon (2001:8) make reference to many initiatives which have been introduced into higher education over the past two decades in an attempt to make access to university more equitous. RPL is one such approach. Used as a form of access, it provides a bridging experience for students within third level education, by way of recognising achievements that were outside the standard entry qualification route. The National Qualification Authority of Ireland (NQAI) specifies that:

> *It is a statutory requirement that providers who have programmes validated by either of the two Councils or with authority delegated by either of the two Councils to make awards themselves, as well as the Dublin Institute of Technology, implement the Authority's procedures on access, transfer and progression. In addition, the implementation of these arrangements by the universities is to be reviewed by the Authority. All providers are required to develop a statement of arrangements available in respect of each of their programmes for the recognition of prior learning, for entry, for credit towards an award and for access to a full award…. the statement of arrangements available should indicate to learners the competences needed to succeed on the programme.* (2005:12)

Based on this policy, in an Irish context, both the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT, 2009) has a good track record in RPL research and scholarship: OMNA and VaLEx projects with considerable resources and publications already developed. They have fulfilled their requirements by developing and implementing policies and arrangements for the RPL process to be an active part of their existing overall curriculum. However, for RPL to be fully effective within education it needs experienced staff at Departmental level to implement an appropriate process for each programme or module sought (DIT, 2008).

1.2 AP(E)L explained

APEL is the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning. It is a process by which certain experiential and 'uncertified' learning is given either recognition or an academic value. Very often the academic value is expressed in terms of the (ECTS) European Credit Transfer System as is the case in the DIT however it can also occur outside an academic credit framework as is the case with FETAC. In this instance AP(E)L is used to gain exemption from specific programmes. Experiential learning encompasses knowledge, skills and competencies acquired mainly through life experience, and in the context of this research, especially in the work-place. There are many acronyms for APEL. It is often closely associated with and sometimes subsumed within APL which is Accreditation of Prior Learning. Irrespective of its non-formal, informal, formal or incidental nature it is deemed to have the potential to be 'recognised' and accorded value in relation to formal qualifications and structures. Hence, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can apply to both certificated and uncertified learning (Harris, 1997; Murphy, 2009).

1.2.1 Understanding the Acronyms

For this Thesis it became apparent that one of the difficulties which key informants and respondents had throughout the process was getting to grips with understanding the concept of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the many acronyms it has attracted. In fact, different people and organisations use the same acronym to mean different things.

APL stands for Accreditation of Prior Learning and is generally used as an umbrella term which includes both prior certificated learning and experiential learning.

Within the DIT (2007) policy for RPL, APL is divided into 2 main categories:

a. *Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) is considered as a process of claiming and being awarded academic credit for previously certificated learning.*
b. *Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is the process of claiming and being awarded academic credit for evidence of prior learning from experience. Continuing education students need to reflect upon their experiences, identifying their learning outcomes and provide carefully constructed written evidence of their previous industry learning.* (Murphy, 2007)

1.2.2 APL and AP(E)L: what's the difference?

APL can be used by anyone with an existing 'prior formal qualification' irrespective of where or why the qualification was taken. AP(E)L, on the other hand, is generally used by more mature adults or experienced professionals who may not have had opportunity or access to qualifications in the past.

The Learning from Experience Trust (2003) gives an account of the most likely groups of people to use APEL:

1. undergraduate and postgraduate students
2. people wanting to improve upon existing qualifications
3. people who left courses before achieving a formal qualification
4. people who have been out of the education system for a long time and who may lack formal qualifications
5. those wanting to re-train or change careers
6. women returning to education
7. unemployed people seeking accreditation for past skills or informal learning
8. people who have disabilities of some kind
9. minority ethnic groups and asylum seekers.

According to the NQAI Principles and Operation Guidelines for RPL, AP(E)L can be used in 4 ways. Provided that an applicant's learning claim is formally recognised by an educational institution or employer, it may be used:

1. *To gain entry to a programme of study which leads to an award offered by the educational institution or to the employer's training programme;*
2. *to gain advanced entry;*
3. *as eligibility for a full award;*
4. *to gain credit towards an award or exemption from some programme requirements.* NQAI (2005;2)

However, it is very often referred to as **RPL** (the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning) particularly at the Dublin Institute of Technology.

For the remainder of this paper, the term **APEL** or **RPL** will be used to encompass both categories 'certified' learning and 'experiential' learning.

1.2.3   Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL is one of a range of responses to the needs of adult education in education and training. The key assumption is that all adults have prior learning which, subject to reflection, articulation and assessment, may be worthy of recognition and accreditation within formal education and training or work place context (NQAI, 2006:1).

In the context of lifelong learning, Ireland is opening up educational qualifications to all citizens. This will enable them to take up learning opportunities at chosen stages throughout their lives (National Framework of Qualifications, 2005). Used as a form of progression and a route to a full award, the RPL process provides a bridging experience by way of recognising achievements that were outside formal further and higher education. RPL recognises skills, knowledge and understanding gained outside traditional courses of study or training. Fundamental to the guidelines for the implementation of RPL Policy is that recognition of prior learning should be fully embedded within quality assurance procedures of providers and awarding bodies (NQAI, 2005).

1.3   The Research Problem in Context

This research focuses on how RPL could be used to assist professional progression of chefs in Ireland. At present the majority of professional chef students across Ireland must complete a standard two year qualification at FETAC level six which is considered the minimum entry level for employment. Until 1994, the highest level of qualification within the Culinary Arts field was the City & Guilds Advanced Craft 706/3. This 'craft' qualification was, and still is, considered to be the most prestigious culinary craft

qualification to date (Moody, 2008) and continues to be one of the prerequisites for a position as culinary arts lecturer. It is now recognised as an honours degree equivalent for the purpose of employment as a culinary lecturer at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT).

In 1994, only one college in Ireland, the DIT, offered this advanced qualification. It is worth noting that in Ireland at that time, only one lecturer, Chef James Kilbride, was qualified to teach the advanced culinary craft 706/3 programme. No more than twelve professional Chefs were selected each year for interview onto this programme. There existed at that time only one qualified 706/3 examiner in the country. Two specific eligibility criteria were necessary upon application:

1. all candidates must have had previously gained a minimum of five years industrial experience in an establishment recognised for its high standards of craft skill;

2. all candidates were to have successfully completed the professional chef City & Guilds qualifications 706/1 and 706/2 programmes.

As a result, there developed a five year waiting list for application, creating a rigorous student selection process each year for what effectively became an elitist programme. This phenomenon became a gateway mechanism that excluded a large proportion of professional Irish chefs.

However, in Britain, access onto this advanced 706/3 programme was automatic after the successful completion of 706/2. In 1994 the then Irish hospitality awarding body, Council for Education Recruitment and Training (CERT), currently known as Fáilte Ireland, began to phase out the three City & Guilds qualifications namely 706/1, 706/2 and 706/3. A new National Culinary Arts curriculum was to be developed for further and higher education in Ireland. However, the focus of this new curriculum was at foundation and intermediate level 6, the equivalent of City & Guilds 706/1 and 706/2. An equivalent 'advanced craft qualification' for the City & Guilds 706/3 was never substituted as there existed a distinct lack of qualified culinary lecturers at such an advanced level. Since this transition, there has been little or no curriculum developed to substitute for the advanced craft qualification for the City & Guilds 706/3 hence, there is an assumption that the

majority of professional chefs across Ireland have had little opportunity to advance their studies or gain advanced culinary arts qualification (Erraught, 1998). As a result, the options remaining in Ireland for professional chefs were limited to the following choices:

1. apply to private cookery academies that continue to deliver City & Guilds qualifications;
2. apply to private culinary schools for non professional chefs;
3. apply for further advanced craft certification in Northern Ireland or abroad;
4. Continuous professional development in the form of work-based learning.

1.4   The Researcher's Position

As researcher, my stance throughout this thesis is informed by a belief in equal opportunity and access to further and higher education qualifications. As a former student at DIT in 1989, I completed the City & Guilds 706/1 and 706/2 and was left with no option of progression to an 'advanced craft qualification' in Ireland. Fourteen years later, when approached to teach an advanced culinary arts craft programme at Westminster Kingsway College London, the dilemma of not already having an advanced craft certificate surfaced as it was in fact, an explicit entry criteria for lecturing within the English further education system. However, upon evaluation of the my fourteen years of international experience, Westminster Kingsway College Accredited my Prior Experiential Learning AP(E)L to claim an 'Advanced Craft Diploma' in culinary arts. This in turn led to the opportunity of being accepted onto a higher education programme which led to a full-time teaching post and eventually the position of senior lecturer. Hence my personal and professional interest in work-based learning pedagogy. From these personal experiences, and finding myself unable to source any similar form of prior experiential assessment for professional chefs in Ireland, I framed the hypothesis and research question which underpins the research for this thesis.

1.5   Epistemological Assumptions Explored

Following on from the problem in context, there seemed to suggest a number of possible barriers to the potential employment and progression of professional Irish Chefs. Fourteen years have passed since the Advanced Craft City & Guilds 706/3 programme

was phased out of the Irish National Curriculum. In 2007, Carbury (2007) of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), introduced a stand-alone Advanced Culinary Arts Craft Level 7 Module. This module was taken from the existing Culinary Arts honours degree programme and marketed as a continuous professional development (CPD) module. One now assumes this module, which is recognised as an 'Advanced Craft Qualification', may present an opportunity for many very experienced industry chefs across the nation who have had limited opportunity over the past fourteen years, to compare their existing craft skills and experience with the outcomes of this module for the purpose of (certified) accreditation. The question arises as to whether mature industry chefs are entitled to, or indeed have an opportunity to access, *certified accreditation* in the form of an 'Advanced Craft Qualification' for a stand-alone module as a minor award.

As mentioned above, from 1994 to 2000 an advanced craft 'certified' qualification had yet to be successfully developed in Ireland. Therefore it was assumed that the demand for the RPL process from mature industry chefs would be high. However, as it is likely that most senior chefs in industry over that particular decade may not have been involved in further or higher education, it was also assumed that there possibly existed a lack of industry awareness regarding the RPL/AP(E)L process. Furthermore, questions were raised to explore the extent to which chefs, formally trained or educated in Ireland, have found possible barriers to career/employment progression arising from this apparent lack of opportunity to achieve a 'certified' advanced craft qualification.

Lifelong learning, in the form of qualifications, is imperative in the culinary arts profession. There are rapid changes in food trends and gastronomy, therefore experienced industry professional chefs may have a desire to have their existing skills, training and knowledge formally accredited and or recognised.

1.6   Aims and Objectives of the Research

The initial hypothesis of this thesis was that professional chefs in industry do not always have an opportunity to up-skill by way of formal further education programmes or modules, and that they are more likely to learn more relevant and useful knowledge both formally and informally in the work place. Hence the thesis title:

Could Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) be effectively used for Industry Chefs as access to or accreditation of Culinary Arts Advanced level 8 Craft Modules at the Dublin Institute of Technology?

The aims of this research was to investigate the awareness of RPL within the hospitality industry and education sector across Ireland with specific reference to professional chefs and advanced culinary 'craft qualifications' and to determine if there is a demand for this type of assessment. Following these specific areas of research was a plan to form recommendations for the further development of the existing RPL assessment model, to be used in both work-based learning and the education sector to form a 'certified award'. Within the stated aims of the research the following objectives were investigated:

1. The level of opportunity which industry professional chefs have had in Ireland to further develop their formal qualifications over the past decade;
2. The extent, if any, to which professional chefs in Ireland experience barriers to employment or employment progression as a direct result of their existing formal qualifications;
3. The extent to which RPL policy is currently implemented within Culinary Arts further and higher education across Ireland;
4. The extent to which the hospitality industry, management staff and employees are currently aware of the RPL process;
5. To explore opportunities, advantages and possible barrier to implementing RPL as a form of assessment.
6. To research existing international AP(E)L policy and models of good practice specific to the culinary craft qualifications.
7. To suggest an RPL process model based on good practice specific to the culinary craft sector.

1.7 Outline of the Research

This thesis took the form of an evaluative case study of RPL in culinary craft qualifications across Ireland. It is structured around two specific sectors, Industry and Education, and involved in-depth interviews, and structured and semi-structured questionnaires with key RPL stakeholders namely 'Fáilte Ireland', the primary educational awarding body for culinary arts in Ireland, and two of the most prominent culinary associations involved with work based qualifications namely, 'The Panel of Chefs of Ireland' - who represent the industry sector for professional chefs at both national and international level and 'The British Food Trust' – who deliver the Triple AAA culinary work based qualifications across Britain and Ireland.

A sample of eligible professional industry chefs and managers informed the research questionnaires. Furthermore an evaluation of journal articles and documents pertaining to RPL policy and existing models of RPL practice at international, national and local institutional level were reviewed in a bid to inform the overall conclusions and recommendations for the research, in particular addressing the implementation process.

1.8 Outline of the Chapters

The thesis is structured around seven chapters which are summarised as follows;

Chapter 1- is this introduction, contextual overview and summary of the thesis;

Chapter 2 - presents a selected review of up-to-date relevant literature focusing on RPL policy, aligned in context to the research question, together with a rationale for why each research category was chosen. Elements of this review are used in later chapters to inform the epistemological and theoretical perspectives of the research design and the framework for analysis of the research data;

Chapter 3 - begins with a detailed description of the research design process. Included is a description of how the research was conducted and the data analysed. A justification of the use of a case study is given; ethical dimensions of the research are outlined together with the intentional delimitations and actual limitations of the research. This chapter concludes with an initial analysis of the data.

Chapter 4 - presents a description of the specific findings from the primary research sources. The data are presented in table and chart form.

Chapter 5 - discusses the findings which are linked directly to the literature review and the implications of the analysis are discussed against the overall aims and objectives of the research.

Chapter 6 - presents the conclusions drawn on the basis of the major findings. This chapter also includes the recommendations/implications put forward to Fáilte Ireland, to the DIT and to The Panel of Chefs of Ireland in light of the research analyses. In light of the fact that RPL is currently a priority agenda within the Irish education system, an addendum is included to this chapter to indicate developments since the completion of the fieldwork for this thesis.

Chapter 7 – concludes the thesis with a critique of the researcher's own work. Suggestions are also put forward regarding areas of possible future research, which might illuminate the issues uncovered in this thesis.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

2.1   Introduction

This chapter presents a selected review of the relevant literature regarding the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) focusing on policy in the context of the research question, together with a rationale as to why each research category was chosen. Elements of this review are used in later chapters to inform the epistemological and theoretical perspectives of the research design and the framework for analysis of the research data.

The literature chosen begins with the history and development of RPL as a form of assessment. RPL, in the area of 'culinary craft' programmes and modules is a relatively new form of assessment and developed as recently as three years ago within the Irish further education system. Therefore an analysis of existing international RPL practice currently used within the context of 'Culinary Arts Craft Programmes' is discussed.

On a macro level, this chapter focuses on international and EU related research by examining international RPL policy documentation, structures and models of practice in Australia, South Africa, Canada, the UK and France. At a more regional level the research explores how EU policy has facilitated the national educational policy within Ireland. This chapter further analyses some of the key drivers and barriers to the implementation of RPL processes specific to culinary craft qualifications within further and higher education. At a micro level, this document investigates existing recommendations recently developed by the Dublin Institute of Technology arising from the Institute's statutory obligation to make provision for access, transfer and progression based on the 'Principles and Operational Guidelines' set by the National Qualification Authority of Ireland (NQAI).

2.2 The History and Development of RPL

RPL as an assessment process, within further and higher education, has been in operation at international level for more than thirty years. It has developed in different ways and at different rates. RPL is largely culturally determined, 'being largely shaped by national education systems'. In Europe, countries such as the UK, Germany and France, have considerable experience using RPL as a form of assessment. RPL is synonymous with vocational learning however is linked to work-based learning within the higher education sector (Merrrill and Hill, 2003).

In the UK, Hobbs (2000:49) chair of the Learning from Experience Trust, describes RPL as,

> *the ingenious system, known as Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), was introduced by the Learning from Experience Trust (LET) in the 1970s to capture the skills of coal miners who had been made redundant. They had left school at an early age but had developed a variety of skills….*

Cargill (2005:120) points out in particular that

> *food studies are evolving into a powerful and fertile interdisciplinary that is a welcome fixture in the landscape of higher education. The trend of disciplinary specialisation, which dominated the first half of the twentieth century, has moved toward hybrid, interdisciplinary programmes.*

Many authors (Challais, 1993; Garnett, 2004; Simosko, 1996, Wong, 2000) record, that in the 1980s there was a growing recognition that students, in particular adults, found it difficult to acquire all the relevant programmes within one institute. With the notion that employment was 'a job for life' circumstances dictated that study patterns might change from the traditional by altering attitudes and expectations due to the greater use of RPL (Corradi, Evans and Valk, 2006:17). As a result, the system of formal education was to become more responsive to diverse styles and venues of learning. Moving from one institute to another, acquiring and storing credit would have to become be an option as students needed to be able to benefit academically from prior experience, skills and knowledge, providing these areas met with acceptable educational criteria (Thomas, Collins and Plett, 2002).

A group of academics known as the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) took to following this concept. This new form of assessment resulted in the dramatic increase in access courses. In turn, award-bearing courses began to develop for more mature students and thus APEL for access to HE was explored (Corradi, Evans and Valk, 2006: 23).

The USA and Canadian concept, know as Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR), came to the fore in the pre 1960s and was dedicated to the increasing number of students wishing to return to study as well as the growing number of rebellious 'non traditional' students entering academia after the aftermath of 1968, the most turbulent twelve months in the USA's post war history. This denoted the process of assessing and recognising non-college sponsored learning that had been achieved through work experience or life experience The Commission on Non-Traditional Study (CNTS) was formed '*to study these emerging students and advise what should be done to serve them and society better.*' (Corriadi, Evans and Valk, 2006:22)

The purpose of PLAR was;

- *To obtain admission into, or get advanced standing on, a formal education or training programme;*
- *To obtain an occupational credential through certification and recognition of on-the-job learning or learning achievement in a different country;*
- *To provide of competence for making a career shift or advancement to higher level responsibility.* (Wong, 2000: 4)

On a national basis, Canadian policies were implemented to promote collaboration between the education/training community and the labour market partners and to enhance the development of the national workforce.

Co-operation at a European level began to ensue within education and training as the enlargement of the European Union began to add a new dimension. In June 1999, the Bologna Declaration on higher education marked the introduction of a new enhanced cooperation in this area and the European Council set the strategic objective for the European Union to become the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy. (NQAI, 2007)

In 2001 the European Council endorsed the report on the 'Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems' identifying the following strategic areas:

- *To improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union:*
- *To make access to learners easier and more widespread at all times of life:*

- *To update the definition of basic skills for the knowledge society:*
- *To open education and training to the local environment, to Europe and the World.* (Commission of the European Communities, 2000:6-13)

Following that report, in 2002 The Copenhagen Declaration was agreed and concluded that its '*strategies for lifelong learning and mobility are essential to promote employability, active citizenship, social inclusion and personal development'* (2002:1). This was followed by a call for action, to introduce instruments which would ensure transparency of diploma qualifications, which would include action, similar to the Bologna process, but '*adapting to the field of vocational education and training*.' (2002:1)

2.3   EU Policy - European Credit Transfer System

As part of The Copenhagen Declaration, (2002:1) in Barcelona 2002, the European Council endorsed the work programme for European education and training, to become '*a world quality reference*' by the year 2010. Included in this report was a call for further action to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications, but adapted to the field of vocational education and training. For the purpose of promoting employability, social inclusion and personal development, strategies for life long learning were also requested to be put in place to support national policy and development systems for the provision of Life-Long Learning. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) developed common aims and principles for guidance provision at a European level. These principles focused on developing the skills of individuals to manage their own careers and learning. They were intended to be used as a self-development tool for guidance at national, regional and local level.

Two of these guidance aims were to:
- *enable citizens to manage and plan their learning and work pathways in accordance with their life goals, relating their competencies and interests to education, training and labour market opportunities and to self employment, thus contributing to their personal fulfilment;*

- *assist educational and training institutions to have well motivated pupils. Students and trainees who take responsibility for their own learning and set their own goals for achievement.* (CEDEFOP, 2005:11)

Essentially, these two aims are directly related to the focus of this research. One of the main priorities within the Copenhagen Declaration is to investigate many aspects of transferability and recognition of competencies and qualifications. This is a drive to promote a common recognition of competencies and qualifications i.e. aspects such as transparency and comparability of qualifications and programme levels across different countries. In turn, these are to be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification and common measures which would include a credit transfer system for vocational education and training. Increasing transparency in vocational education and training would be achieved through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, including the integration of existing instruments such as the European CV, certificate and diploma supplements, the Common European framework of reference for languages and the EUROPASS into one single framework. (Copenhagen Declaration, 2002:2)

In the context of culinary 'craft' qualifications across Europe, few culinary craft programmes are being delivered within the Higher Education sector (DIT, 2008; Johnson and Wales, 2008). As far back as 1995, students at Johnson and Wales University (J&W), USA, were developing electronic portfolios used by employers recruiting on campus. These portfolios describe the competencies of each student that would link the student with jobs appropriate for their skill levels. J&W now delivers a four-year bachelor of science in culinary arts, the first of its kind in the United States (Van Landingham, 1995). The majority of culinary 'craft' programmes and continuous professional development (CPD) modules were found predominantly within Further Education and Vocational Educational centres across most countries (Crumlin College, 2008; Bournmouth and Poole, 2008; Fáilte Ireland, 2008). Culinary Arts as a form of pedagogy was, and to a greater extent still is, predominately delivered at pre-graduate level in colleges across Europe. The most popular culinary craft programmes in Ireland, taken either full time or by part-time day release, culminating in a Certificate in Professional Cookery, is a second

level training programme run by Fáilte Ireland and offered in nine Institutes throughout the country. Research in the mid 1990s culminated in the development of an honours degree in Culinary Arts in the Dublin Institute of Technology. That research engaged with the concepts of both mentoring and work-based learning and through this, the BA in Culinary Arts was initiated (Mac Con Iomaire, 2008:50). With the exception of Johnson and Wales University in the USA, culinary degree modules within higher education are rarely found. Such modules at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) have, since 2000, evolved as a result of the Institutes' drive to move from further to higher education. A gap in training and education provision was targeted for industry head chefs after it was identified that head chefs in Ireland had not been equipped in their previous college training with the skills necessary to function as effective industry managers (Erraught, 1998).

2.4 RPL at International Level

While RPL as a form of assessment has been in use for more that twenty years, it is clear from the research that most countries have a specific agenda for its purpose, that all countries do not deliver the RPL process using the same methodology. It is for this reason that an analysis of the documentation at international level is necessary.

The Bologna Process (2005:4) also makes a point of renewing their commitment to making higher education accessible to everyone and stresses the need for appropriate conditions for students to complete their studies with minimal obstacles related to their social background. In particular, it emphasises that the mobility of students and staff among all participating countries, remains one of its key objectives.

Reports from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA, 2003) show that RPL, as a system, in conjunction with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) provides the basis for improving linkages between qualifications in the school, adult and community education, vocational and higher education sectors. In this way, their credit matrix system could, among other things, improve credit transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning processes and, as a whole, make it easier for people to re-enter education and training and acquire qualifications throughout their lives. From the National Centre for Vocational Education (NCVER), Bowman, Clayton et al. (2003) conducted a research project which shows that existing subject exemption and credits through RPL and credit

transfer have been in place since the 1980s. At least two state training authorities in Western Australia and South Australia have developed and provided their registered training organisations with purposely developed guidelines and information relating to the implementation of RPL or the skills recognition processes. There was no consensus across the jurisdictions, however, regarding the proactive promotion of RPL. In a number of instances, states and territories had promoted it, and had generally considered the process to be effective in increasing awareness of RPL.

Unlike the Australian motive for promoting RPL, in South Africa, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the largest labour movement in South Africa, has been promoting the concept since the 1990s. In this instance Mayet (2006) of the Council of Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), informs us that the government's motive was primarily to address the inequities of apartheid (2006:1). The intentions of RPL were to create career pathways and access routes for the historically disadvantaged groups who received inferior education during the Apartheid era. RPL has since been included in South Africa's National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as a key redress principle and is promoted, not just as a form of assessment for prior learning, but as a necessary first step in further and higher education qualifications. It has been designed to combine education and training into a single framework, which brings separate education and training systems into a single national system and to make it easier for learners to enter the education and training system while moving and progressing within it (SAQA, 2006). However, since the late 1990s there has been very little impetus in the form of projects, development plans or funding from government and funding structures to ensure that RPL benefited those most in need. Even the labour movement had not effectively popularised the notion of RPL since the early 1990s due to the absence of support from the government and the lack of drive by its key stakeholders (Mayet, 2006). Mayet (2006) further explains that specific processes were needed for the RPL process to be effective. An initiative known as the Workers' Higher Education Project (WHEP) was established in 1995 to assist in the promotion and implementation of RPL in South African universities and technical colleges. An interesting aspect to this initiative was that the implementation of RPL nationwide, was to be directed by the South African Council

for Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) whose role in promoting RPL in higher education included training of assessors and RPL advisors, materials development, advocacy and research (2006:1). Smith (2003:1) explains that within the process of assessing its candidates, '*academic staff decides on the assessment mode in conjunction with trained RPL assessors.*' Similarly, all assessors and quality assurance verifiers in Britain are required by the Qualification Curriculum Authority (QCA) to have a separate training qualification before they approach the RPL process in Work Based Learning Tucker and Ollie (2004).

However, despite these assurances, Harris (1997) explains that for all the good will and intention which RPL brings to the South African education system, it is predominantly fitted into the broad discourse of vocational education. Because practices are continuing to draw on their vocational roots and orientations, and a large proportion of candidates are previously disadvantaged learners, this in turn has seen a huge growth in lower level craft qualifications. This has caused tensions and problems within the emerging higher education policy discourse. Harris specifically points out that '*There are also many constraining factors and potential pitfalls for RPL in the current higher education discourse (inflexible entry requirements, maintenance of quite strong boundaries in reality, little mention of adults as learners and their particular needs and purposes, financial c*onstraint*s on the system as a whole etc.*' (1997:17).

At a time when RPL was relatively new to South Africa, Usher (1996:5) concludes that

> *South Africa may well have been looking at RPL candidates who have had their experience and learning constructed under very particular and disadvantaged social conditions. Such candidates may have had a wealth of practical experience but could have relatively low levels of formal education, little experience of academic discourse, use the medium of instruction as a second or additional language and be drawn from largely working class communities. In this regard, it was probably the case that the experiential learning of previously disadvantaged adults will not easily fit into traditional higher education categories or into sets of prescribed outcomes expressed in terms of 'objective knowledge.*

Taking these factors into consideration, it would seem little wonder that South Africa is highly focused on the development of the RPL process and on the development of their previously disadvantaged population unlike the EU RPL agenda which centers around issues of transferability of already existing qualifications and opportunity for progression. Similar to South Africa, RPL and more specifically AP(E)L, was introduced to Ireland in the 1980s. However unlike South Africa, it was promoted by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) formerly the (National Council of Educational

Awards (NCEA). Murphy (2005) reports that the drive for RPL came from professional bodies that had staff development needs.

2.5   RPL in Ireland

Ireland signed the joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education in Bologna (1999) which demanded that higher education structures were to be reformed in order to enable compatibility and comparability between systems of credit accumulation and transfer in Europe (Ni Mhaolrúnaigh, 2003). As a consequence of the Qualifications Act 1999 three new national bodies were established, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). Although these bodies had individual functions, they were closely linked to the development of a co-operative national system for qualifications and awards. Procedures for access, transfer and progression were to be promoted through a National Qualifications Framework for schools, further and higher education (NQAI, 2001). In 2001 the Department of Education and Science (DES, 2001a) outlined a strategy for education in Ireland based on the Government's priorities which were identified in the *National Development Plan*, *Programme* f*or Prosperity and Fairness, The Action Programme for the Millennium* and the White Paper *Learning for Life* (DES, 2000). This included strategies to promote lifelong learning which was to be inclusive of all age groups, committed to the development of systems to promote flexible entry, transfer and progression and accreditation of formal, non-formal and informal learning. (Skilbeck & Connell, 2000) maintain that by this stage, policy within the HEA was becoming more evident and visible through the upsurge in published reports relating to access and equity.

In 2003, a national objective to move towards a life-long learning paradigm was launched by The Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). It was at this stage that policies, criteria, procedures and determinations relating to the RPL framework were set out. The rationale for this approach was,

> *that these principles will be built on to develop operational guidelines which*
> *will be an exemplar of the nature of arrangements that further and higher*

education and training awarding bodies (the Further Education and Training Awards Council, The Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology) should consider putting in place (NQAI, 2005:4).

Murphy (2004a:7) of the Dublin Institute of Technology, reported that during this time, *'the universities had not traditionally accepted experiential learning as a basis for entry or credits except in cases where it was used in support of application for mature student entry or non-standard entry to postgraduate studies.'* Murphy also reports that many colleges across Ireland, after discussion of the RPL and AP(E)L process, failed to introduce this methodology of assessment. Among the reasons for this failure was that many colleges simply had no demand for RPL. One college turned away from its initial pro-RPL approach due to the over-cumbersome and time- consuming work relative to the benefits of the learners.

However since 2004, Harold, Taguma and Hagens surmise that,

> *compared internationally, the Irish educational world is relatively centralised with businesses well developed, which is advantageous when it comes to reducing development costs. FETAC, HETAC, DIT and the Universities have shown a considerable amount of enthusiasm and passion in its understanding and commitment towards the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications.* (2008:34)

2.6   Key Drivers to RPL

Through the vast array of national and international RPL documentation there are many common themes, in particular, regarding the reasons both 'for and against' this form of assessment. In the UK, the Universities and Colleges Application System (UCAS, 2007) reports that institutions may be using RPL as a marketing tool to increase the attractiveness of their part-time provision. This document suggests many positive attributes to the process which include the following:

- *RPL is a student centred approach:*
- *that there is a higher level of motivation and interest in aspects of practice on the part of the employee/student:*
- *APL may lead to an accelerated path to a qualification, and thus less time spent away from the workplace:*
- *APL may prove less costly than fees for taught modules:*
- *the process of reflection on practice may lead to new ideas/developments within the workplace* (UCAS 2007:6).

McCurdy (2000) is in agreement with these attributes and refers to the adoption of more flexible assessment methods for students. '*In true flexible assessment, the student has the freedom to prove they have met the required standard, using any mode or combination of modes they prefer, and submit for marking whenever they want.*' (2000:228). Simosko and Cook (1996) give an account of how the organisations can also gain from the introduction of such a flexible assessment opportunity by maximising use of their educational and training resources. In this case, they make reference to the credibility of RPL stating that: '*APEL claims are often made on the basis of recent experience, and therefore represent an up-to-date and dynamic interaction with the world of work, providing material for discussion and research partnerships in learning with employers are encouraged through the negotiation of learning outcomes which relate to current work practice*' (1996:6). Furthermore, they believe that the learning outcomes approach may encourage curriculum development insofar that students' RPL claims may highlight ideas for future assessment techniques or even new taught modules.

Smith (2004) emphasises the potential RPL has, to generate applications from a college's marketing strategy within its advertising literature by promoting its availability and benefits. In line with this, at the time of enrolment, every new student should be advised of the process for seeking credit. Relevant forms and information sheets are made available for all applicants (2004:23). The key message promoted, in this case to students, is that, similar to UCAS (2007) mentioned earlier, RPL can reduce the cost and time of their training programs. More interestingly, the Nurse Education Today (1997) reports that the main reasons for using RPL were for students to have their work experiences recognised towards a qualification; once again, saving unnecessary training and time. It further identifies that although a prior learning/experience was the drive behind choosing RPL, it was in fact the more practical issues of 'long waiting lists' and 'limited places' on formal modules that led the vast majority of students to undertake the RPL process. However, six years later, Bowman et al. (2003:13) report that '*compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework is now a major driver behind registered training organisations interest in RPL coupled with an ongoing interest in meeting access and equity obligations and the demands of clients*' implying that 'Policy', in this case, drives 'Practice'.

Reporting on the Canadian RPL process Thomas, Collins and Plett (2002) support the above findings and maintain the original justification for RPL was the time saved, both for teaching agencies and thus for the students, in not having to teach what the students had already learned under non-formal circumstances.

That means separating evaluation, the act of making private learning public, from instruction, the conscious conveying of public knowledge. The corollary of that process is reputedly saving the agencies, and thus the society as whole, and the student, the cost of the redundant instruction (2002:11).

According to Bjornavold (2000), Workers in France have a right to RPL, while Gendron (2002) of the University of Montpellier in France sums up the APEL system as one which becomes more and more crucial as a kind of individual survival obligation to avoid being trapped or excluded (2002:1**).**

Cleary, Whittaker et al. (2002) emphasise that the most important aspect of APEL is the fact that through processes of reflection and analysis the learner comes to appreciate the value of learning and their potential for learning.

In this way, the RPL processes have the potential to act as a bridge between informal, experiential types of knowledge and more formal, academic types of learning. The process - through reflection and self-analysis - transforms informal, experiential learning into a more formal, academically-recognised form of learning by identifying specific achievements, learning outcomes or skills. (2002:16).

In summary, there are many positive and constructive reasons for the development of RPL. The most obvious and beneficial pertain to social inclusion, equal opportunities, lifelong learning, access to education and industry. However, with the many drivers of RPL pedagogy come issues around infrastructure and implementation techniques.

2.7   Barriers to the RPL process

Of the many advantages to, and drivers of, the implementation of an RPL process mentioned earlier in this chapter, there also comes with it many stumbling blocks and issues in particular with regard to the way that RPL is supported and implemented at local institution level. Cox and Green (2001) maintain that while some institutions use RPL to allow mature students to gain access to courses where they lack the necessary formal qualifications, others use APEL to give students exemption from parts of existing courses. Some institutions offer no APEL, '*others have an energetic nucleus of staff who are innovators in the area of APEL support'* (2001:6).

Since the introduction of RPL as a form of assessment, Merrifield, McIntyre, and Osaigbovo (2000) identify major stumbling blocks to the implementation process of APEL within higher education in particular the lack of awareness of RPL as an assessment process reporting that 26 per cent of institutions do not include APEL in their prospectus and 76 per cent '*expect students to ask admissions officers or academic staff – assuming that students know enough about the existence of and potential of APEL to ask'* (2000:20). Other major stumbling blocks identified were - staff resistance, time consuming assessment exercises, issues around the grading of portfolio's and the cost of implementing the process (2000:5).

Cox and Green (2000) echo this sentiment, particularly in relation to issues of cost, labour time and funding sources. *'In order to have APEL provision truly embedded in higher education these issues would need to be resolved, in a way that was reassuringly cost effective for institutions'* (2001:6). Furthermore, they identify that staff show little trust in the quality assurance processes of validity, sufficiency, currency relevant to appropriate evidence. The following reasons for this lack of trust were identified:

- *mature students are not necessarily self-directing;*
- *students need considerable help in preparing an APEL claim and in understanding what is a sensible claim to make;*
- *some students may receive credit that enabled them to gain advance standing onto a course, without necessarily having developed cognitive abilities;*
- *The lack of awareness, by staff and students, combined with the newness of the RPL concepts led students to feel isolated by the APEL process.* (2001:7)

Wheelahan (2002) makes the point that all best practice models of RPL point to the importance of support and advice being available to candidates. Support and advice are clearly identified as one of the core stages in the RPL process. She further emphasises that relatively little attention is paid to the process of translation, and suggests that '*it is necessary to distinguish between RPL as a process and RPL as an outcome.*' (2002:42).

Smith (2003) puts forward the view that teachers and curriculum designers express concerns that less than rigorous RPL assessment practices have undermined the quality and credibility of other more formally assessed qualifications: '*teachers also complain that RPL is difficult to implement under government accountability regimes; that it increases workloads; and that they are 'not funded' to do RPL ('on top of their teaching'* (2003:2). Bateman (2002) supports this view but looks upon this barrier as more of a '*perceived barrier*' and that '*Much of the criticism to do with RPL related more to the various implementation models of RPL assessment.... and administrative issues rather than the concept of RPL...frequently these barriers are cited as being the reason for its lack of success'* (2003:2). Bateman, although in support of the RPL process as a whole, maintains that as a form of competency-based assessment, RPL should be integrated with all learning processes in order for it to be effective.

Cleary, Whittaker et al. (2002) drew together the findings of reports produced for a European Commission Socrates-Funded project on RPL from Ireland, England, Finland, France, Scotland and Spain. The aim of this report was to bring together some of the main findings in the National Reports, to consider some of the main issues that were highlighted by the research and to make recommendations for future work on RPL and social inclusion. Again the barriers identified were to do with initial funding, support, and training resources for students and staff, which were necessary to simply get a better understanding of what RPL actually is. From the researchers' understanding, this points out the lack awareness of the RPL process both at public level and at institutional level not only as a form of assessment and accreditation for potential candidates, but also for the teaching staff and management themselves. If this scenario were true, it would possibly lead to the 'blind leading the blind'. It is on this basis that the researcher has formulated research questionnaires around the awareness theme.

The above document was followed by a report from the Valuing Learning from Experience project (VaLEx) on higher education. In this report Murphy (2005) indicated that there were no obvious benefits for existing stakeholders other than easier facilitation of mobility and student exchange. While mutual recognition of experiential learning was regarded as essential to facilitate the mobility of students and workers especially in the cases of economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, the issue of resources would

remain. '*with the added complication that in a differentiated third level system...there would be greater difficulty in motivating colleges to facilitate disadvantaged individuals at a European level.*' (Murphy, 2005:8).

Within the actual assessment process of RPL many agree (Bowman et al., 2003; Dunn, 2004; Heeks, 2003) that RPL outcomes are not valued as equal to training outcomes. From a cross analysis of these documents another set of potential issues or deterrents for both the academic and the student emerges. If an institute has significant concerns about granting credit for formal learning or experience which occurred a significant time ago, particularly in industries experiencing rapid change, students may not be brought up to speed with the latest knowledge or standards for the industry, highlighting the principle of currency within quality assurance. Also, should a candidate have already achieved RPL from a different institute or awarding body, are they then obliged to accept this award?

In some instances, Heeks (2003) and Bowman et al. (2003) report that although an RPL claim may save the candidate some money, it can involve extensive time in collecting and presenting evidence of prior learning, in particular the amount of paperwork gathering which can be associated with RPL assessments and in some instances the students '*were often unable to locate the evidence required*' by industry (2003:8). This leads to RPL becoming a major turn-off for both the provider and the candidate.

An even more important issue was made by Garnett and Portwood (2004) who point out that in the overall picture of RPL as a form of qualification, the support from employers in industry in never going to be great due to the overwhelming realisation that '*they are more concerned about unrealised potential than with what is already evident, and therefore can see little point in the process*' (2004:22). On this point the author does not agree with elements of this statement as in his extensive experience, he believes that with the trade industry in particular, a record of prior evidence is absolutely vital for job promotion and further employment opportunities.

Alongside the barriers to RPL there are recurring solutions. Cleary, Whittaker et al. (2002) maintain that in order to prevent the barriers from developing, awarding bodies can do better

> *by providing better information about the APEL process, giving clear guidance about assessment criteria and providing clear mechanisms of support throughout the process* (2002:20).

Although RPL is viewed as a useful mechanism for bridging the gap between informal, experiential learning and more formal academic learning. In this sense, it is an institutional tool used at departmental level rather than a nationally-defined educational objective (2002:6).

Within the RPL system as a whole Adam (2007) suggests specific preventative measures to ensure less confusion, namely, that the process itself should not be overly time consuming for the provider or the candidates, nor should the system be overly complicated. In order to achieve credibility and acceptance, the system should also be cost effective both for the potential candidates and the administrators. If not, it is suggested that it will instinctively become a deterrent. This leads us to analyse which RPL delivery models are currently in use or have been in use on a national and international basis.

2.8   Existing RPL Models in Culinary Arts

After extensive research into existing RPL models, few were found that pertained specifically to '*Culinary Craft Programmes'* or modules. Before discussing these findings and in order to formulate a better understanding of the RPL process, a wider search was conducted on more general RPL models which are currently and successfully in use. It is important to note that few, if any, models of RPL result in a complete or full award. Prior learning may be accredited toward a certificate or qualification however, unless the provider's RPL policy states otherwise, only minor awards (Modules) are accredited to the candidate.

Harris and Saddington (1994) break down the RPL process into four main categories. The first category makes use of '**nationally standardised tests' and examinations as a means of recognising and accrediting prior learning which covers many disciplines and occupational areas. These tests are designed to formulate the same outcomes as existing traditional examinations. This process would not assume compulsory attendance.

The second is the 'challenge process' which refers to special tests, projects or modified examinations undertaken with a view to earning credit for or towards a particular qualification. This process often consists of a modification of an existing institutional module or assessment and also does not assume attendance of specific courses or

programmes. The challenge process can be developed broadly and applied to significant numbers of potential learners, or devised specifically for a learner or small group of learners at a particular moment in time. Increasingly, challenge processes are being formalised regionally or nationally, in which case they come to more closely resemble nationally standardised examinations.

The third and currently the most frequently used process is the form of portfolio development. Throughout this process the candidate explores and interrogates past experience on an individualised basis and documents prior learning experiences in such a way as to render it potentially creditworthy. It is this particular process to which reference was made in the previous paragraph regarding barriers. This process is often an extensive and laborious task. Portfolio documentation can involve, for example: work samples, articles, reports, essays, tapes, testimonials, awards, certificates as well as reflective accounts of learning. In the case of 'Culinary Craft' modules, evidence may also include photographic and video evidence and in many cases, for the purpose of reliability, a practical skills test will be given. The main difference between portfolio development and challenge and standardised tests is that the nature of evidence is not defined in advance and was not generated, in the first instance, for assessment purposes (Innovative Educators, 2006).

The following is an example of their existing RPL model which encompasses a wide range of assessment styles required in Culinary Craft Education.
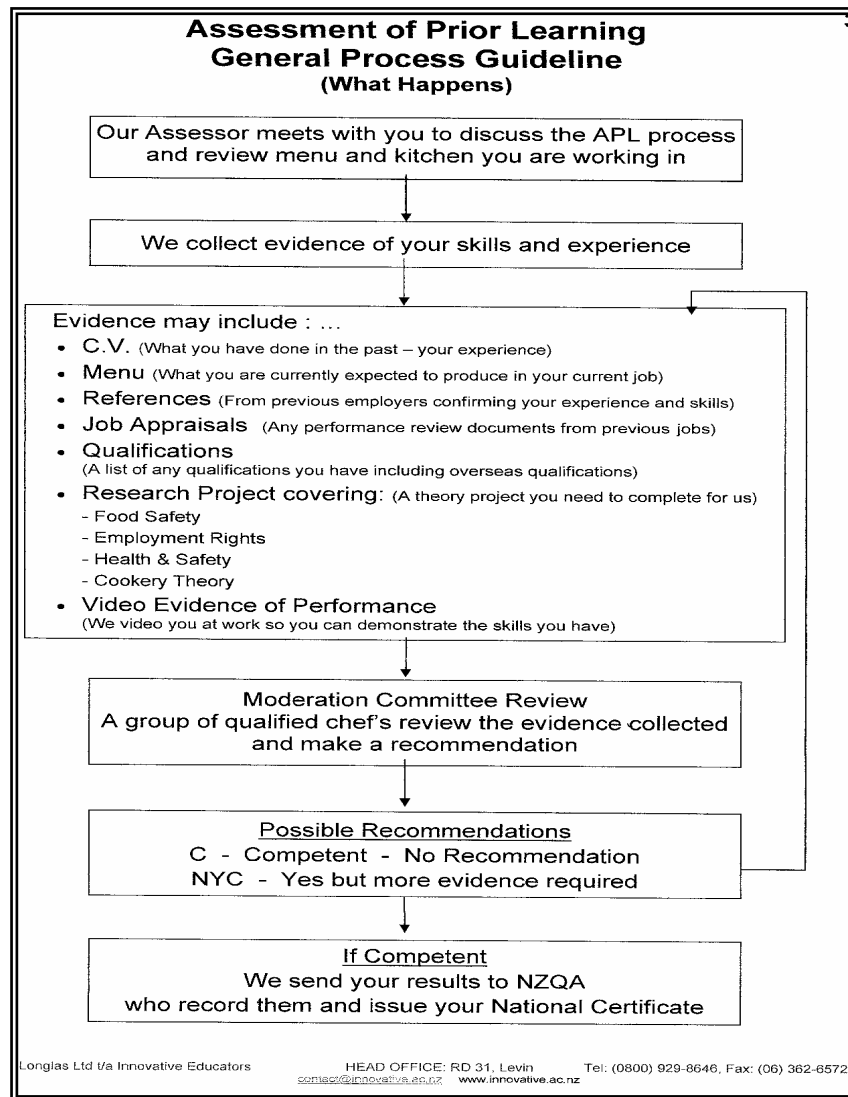
Assessment of Prior Learning
General Process Guideline
(What Happens)

Our Assessor meets with you to discuss the APL process and review menu and kitchen you are working in

We collect evidence of your skills and experience

Evidence may include : ...
- C.V. (What you have done in the past – your experience)
- Menu (What you are currently expected to produce in your current job)
- References (From previous employers confirming your experience and skills)
- Job Appraisals (Any performance review documents from previous jobs)
- Qualifications (A list of any qualifications you have including overseas qualifications)
- Research Project covering: (A theory project you need to complete for us)
  - Food Safety
  - Employment Rights
  - Health & Safety
  - Cookery Theory
- Video Evidence of Performance (We video you at work so you can demonstrate the skills you have)

Moderation Committee Review
A group of qualified chef's review the evidence collected and make a recommendation

Possible Recommendations
C - Competent - No Recommendation
NYC - Yes but more evidence required

If Competent
We send your results to NZQA who record them and issue your National Certificate

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Figure 2.1   RPL culinary model, New Zealand (Innovative Educators, 2006:3)

The fourth approach often places an interactive assessment interview in a central position. In this situation a candidate can perhaps, after the initial interview, have many minor outstanding supplementary tasks or learning outcomes to achieve. This would be a highly individualised form of assessment, for example, combining a mixture of assessment methodologies including special projects, performance testing, oral presentations or essays. According to Thomas, Collins and Plett (2002) most Canadian research suggests that portfolios of evidence have become independent of the immediate objective of RPL. Their statistics report two thirds of RPL candidates make use of portfolios and that they

intend to continue using them throughout their lives. Candidates regard their portfolios as achievements of personal satisfaction beyond whatever immediate use to which they were put. They found the preparation of portfolios difficult and time-consuming, as well as immensely rewarding.

The document analysis of many international models (Fáilte Ireland, 2007; Jones & Martin, 2007; MetraNet, 2007; Murphy, 2005; Valex, 2005) makes reference to techniques used in the process of identifying prior learning upon application. They all include the following criteria upon application:

- The length of time the candidates has been working professionals;
- The development of the candidates' responsibilities;
- The complexity of the tasks undertaken and the knowledge used to achieve them;
- The relationship between the work experience and the course to enter;
- The current level and scope of responsibility;
- An equivalence between the level of the experience and the type of the course to enter.

The French national model however, clearly extends these boundaries on a much deeper level. USTL (2001) gives an account of the criteria or model used by French universities where a judgment is made about the potential and the capacity of the candidate to succeed and benefit from the course of study chosen. In order to do this, the universities go to the extent of checking the level of responsibility and problem solving that the candidate may have experienced in industry prior to application. An interesting point to note here is that across most French universities, RPL has developed owing to the implementation of new structures and the continual improvement and evaluation of RPL procedures i.e. the opening of APEL services within each university, in order to better inform the public who then in turn have a greater awareness of the opportunities RPL offers. In 1985 a decree known as the 'Bilan de Competence' was passed which allows all Higher Education Institutions to award exemption from qualifications normally required for entry to a course. The HE Institution can also exempt a candidate from some assessment requirements of the chosen course. It may require the candidate to undertake some top-up studies either before entry or alongside the chosen course. A further decree was passed in December 1991 which entitled all employees the right to 'education leave' for the Bilan

and again in July 1992 a further decree was passed which entitled all employees to have their prior skills and work experience assessed to be awarded units, modules or part of modules of a diploma course (Bjornavold, 2000).

The award of the units through this process of accreditation confers the same rights and opportunity as if you had successfully passed the examination of those units. In this case, the maximum which may be awarded using the RPL process is all the units of a diploma. In order to obtain the full qualification the candidate has to pass the missing units.

The French RPL process is state-funded and seems much more rigorous than those of other European or international countries. French universities attempt, not only, to confirm that the candidate has the knowledge required for the award of the unit, but that the candidate has the intellectual skills and problem solving abilities, which are usually developed by- attending a full time programme. The RPL uses the following criteria as the RPL path must relate directly to their work place:

- *The company context;*
- *The scale and scope of previous projects undertaken;*
- *The relationship with superiors and colleagues inside the company and with suppliers or clients;*
- *outside the company;*
- *The type of problems faced and the ways in which they were addressed;*
- *The equipment used by the candidates.* (USTL, 2001:4)

To put this into perspective, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) uses an existing model which caps the units within a programme at a maximum limit of 50%. This infers that within any programme or module, four of the subjects can be obtained by way of RPL and the remainder must be completed through the normal coursework requirements. Besides the subject for assessment, there are three subjects that have been designed with project work in mind. These include a negotiated minor workplace project, a major workplace project (equivalent to two subjects) and the workplace practical test.

From within the context of this research, the subject matter 'Culinary Craft Qualifications' is highly practical in orientation. For this reason, to find an assessment model for a multitude to practical skills tasks makes credibility a huge factor in the credit transfer and quality assurance process. In pedagogical terms, Jones and Martin (2000) refer to "The Empowerment Model". This model looks at steps necessary in the preparation of RPL applicants. Steps which empower the individual by enabling them to

understand their own learning process through critical reflection, challenging them to question their own values and assumptions. This in turn leads the individual to identify and recognize just how valid RPL can be. '*What becomes abundantly clear is that most people cannot undertake such an analysis without the assistance of a trained educator to guide them through the process'* (2000:3).

2.9   The Triple AAA Programme

Within the specific confines of Culinary Craft Models, one of the largest and fastest growing culinary craft work-based learning awards in Britain and Ireland, the Applied Ability Awards, known as the culinary Triple AAA programme, which is endorsed by City & Guilds, currently has no provision for RPL in any form (Triple AAA, 2008). Developed for industry by industry and funded by the British Food Trust, the Triple A awards are supported by the eight most highly recognised culinary associations in Europe namely, the Academy of Culinary Arts, the Association Culinaire Francaise, The British Culinary Federation, The Craft Guild of Chefs, the Federation of Scottish Chefs, The Master Chefs of Great Britain, the Welsh Culinary Association and the Panel of Chefs of Ireland.

This Triple A awards were designed in 2007 specifically to fill the void which was left by the City & Guilds 706 awards. One of these awards (the 706/3 advanced culinary craft award) is one of the drivers behind the development of this thesis. Although comprehensive in its approach to assessment there is no scope for accreditation of a candidate's prior experiential learning. It is perhaps because this award was developed 'for industry by industry' that the awareness of EU policy and the objectives of the 2010 Copenhagen Declaration is being ignored (Triple AAA, 2008).

What seems outstanding about the Triple AAA award however, is the very fact that so many key stakeholders are buying into it for its rigorous practical standards and in particular its validation process which states that all candidates will be mentored on the job by a qualified mentor and all mentors will receive training by the British Food Trust (Triple AAA, 2007). In order for this award to hold credibility, it also had to include educational institutions in order to eliminate conflict of interest in standards of training. It brought on board existing qualified mentors from culinary educational institutions such as

Westminster Kingsway College, Exeter University, Birmingham College of Catering and Cornwall College. However, with colleges such as Westminster Kingsway in London, who are accredited for their outstanding best practice procedures in culinary arts 'Work Based Learning', there is a formal RPL process which is integrated alongside their day-release programmes. Within this curriculum, specific RPL quality assurance guidance materials are issued to the students, the assessors, and the work place mentors (Seberry, 2003).

Unlike RPL models within other sectors the disparity of content within the culinary models seems greater with some culinary institutions choosing to include the employer in the process and others not. In Canberra Australia, Mitchell and Mc Kenna (2006) recall a three phase RPL process for mature chefs used by the Caloola Skills Training provider. This assessment process is performed over two days. First, a skills demonstration is required in the work-place kitchens in order to verify the extent of the menu and its relevance to the level of award being applied for. Secondly, the candidates are given a theoretical knowledge test again pitched at the level required, and the final phase of the process involves a formal interview with a panel of industry chefs, teachers and assessors. Similarly, in New Zealand, including the standard practices and many of those used by Australian training providers, Innovative Educators (2006) also require video evidence of the skills performance and require a written theoretical project which includes core work experience knowledge which includes aspects of food safety, employment rights, health and safety and food theory.

Within Ireland, a report to prospective national education providers by Keys (2007) included details of the RPL process used by one of the country's largest culinary awarding bodies, Fáilte Ireland on behalf of the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).Within this RPL process, Fáilte Ireland allocates a mentor to each candidate. It should be noted that the mentor is not necessarily based in the candidate's place of work. The mentor is generally only accessible by phone and can be based anywhere in the country. This is in stark contrast to culinary education providers across Britain. In this instance, from a quality assurance point, the candidate together with his/her specific work based 'qualified assessor/mentor', is given a formulated set of RPL targets to achieve, which in turn are verified by a 'qualified external verifier' (Seberry,

(2004). The emphasis in this instance is on the preparatory training of assessors and verifiers in Work-Based Learning and RPL. In order for any institution to deliver and assess the work-place RPL process, it is a requirement of The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the British Hospitality Awarding Body (HAB) and that all RPL and work-based assessors and verifiers are trained and qualified as well as being competent specialists in their profession.

The following is an extract from the OFSTED government inspection report 2008 which gave a national inspection grade to the Culinary Arts Department of Westminster Kingsway London as 'Outstanding' in its best practice procedures at national level (OFSTED, (2008:17):

> *Curriculum management is outstanding. Communication between managers and teachers is regular, effective and helps to maintain high standards. The self-assessment and internal verification procedures are robust and thorough. Lesson observation and staff appraisal lead to better teaching and provide excellent support for teachers to update their skills. Realistic work environments are well resourced and there is good management of work based students. All of the strengths identified at the last inspection remain in place and in addition the college has successfully improved provision to include young apprenticeships for 14 to 16 year olds and commercial courses for employers.*

This is in contrast to the current FETAC requirements where up to level 6 the assessor must be qualified to the level of occupational craft being taught. Above level 6 is then the responsibility of the higher education provider where the programme staff acts as the assessors and verifiers. There are some indications that Fáilte Ireland uses other providers to undertake the RPL process on their behalf (OECD, 2007). Although assessment of prior learning should be carried out by persons who are competent and all assessors and persons involved in the process should be specifically trained and given appropriate support (NFQ, 2005), there is little evidence to date to support who has had or when such training has taken place.

2.10　Implementing the RPL Process

The level of visible commitment to RPL across higher education providers varies. Butler (2000) points out that the single biggest supporting factor to managers, unions, staff and facilitators is the personal and visible commitment of a Director.

Reeve and Smith (1996) surmise the cost implications associated with RPL, in particular the running cost of a dedicated RPL office, its administration, the support measures for students and assessment and, in particular, staff development (1996:42). However, unlike others, they also mention 'Sources of Income' to support the process which includes the following:

- Top slicing – where the institution may decide to allocate resources to RPL from its overall budget. Usually associated with centrally based services;
- Funded courses – resources attracted from funding bodies;
- Fees – A direct fee charged to the student or their employer calculated on the basis of the services necessary to support each individual.

With the varying forms in which the RPL process is implemented Smith (2004) highlights the cost factor to the candidate. With most HE providers, a programme or module has with it a fixed registration and running cost. A case study on a primary hospitality training provider in Australia (fictitious name given) does not charge students for the assessment of portfolios for the purpose of RPL. However, a standard charge of $100.00 does apply if formal testing of claimed skills is negotiated as part of the process, usually in lieu of other formal evidence. This particular college places a standard 50% limit on the amount of credit that can be given towards a qualification by RPL and any exceeding 50% of a qualification must be formally approved by an academic director. RPL at this college is managed by course chairpersons. This example has, in effect, a sliding scale of the degree of rigor applied to assessments. If a candidate is only seeking a small amount of credit towards a qualification, the college makes the process relatively quick and easy because it is argued that the appropriate standards will be ensured during the duration of the course. If the candidate is seeking a significant amount of RPL, the college applies considerable rigor to the process because it is argued there may not be sufficient time for the college to ensure the appropriate industry standards can be met. However, at staffing level, the institute needs to allocate responsibility of each task to

specific individuals (2004:23). Cleary and Whittaker (2002:9) highlight the processing of the portfolio of evidence as one of the major contributing cost factors to be considered.

In France, the process of portfolio submission for assessment tends to be centralized i.e. there may be a central committee within a university which considers all claims for RPL (Merrill & Hill, 2003). Although in agreement with this assessment methodology, in Canada, Arscott, Crowther et al. (2006) report that a jury assessment is considered by many institutions '*as an unjustifiable expense... This is because in many courses, the teaching as well as the evaluation component is done by a single individual. Jury assessment, however, ensures fairness to both the learner and assessor in that the learning being presented meets an academic, professional, and experimental standard. As the jury method uses three kinds of subject-matter experts, the effectiveness of the assessment process is increased'* (2006: 73). The reality, in all cases where assessment of portfolio work takes place, would surely be that assessment by many experts would be grounds for a fairer and more credible mark.

In other countries, the nature of the process may be less centralised and RPL claims may be considered and assessed at school level rather than at departmental level as is currently recommended at Dublin Institute of Technology. Blom, Clayton and Bateman et al. (2004) discuss an alternative approach which directs the learners to go to the organisation's intranet site to find learning materials and discover what to expect from the RPL process. They can then download an assessment matrix which comprises an initial self-assessment task, then source an assessor from the workplace who has the skills to assess the specific competency required of the learner. Once the recognition has been conducted, the assessor's decision is recorded electronically in the learner's training file and on hard copy. This is only an alternative if the institution provides such access. Garnett, Portland and Costley (2004) put an emphasis on the importance of the role of the RPL advisor as a highly skilled individual who requires support and staff development in order to facilitate student reflection on experience. This, they note, is necessary in order to identify and articulate learning achievement but also to advise on the nature, role and

sufficiency of evidence (2004:8). Meanwhile Wailey (2005) further identifies the widely accepted assessment criteria as follows:

> ***Sufficiency*** *– relating to sufficient breadth of evidence, including reflection, to demonstrate the achievement of all the outcomes claimed;*
> ***Currency*** *– demonstrating that what is being assessed is current learning;*
> ***Quality*** *– relating to the evidence demonstrating the required level of learning achievement;*
> ***Validity*** *– relating to the match between the evidence presented and the learning and outcomes claimed.* (2005:35)

In support of these criteria, Blom et al. (2004) add that within most established and successful RPL centres, the better resourced the enterprise-based training provider is, the more extensive its support materials and strategies are. They found that some or all of the following services best support the recognition process (Blom et al., 2004:6):

1 information sessions;

2 printed information and guides for candidates;

3 recognition workshops;

4 provision of evidence requirements;

5 provision of exemplars or guidelines for the types of evidence required;

6 meetings between individual candidates and assessors negotiated opportunities for recognition assessment to be undertaken.

DIT is also working towards these steps with an in-depth online RPL web page, which includes and addresses all of the above recognised criteria necessary for the successful implementation of the RPL process (Murphy, 2008).

2.11   RPL within the Dublin Institute of Technology

In 1996, one of the first draft documents was produced by the DIT in support of Accreditation of Prior Learning. This document specifies that only those subjects or modules described in terms of learning outcomes would be suitable for the RPL process. It further emphasises that experience was not what was being evaluated, but the learning and '*this learning should imply a conceptual aswell as a practical grasp of the knowledge and competencies required and be applicable outside the environment in which it was acquired*' (DIT, 1997:4). Even at this early stage, DIT point out the need for an AP(E)L

Workshop for applicants in order to fully understand the concept and how to use and apply it successfully. This was to ensure there was an 'appropriate balance' between the theoretical and practical application. Although the more traditional learners may score highly on written examinations, they tend to be weak when it comes to practical application and vice versa, many of those who can 'do' cannot discuss the concepts embodying the principles in an analytical way. An interesting point to note in this document is that no grade or mark would be allocated to the exempted subjects. All applicants' performance in examination would be determined only on the basis of marks gained in other subjects that are examined in the normal way (DIT, 1997:9).

In 1998, DIT Academic Council further developed its RPL policy document *'Towards a policy on the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) AP(E)L'*. Although procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL) were already in place, it was noted that 'careful consideration would be required by the Institute in formulating future policy for the adoption of a more formalised approach to the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning' (1998:7). Included were implications for the introduction of this new process such as; standardisation of approaches by different faculties, applicant interviews, separate application documentation, staff training and timetabling (1998:6). It is noted that certain Schools/Departments were likely to have greater demand for the RPL process, particularly those disciplines where there is already a significant part-time provision.

Learning in response to the 2005 NQAI Policy Document '*Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training'* the Dublin Institute of Technology developed recommendations in relation to the implications for the Institute and its statutory requirements arising from this document. The two main reasons highlighted were, firstly to frame a response for its Academic Council regarding the implementation process. The second reason was to make recommendations in relation to a strategy to introduce RPL on an Institute wide basis.

The key principles recommended to underpin the recommendations included the following (DIT, 2006:9):

- *coherence and quality of awards;*

- *efficiency and supportiveness of processes of applicants;*

- *appropriateness of programme level;*

- *sufficiency and appropriateness of support staff involved;*

- *subsidiary of academic decision making to programme level; and,*

- *affordances at executive level.*

DIT formed an RPL working group to further a development strategy. Kenny, Murphy and Duff (2006) proposed the formation of a dedicated APEL Unit whose purpose would be to facilitate the development and implementation of APEL across the DIT. This would possibly include a wider remit inclusive of curriculum designed delivery. By 2007, Dr Anne Murphy was appointed RPL Policy Officer for the DIT and began the further development of the internal RPL process.

As mentioned earlier, Murphy developed the DIT (2008) website specifically for online RPL applications. This was initiated in January 2009. This includes an overview of what exactly RPL represents and the various processes required by an applicant. In particular, this website addresses the awareness issues which were highlighted as possible barriers to a successful RPL implementation process. What particularly stands out is the way in which Murphy has included not only the documents essential and necessary for external applicants but also documents for students and staff currently registered and employed by the DIT. By addressing the foreseeable concerns of the DIT staff namely, resources for creating a better understanding of the RPL process; the DIT has taken constructive steps towards successful change in managing change within the curriculum. Addressing the support and guidance for DIT staff includes a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) 5 ECT credit module in RPL which includes aspects of RPL assessment methods and criteria, grading, appeals procedures, case studies, costs and risks associated with RPL (2008:2).

Alongside this RPL website is a draft working document which includes guidelines to 'Implementing NQAI Principles and Operational Guidelines for RPL'. These principles are divided into three categories:

1. **General** – which points out that RPL gives value to all learning, no matter how that learning is achieved;

2. **Quality** – Insuring RPL is fully imbedded within the DIT quality assurance procedures and the assurance to stakeholders is credible; and

3. **Communication documentation** – Where a clear statement is recorded for policies, processes and practices (Murphy, 2008:5).

The guidelines communicate DIT's approach to the development and expansion of the RPL process by bringing coherence and consistency to the process. Emphasised, are the benefits to the development of these principles within the DIT which include:

- *socially inclusive purpose;*
- *addressing the needs of the disadvantaged;*
- *part-time and mature students;*
- *the impact on retention;*
- *enhancing worker's employability* (Murphy, 2008).

2.12   Summary

This chapter began by putting RPL into context by exploring its development and purpose, surmising that work and study would end up side-by-side in a bid to combat unemployment and redundancy.

The advent of RPL policy across Europe, Australia and South Africa were explored in a bid to find variances in the reasoning behind government drive to promote the RPL process. As the opportunity for travel, employment and further education became more accessible and prevalent within the EU states it was found that the ever increasing European Union of countries was in need of common principles for EU students wishing to be further educated. A need for transparency in education and training was one of the key factors for the promotion of RPL as a new form of pedagogy. This would be achieved through the implementation and rationalisation of new information tools and networks such as the European CV and a single, common European framework for languages and certificates. The 2002 Copenhagen Declaration was the beginning of a collective strategy for all European countries to implement RPL policy at a national level.

At international level, the purpose for a drive to develop RPL varied across each continent however all emerged from specific socio-economic reasoning. Australia's purpose was to provide a basis for linkages between qualifications within higher education, further and vocational education, schools and the adult community sectors. South Africa's purpose was found to be primarily addressing the 'inequities of Apartheid' and to create career pathways for the historically disadvantaged. In 1999, Ireland signed the Bologna Agreement which was to begin a reformation of Higher Education structures. Its purpose was to enable compatibility of credit accumulation and transfer of credits. In 2003 a national objective to move towards 'life long learning' was launched and ignited the introduction of policies, criteria, procedures and guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning.

The key drivers and barriers to RPL were then explored. Of the many drivers to the process the most prominent were seen to be e.g. the fact that RPL is very much a student centred approach to learning and particularly focuses on the advantages of RPL as a form of pedagogy. Many agree RPL is less costly both in terms of a student's time spent away from work and the cost of registration fees and within its makeup it is agreed that the process of reflection may lead to new ides of development in the workplace.

Of the barriers associated with PRL it is agreed on most counts that the implementation process at local level is most likely to be the source of any stumbling blocks. Strategic plans in all cases need to be put in place to make RPL reassuringly cost effective for any institute. RPL outcomes also need to be aligned with existing programme and module descriptors in order to facilitate assessment and marking. For teaching staff, the research consensus is that a greater awareness and understanding of the process from registration through to assessment is needed which can be facilitated through work shop style training by existing RPL experts. For industry, without a greater awareness of RPL as a current form of accreditation, employers may not be overly forthcoming as their concerns for training are more focused on the unrealised potential than what is already evident. This highlights the necessity to build strong partnerships and links with work based learning.

In order to foresee an appropriate RPL methodology with the Culinary Department of the DIT, the author made reference to 'RPL Models' which currently exist and are successfully in operation. With specific reference to Culinary Craft, the development of

performance tests and a portfolio of evidence were found to be the most popular form of assessment next to and alongside a formal interview and written underpinning knowledge tests. The review ends with an analysis of the current RPL policy procedures and processes which exist in the Dublin Institute of Technology.

Chapter 3
Research Design and Theoretical Perspective

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to provide a focused selection of some of the key literature consulted regarding the Recognition of Prior Learning specific to culinary arts within the Irish education system and hospitality industry. Outlined is a description of the methodologies used in carrying out this study and to present a justification for their use. In order to best achieve the stated aims and objectives of the thesis, a mixed method approach was employed using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires as the primary source of data collection. The literature also examined the validity and robustness of the research design based on Creswell (2005). The sections following discuss the method used in more detail and outline the limitations encountered in the process.

3.2 Thesis Aims

From the context of this thesis, the strategies for designing this research are taken from Creswell (2007:10), Crotty (1998:2), Wisker (2005:74), Picciano (2004:5), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007). The first aim of this thesis was to investigate the extent to which Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is understood and used in both the hospitality industry and in higher education across Ireland with specific reference to chefs and culinary craft qualifications. The second aim was to determine the demand, opportunities and possible barriers for mature, full-time employed chefs in Ireland to use the RPL process as a means of gaining an advanced culinary craft award or qualification. The third aim was to explore existing RPL models currently in use which are specific to advanced culinary craft. Recommendations would then be formulated for the further development of RPL specific advanced craft modules for the Dublin Institute of Technology and other further and higher education providers of advanced culinary craft education across Ireland.

3.3 Researcher's Personal Stance

It is now standard practice that the researcher should make clear, early on, their philosophical stance in relation to the research subject (Scott & Morrison, 2007). In this thesis, my stance as researcher was informed by a belief in equal opportunity and access to educational awards and qualifications. This evolved from my own education and employment background as a professional chef whereby, after completing a City & Guilds 706/1 and 2 in Ireland, I had no option but to move to England to study at advanced culinary craft level, as there were no further progression routes available in Ireland. However, after many years of part-time teaching there was an explicit and real barrier to job progression. By applying for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) based on prior industry experience and teaching, the opportunity to access a postgraduate diploma programme was granted which in turn led to a postgraduate certificate in education and a full-time lecturing post. This experience promotes the professional practice background to this research.

3.4 Theoretical Assumptions Explored

The problem in context mentioned in section 3.5 above would seem to suggest there is a possible barrier to the potential employment progression of professional chefs in Ireland. Ten years have passed since the City & Guilds 706/3 programme was phased out of the DIT. In 2006/7 DIT introduced a stand alone *Advanced Culinary Arts Craft* Module (Carbury, 2007, taken from its existing Culinary Arts honours degree programme). This most recent 'advanced craft qualification' which is worth 5 ECT credits at level 8, may present an opportunity for many experienced industry chefs across the nation who may have had limited opportunity over the past 14 years, to apply for RPL and compare their existing craft skills and experience with the outcomes of this new level 8 advanced craft module. The question arises as to whether or not mature industry chefs are entitled to, or have the opportunity to, be accredited with this advanced craft qualification by way of learning through recognition of prior learning from work experience.

Since 1994, access to an advanced craft qualification has yet to be successfully developed in Ireland, therefore the demand for such a craft programme or module, using the RPL process, could be in high demand. However, as professional chefs in industry over the

past decade may never have had the opportunity to be involved in higher education (Moody, 2008), there may exist a lack of understanding and awareness by industry regarding the RPL process. Furthermore, questions must be raised to explore the extent to which Chefs, formally trained or educated in Ireland, have come up against possible barriers to employment or progression arising from this apparent lack of opportunity for Advanced Craft Qualifications. This thesis tries to construct an answer to these questions. Additionally, lifelong learning in the culinary arts profession is imperative in an environment where qualifications, food trends and gastronomy are subject to frequent change. Therefore experienced professional chefs may have a desire to have their skills, training and knowledge formally accredited and or recognised.

3.5   The Main Question Categories

The following table describes the main question categories:

Table 3.1 Research question categories and strategies

Questions towards Objectives	Strategy to achieve these objectives
How aware are the Irish hospitality industry, management and staff of the RPL/AP(E)L process?	Employer – Semi-structured interviews Employee – Chef Questionnaires Industry culinary Leader – In-depth interviews
Are there examples of successful models of RPL currently in practice for professional chefs?	In-depth interviews – Fáilte Ireland In-depth interviews – Triple AAA Literature Review – International research
Is there a demand for the RPL process within the culinary arts field?	In-depth interviews – Fáilte Ireland In-depth interviews – Triple AAA Recruitment Agency – Semi-structured interviews Employer – Semi-structured interviews Employee – Chef Questionnaires
To what extent is RPL in culinary arts currently implemented across Ireland?	In-depth interviews – Fáilte Ireland Industry culinary Leader – In-depth interviews

3.6   Research Methodology

This thesis is a form of exploratory research which is focused around prior learning in industry. Learning itself is open to interpretation and therefore the research undertaken is suited to the interpretative social research paradigm. The case study itself deals specifically with professional chefs within the specific context of obtaining advanced craft awards therefore the findings may be of limited value to other similar practical trades. However, the theoretical and pedagogical intensions may be transferable to other practical trade sectors in industry.

Within this research, the main objectives were not to prove a particular theory about RPL or solve an existing problem, but were designed to draw a significant insight into the awareness and demand for an RPL process which already existed. The results of which may have significant transfer potential which might inform better the existing management strategies which are currently being designed. By employing the interpretative paradigm to this study it was decided to work directly with the participants' experience and personal perspective in order to construct a theory based on interpretations of their responses. This would be in direct contrast to, for example the positivist approach put forward by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:21) who regard positivism as *'an approach to understanding based on the principles of science where explanation derives from scientific description'* and note that it is less successful explaining, human behaviour, and social phenomena, hence the reason a strictly positivist approach has not been proposed here. It was intended that the outcomes of this research would then be critically analysed to form a better understanding of the existing phenomena which could then quite possibly be used as a tool to make recommendations for the development of RPL in Culinary Arts. This interpretivist research model, according to Cohen et al. (2007:26) is '*not only to understand existing phenomena but its expressed intension is deliberately political.*'

3.7   Research Design

Objectivity and subjectivity are key issues which need to be taken into consideration by the researcher. Within the design of the thesis, aspects such as legal ethical considerations and how the researcher made claim (proof) had to be made clear (Scott & Morrison, 2007). In this case, the researcher makes clear his philosophical stance in relation to the research subject (ref. chapter 1).

Creswell (2003) addresses three key questions which are central to the design process of thesis research. They are as follows:

1. What knowledge claims are being made by the researcher (including a theoretical perspective)?

2. What strategies of enquiry will inform the procedures?

3. What methods of data collection and analysis will be used?

3.8   Primary Research

A researcher has an obligation to use appropriate methodology in conducting a study. '*It is unethical to use a method or procedure one knows to be inappropriate (e.g. selecting a highly biased sample, using an invalid instrument or drawing on wrong conclusions*' (Kumar, 2005:215). This study focused on two main culinary sectors namely, the hospitality industry sector and the culinary education sector. The data required from the participants in the hospitality industry sector were intended to be predominantly, but not wholly of a quantitative nature. The data from the participants in the educational sector could perhaps have been politically sensitive and so have resulted in a more qualitative approach using in-depth interviews to collect data, therefore a mixed method approach to ensure a greater degree of objectivity. Dencombe (2002) emphasises the fact that researchers need to be open-minded and self-reflective. Objectivity lies in the heart of what it means to engage in research in order to provide a fair and balanced picture.

Research in the social sciences, is dominated by two major paradigms, the first and more frequently used quantitative method is used by the positivists while the second group the interpretivists, use the qualitative approach (Bartlett, Burton & Peim, 2001).

3.8.1 Quantitative versus Qualitative

The qualitative researcher requires aspects such as seeing, hearing and experiencing the natural environment. This is in contrast to the quantitative approach which purposely distances itself and the measuring process from the object of study Picciano (2004:32). Both qualitative and quantitative researchers use systematic methods to gather high quality data and both approaches stress the importance of objectivity in observations and data collection however the qualitative methods tend to focus on the small-scale, micro aspects of social life while the quantitative methods are concerned with more large scale, macro aspects (Robson, 1993:372). Quantitative researchers design precise ways to measure variables in a most objective manner while qualitative researchers, who use a wide variety of techniques to measure are '*more dependant on the researcher's subjective interpretation and therefore their approach to the measurement process is very different*' (Piciano, 2004:32). According to Neuman (2003: 171) there are also different research styles. Firstly, while the quantitative researcher reflects and contemplates before they gather data, the qualitative researchers develop many of their concepts during the actual data collection process. Secondly, the difference is in 'Timing'. While the quantitative researchers think about variables, converting them into actions during and separate from the gathering or analysing of the data, the measurement for qualitative researchers occurs in the data collection process, and thirdly regarding 'Data', the quantitative researcher wants to develop techniques that can produce data in the form of numbers whereas qualitative researchers include written or spoken words, visual images, sounds and actions resulting in data of varying shapes and sizes.

This leads to finding a solution to the so called 'paradigm wars' in the social sciences. Others who advocate a pragmatic approach, use whatever philosophical or methodological approach works best for a particular research issue as this leads to mixed-method studies where both quantitative and qualitative approaches are adopted (Robson, 2002:45)

3.8.2   Mixed Method Research

As a distinct approach, mixed method research is relatively new in the social and human sciences (Cresswell, 2003:209). Researchers using the mixed methods approach base their inquiry on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research problem (p.21). Even when the research strategy is decided, it can, in most cases, be approached by more than one method. It is often based on the researcher's past experience as to their preferred strategy whether that be the experimental approach or a grounded theory. Multi methods can be used in a complementary fashion to enhance interpretability (Robson, 1993:370).

The mixed method approach draws upon both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches to answer a particular research question. This approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds. Cresswell (2003: 15-17) notes that limitations to the two dominant paradigms were recognised and a possible bias in one preferred method could cancel the other. This lead to a means of convergence across both methods from which 'triangulation' and methodological pluralism came into being.

3.8.3   Implementing Mixed Methods

While implementing these research methods Cresswell (2003) suggests two approaches. Firstly, the researcher collects the data sequentially (in phases) for example when intending to explore the topic qualitatively with the participant and using the data with a view to expanding the research into a secondary phase. Secondly, the researcher can collect both types of data concurrently, so that both research methods are implemented simultaneously.

3.8.4   Methodological Pluralism

For the researcher to choose the most suitable methods to use, an element of flexibility should be inherent in the selection process. Jupp (2006:174) describes this flexible approach as methodological pluralism and more generally calls on the researcher to be '*tolerant of other peoples preferred methods*'. also argues that it is healthy for sociology

to contain a number of different theoretical perspectives, however upon evaluation, notes that '*more sociologists pay lip service to it than actively adopt it as a philosophy*'.

3.8.5 Triangulation

In social research triangulation is the term used to refer to the observation of the research issue from at least two different views in this case form both the quantitative and qualitative methodology approach. Neuman (2003:138) and Jupp (2006:306) categorise triangulation into the following four different forms:

- *Triangulation of data or measures* where the researcher takes multiple measures of the same phenomena
- *Triangulation of observers* a method employed during the interview process where many observers will report their perspective leading to a more complete picture of the setting.
- *Triangulation of theories.* For this the researcher plans the study using the concepts and assumptions or the data from multiple theoretical perspectives.
- *Methodological triangulation.* This is seen either 'within-method or 'between method' introducing the use of sub-scales within questionnaires. Its intension being to maximise the validity of research by playing one method against the other.

This mixed method approach embodies a number advantages and disadvantages over the dominant paradigms. Jupp (2006) evaluates three such advantages. Firstly the potential to gain fuller, richer and more complete understanding of a research question by combining the quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Secondly that the results from one method or system may help to guide and inform the other leading to the development of more useful and specific questioning.(Jupp, 2006: 180). Creswell (2003: 19) is in agreement and points out that '*the collecting of both closed-ended quantitative data and open-ended qualitative data prove advantageous to best understand a research problem*'. However Jupp (2006) evaluates three potential disadvantages to the mixed method approach.

1. the accumulation of data leading to heavy demands on time and resources;
2. the expertise demanded of the researcher in both research fields;
3. the extent of both paradigms compatibility.

3.9 Secondary Research/Data Sources

Secondary research for this thesis provides a contextual and analytical backdrop for the primary research in the form of a literature review. The first steps towards good research is generally to focus on what is already known, to find out what is lacking and what needs to be done to get new evidence to test an existing theory (Gillham, 2000).

A review of the literature '*is a written summary of journal articles, books, and other documents that describe the past and current state of information, organises the literature into topics and documents a need for a proposed study'* (Creswell, 2005.79).

The secondary data sources used for the purpose of this investigation were a combination of national and international policy documents, up-to-date journal articles, textbooks, documented curriculum models, the internet and unpublished internal policy documents pertaining to educational Institutes. As part of the overall process the secondary research in turn created the foundation to determine the strategy for the more focused primary research. These 'multiple forms of evidence collation' developed into how Gillham (2005) best describes a 'Case Study'.

3.10 Case Studies

Case studies aim to investigate a wider social phenomenon, in this instance the RPL of advanced culinary craft skills of professional industry chefs. Researchers use case studies to explore in-depth a programme, an event, an activity, a process or one or more individuals. The cases are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Sikes, 2004).

> *This approach rests on the assumption that the case being studied is typical of cases of a certain type so that, through intensive analysis, generalisations*

may be made that will be applicable to other cases of the same type (Kumar, 2005:113*).*

Picciano (2004: 45) details criteria for the use of the Case Study method**.** The following is a method which was found to suit the purpose of the research question which is to describe and interpret a phenomenon which involves a variety of data analysis techniques. This Case Study format is illustrated and discussed below:

Data collection sources – The primary research question lent itself to many forms of investigative data. Picciano (2004:45) reports that using a variety of techniques can lead to a more comprehensive overview of an issue. A combination of quantitative fact finding data together with more in-depth interviews are needed to answer the research question with particular regard to the reasoning why RPL policy has yet to establish itself as a mainstream form of assessment in the culinary education sector. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:181) conclude that '*case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analyses and in this instance the truthful answer to some of the research questions were perhaps politically sensitive'.*

Data Analysis – Through the development of both open and closed structured and semi-structured questionnaires and interviews, it was intended to draw information from specific emerging themes which may arise from participant feedback; in turn leading to conclusions which may support recommendations for or against the further development of the RPL process within advanced culinary craft education.

Yin (2003:116) explains that correlated data should take to form a literal reading and interpretation in the form of explanation building and pattern matching, however, while r*eporting results* - Yin (2003:19) also elaborates on the disadvantages of case studies, reporting validity and reliability as two factors which need to be addressed in the quality of the case study design. It is based on these quality issues that the researcher has chosen to take a complete cross section of participants who are highly qualified, knowledgeable and experienced in the field of culinary arts.

3.10.1 The Survey sample

In summary, there were 3 survey questionnaires distributed throughout the hospitality industry sector:

1. to mature professional chefs;

2. to hospitality employers who interview professional chefs;

3. a further three in-depth, one-to-one interviews took place with management staff in the culinary arts education sector while document analysis was used to develop the literary review.

The following is a breakdown of the participants chosen from each of the two sectors together with the method of inquiry;

3.10.1.1   The hospitality industry sector

♦   15 part-time employed chefs targeted for structured and semi-structured interview/questionnaires followed by 30 suitable fulltime employed chefs with a minimum of five years industrial experience and prior qualifications below advanced level. Method used – survey questionnaire;

♦   3 of the most established and prominent hospitality chef recruitment agencies in Ireland. Method used - structured and semi-structured interview/questionnaire;

♦   10 selected hospitality employers/managers with experience in setting the criteria for employment of professional chefs. Method used - structured and semi-structured interview/questionnaire.

3.10.1.2   The culinary education sector

♦   Three prominent and qualified management staff within culinary craft education and with specific responsibility for national culinary awards/qualifications. Method used - structured in-depth interviews.

3.10.2   Justification of the Survey Sample

3.10.2.1   The recruitment agents, hospitality management and industry chefs

Preliminary research established the three most reputable chef recruitment agencies in Ireland which are established for more than fifteen years. The purpose for this was to discover weather or not advanced craft qualifications are essential criteria for

employment within the catering sector and to assess the percentage of their recruitment applicants who currently hold an advanced certificate in professional cookery.

As the culinary arts professions encompasses a variety of industry work places, based on the AA and Michelin food guides, a cross section of hotels, restaurants, pubs and contract catering managers were chosen in ordered to obtain as accurate a representation of data from the catering industry as a whole.

3.10.2.2   Management within Culinary Arts Education

In-depth interviews were conducted with Mr Pádraig Mc Donnell of Fáilte Ireland, the FETAC national awarding body for culinary arts in Ireland; Mr Myles Moody, president of the Panel of Chefs of Ireland, an organisation which trains industry chefs to Olympic and world standards; and Mr Anthony Scott, head of the Triple AAA culinary awards in Britain. All three experienced managers have a background in culinary arts education and were chosen for in-depth interviews.

Limitations were taken into account regarding the timing of this research as access to information is dictated by the peak or busy hospitality industry and education seasons both daily and annually. The education sector is generally closed during the summer period and Christian holiday periods. The industry sector will generally steer external meetings clear of peak seasons such as Christmas, Easter and mid summer time while late January and February would be considered a more ideal time for interviewing as business is at its lowest peak.

Document Analysis – up to date documentation regarding the history of RPL, its development, the process of RPL, its assessment, policy and current examples of RPL models in Culinary educational establishments in Ireland and abroad.

3.10.3   Delimitations and Limitations

The scope of both the culinary education and the hospitality industry survey needed to be delimited to manageable dimensions for completion within nine months. The investigation targeted competent persons limited to areas within the hospitality industry and culinary education sectors as per table 3.1. A rationale of these limitations is given below.

3.10.4   The Questionnaires as a Quantitative Tool

The majority of the respondents throughout this research project responded by means of a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by the respondents. The only difference between the interview and the questionnaire is that in the former, it is the interviewer who asks the questions and on occasion explains them (Kumar, 2005). The answers obtained from the questionnaire should not reflect differences due to the instrument but should indicate differences between respondents. In order to achieve this they should be designed as user friendly as possible resulting also in an un-biased response (Fowler 2002:14).

3.10.5   The Questionnaire Design

The questionnaires for this thesis were designed specifically for each intended target group taking into account their professional position and experience. The questions were designed and categorised in a manner which would first (demographic style) acknowledge the authenticity and credibility of the respondents and secondly which would draw a response to the specific objectives of the research in order to analyse possible emerging themes. There are however advantages and disadvantages to the questionnaire as a qualitative tool.

For the purpose of the questionnaires designed for this thesis the following were considered:

3.10.5.1   Advantages:

♦ It offers greater anonymity and it is less expensive in view of time, human resources and finances

3.10.5.2   **Disadvantages:**

♦ It excludes groups such as very young, very old or handicapped and possibly illiterate.

♦ A very low response rate. Factors such as the interest of the respondents in the particular subject, the quality of the introduction letter which accompanies the questionnaire explaining its relevance to the respondent.

♦ The opportunity to issues of lacking.

♦ Possible self-selecting bias. Not everyone returns the questionnaires (Kumar, 2005:130).

Addressing these factors the questionnaires designed for this research were directed towards mature experienced literate professional who were targeted specifically with the knowledge that their prior professional experience could generate a positive interest in the subject of RPL. A cover letter was attached which included the researcher's background and similar professional prior industry and educational sector experience in order to create further interest. In lieu of the limitations and delimitations which are discussed in section 3.7.7 and to address any possible lack of initial understanding of the subject title RPL, the researcher arranged, by telephone, to meet with the majority of respondents to firstly, hand deliver the questionnaire and secondly to briefly discuss the meaning of the content. This was followed by a planned return meeting to collect the completed questionnaire and answer any further queries which the respondents may have had.

3.10.6 The Interview as a Qualitative Tool

Three in-depth interviews took place with a view to discovering, in greater depth, the answers to the underlying question of this thesis. Each interview took a similar approach in its preparation and careful consideration taken as to who was most suited, qualified and experienced to interview in order to obtain credible, reliable and factual data relative to the objectives of this thesis.

A combination of open-ended questions and closed-ended questions were used for the purpose of obtaining specific answers and areas which needed further probing. A dictaphone was used to record the content of all the interviews.

The following positives and negatives are associated with the questionnaire interviews:

3.10.6.1 Positives

♦ Combines complementary interview and observational data;

♦ Judgements can be subjective to quantitative display and analyses;

♦ Demonstration prompts interview questions.

3.10.6.2   Negatives

♦   Recording visual components can be difficult;

♦   Collating a range of evidence can be time consuming (Gillham, 2005:97).

3.11   Ethical Considerations

The author is aware of his particular bias towards the research subject as through his own career he has successfully completed the City & Guilds 706/1 and 706/2 qualifications and was awarded access to an Advanced Craft Diploma in Culinary Arts in Britain by way of the RPL process. This took into account his 10 years at management level working in 5 Star Hotels internationally.

For the purpose of ethical considerations, documents and writings from Boud and Solomon (2000), Whisker (2005), Cohen et al. (2001) and Gallagher (2005). The following areas were considered before constructing any research activity or involving any participants.

Negotiated Access –was achieved through discussion with the appropriate authoritative figures as also will be the case with all participants first seeking their permission to conduct a survey with them (Mc Niff, 2004).

Informed Consent – The British Education Research Association BERA (2004:6) note '*researchers must take steps necessary to ensure that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are engaged including why their participation is necessary'*. Throughout this study the process of negotiation was necessary to release information and avoid any elements of exploitation. As a result the research involved only voluntary informed consenting participants before undertaking the research, which was recorded. The rights of all the participants to withdraw from the research was considered and documented.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity - of all participants' data was upheld as a norm for this research. This information was documented on all questionnaires. The resulting data was fully disclosed and transcribed so that participants had access to and fully understood the meaning of the data. All storage of personal data complied with the data protection act of (1998) implying that only the participants may consent to disclose

personal information to third parties in any form written, electronic and verbal or other means.

Research design – The nature of this research was such that the there was little negative impact for the subjects as no experiments took place and the phenomena that existed i.e. (the lack of opportunity to advanced craft qualifications in professional cookery or use the process of RPL for the purpose of accreditation.

Data interpretation and presentation – data information was first checked by the subjects to clarify their answers and position. It was then presented in a clear and transparent manner to ensure the subjects fully interpreted the meaning of the data.

3.12   Research Overview

The following table was drafted to aid the process of both the primary and secondary research.

Table 3.2 Research Questions

1 **Method**	2 **Objectives investigated ref. page 4**	3 **Consented Participants**	4 **Target (thematic) data sought**
Survey Questionnaire A	**1,2,3**	**Industry Sector** *Recruitment Agents* Adecco hospitality & Action staff recruitment Noel Recruitment	Identify % of recruits with existing advanced qualification. Identify barriers to employment. What do they look for in a candidate? Degree of awareness of the RPL process.
Survey Questionnaire B	**1,2,3**	*Industry Sector* *Cross section of hospitality managers* HR manager - Carlton Group HR manager of Compass General manager D Hotel General Manager Monasterboice Inn Head Chef Rosso restaurant	% of staff with advanced qualifications What continuous professional development strategies are used? % of staff eligible for RPL. Degree of interest in using the RPL process for their staff. Degree of awareness of the RPL process.

Survey Questionnaire C	1,2,3	*Industry Sector* *Mature professional Chefs* Pilot Group – DIT 3rd year day-release Chefs Range of mature professional Chefs from public house to Michelin star restaurants.	Degree of awareness of the RPL process. Identify barriers to employment or progression. Degree of interest in using the RPL process. Degree to which active continuous professional development takes place.
In-depth Interview 1	**Question 1,2,3,4,5**	**Education Sector** **Head of RPL** Fáilte Ireland Mr Pádraig Mc Donnell	Degree to which RPL is currently being used in culinary context. Details of current RPL model used. Degree of interest in using the RPL process. Degree of awareness of the RPL process. Recommendations.
In-depth interview 2	**Question 1,2,3,4,5**	**Education Sector** **President of the Panel of Chefs of Ireland.** Mr Myles Moody	What are the entry criteria? Identify % of students who achieve an advanced qualification. Nationwide figures. Degree to which advanced qualification in Culinary Arts are delivered across Ireland. Identify barriers to delivering advanced qualifications. Degree of interest in using the RPL process in Culinary Arts. Identify barriers to the RPL process.
In-depth interview 2	**Question 1,2,3,4,5**	**Education Sector** **Head of the Triple AAA City & Guilds, British Food Trust** Mr Scott Anthony	Identify % of students who achieve an advanced qualification. Degree to which advanced qualification in Culinary Arts are delivered across Ireland. Identify barriers to delivering advanced

			qualifications. Degree of interest in using the RPL process in Culinary Arts. Identify barriers to the RPL process.
Document Analyses		Merrill & Hill (2003), Hobbs (2000), Evans (2006), Simosko (1996), Garnett (2004), Thomas , Collins and Pliet (2002), Challis (1993) Corradi, Evans & Valk (2006)	History of RPL and its development.
Document Analyses		Murphy (2008), Gray (1999:1), Skillbeck and Connell (2000), NFQ (2008) DIT (2005), NQAI (2005), FETAC (2006)	Documents and responses to the RPL policy in HE across Ireland.
Document Analyses		Kenny, Murphy and Duff DIT (1996 – 2008) (2005/6) (2008)	DIT specific RPL policy documents
Document Analyses		Wheelahan (2002) Innovative Educators (2006) PLAR (2007) Innovator education (2006) Mayet (2006) SAQA (2002) Harris (1997) Bjoranvold (2000) NQAI (2005), Murphy (2004) FETAC (2005), DIT (2008)	Analysis of existing RPL policy and practice in Culinary Arts abroad. Example of Australian RPL process, New Zealand system South Africa RPL policy Canada RPL France RPL policy Ireland
Document Analyses		MetraNet (2007) Murphy (2005), Lones and Martin (2007), Keys (2007), Triple AAA (2008), Mitchel and McKenna (2006) OFSTEAD (2008) Garnett, Portland and Costly (2004) QAA (2004:6), Future Skills Needs Statistics (2007) Cox and Green (2001) Merrifield et al. (200) Bateman (2002)	Recommendations for designing a RPL model Barriers to RPL

Document Analyses		Bologna Process (2005) Copenhagen Declaration (2002:2) Murphy / VaLEx (2005) Tucker and Ollie (2004) CEEDOFOP (2005) Harris (1997) SEEC (1996:57) Garnett (2004:12) Boud and Solomon (2000:185) SEEC (1996) Allen (1995:71) QAA (2004:13) Romaniuk, K. and Snart F (2000) Mayet (2006)	EU policies and initiatives. European Union reports which will include the 'Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems'. Aspects such as 'transparency and comparability' between different countries and levels. Aspects of transferability and recognition of competencies and qualifications. An account of lifelong Learning Issues regarding quality, assessment and credibility in the RPL process The Cost of APL, its limits in particular it monitoring.

3.13   Validity, Credibility and Reliability

By applying the mixed method approach the author sought the most reliable data to draw conclusions and recommendations. Robson (2002:109) believes that mixed research methods can be used in a complementary fashion to enhance interpretability and explains that *credibility* is bound up with the trustworthiness of the research, particularly qualitative research. He observes that many proponents of qualitative research prefer to use the term credibility rather than reliability, validity, and objectivity which tend to be associated with quantitative research approaches and calls for a detailed specification of the methods used and the justification for their use. He also suggests that credibility refers to sufficiency of detail on the way the findings have been produced. This would require the researcher to demonstrate that the research has been designed to accurately identify suitable respondents to feedback data which would shed light on the phenomenon under investigation.

The participants involved in this research are employed in suitable and appropriate positions within the culinary education sector and the hospitality industry sector and in positions best suited to respond with up-to-date and valid feedback. The expressed intention in turn, was to formulate the most beneficial, informative and credible results in order '*to obtain the truth status'* (Robson, 2001:553).

Wolcott (1990) notes that when carrying out qualitative research it is important to listen and observe carefully and to record everything accurately. He further advices that particular attention be placed on the internal and external validity of the study. Internal validity in terms of qualitative research refers to its credibility. Ensuring that the right settings and informants are used during the research and ensuring that accurate reflections of the situation and informants perceptions are given. All interviews pertaining to this research were recorded with the permission of the interviewees, full transcriptions of which are available in Appendix B**.**

Chapter 4

Presentation of Findings

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents a description of specific findings from the primary research data. Divided into four sections, the data are presented in table and chart form to represent all three survey questionnaires.

The first section presents the data from the three main Hospitality Chef Recruitment Agencies in Ireland. The second section pertains to a cross section of Irish Hospitality Industry Employers. The third set of findings is taken from data gathered from fulltime working professional chefs employed by a cross section of hospitality and food related businesses.

This presentation is followed by a final section which contains a grouping of similarly related thematic graphs which will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

The findings of the in-depth interviews are also presented and discussed in chapter five.

4.2   Findings from Hospitality Recruitment Agents' Questionnaire

Q.1)   What type of Industry Service do you provide?

It was identified that all three agencies specifically provide recruitment work placements for experienced professional chefs for the purposes of full-time and part-time employment to a range of sectors within the hospitality and food industry.

Q.2)   Please indicate the number of years that you have been in business

It was identified that between the three agents, they had a minimum of fourteen years and up to thirty years of experience in business.

Q.3) **Please indicate the number of catering establishments you provide your services to?**
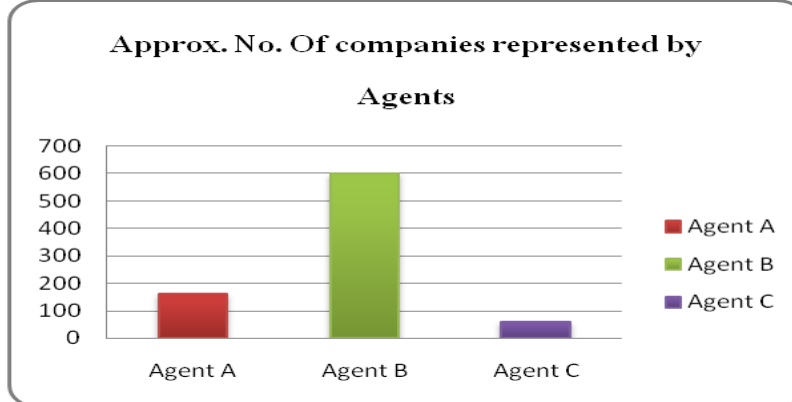
Figure 4.1: Number of companies represented by agents

Q.4) **Please identify how many competitors are providing the same services in Ireland?**
Agent A indicated that they had 2 competitors, Agent B also indicated that they had 2 competitors while, Agent C indicated that that they had 10 competitors.

Q.5) **What percentage of your chef recruitment candidates hold an 'Advanced craft qualification'?**
From options of below <5%, 10%, 15% or 20% all Agents A, B and C identified that that fewer than 5% of all chefs they interviewed held an advanced craft qualification.
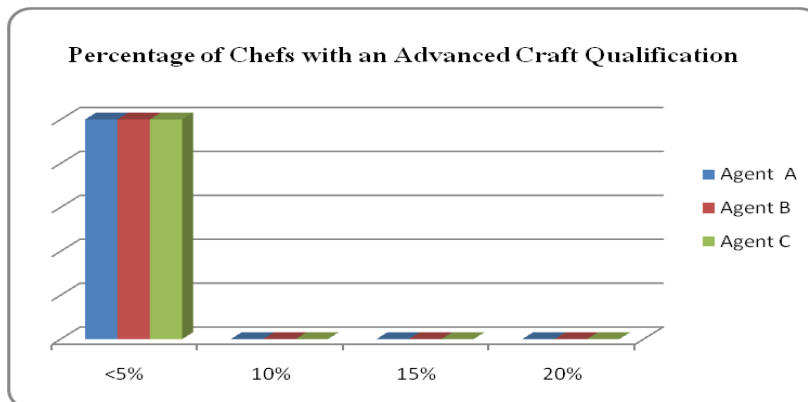
Figure 4.2: Percentage of Chefs with an Advanced Craft Qualification

Q.6) **How many chefs do you help find professional employment for annually?**
Agent A indicated that they placed between 51 - 100 chefs in employment annually, Agent B indicated that they placed 100 – 200 chefs annually, Agent C placed 21-50 chefs in employment annually**.**
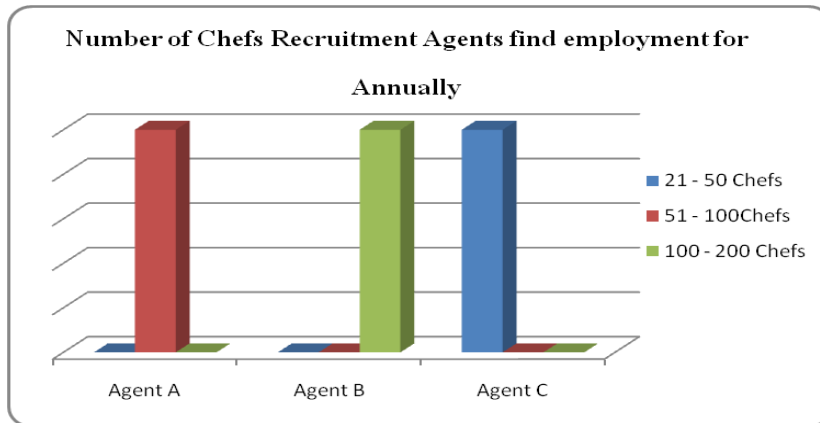
Figure 4.3: Number of Chef which recruitment agencies find employment for annually.

Q.7) **Prior to being informed by this survey, were you aware of the RPL process as a form of gaining a national qualification?**

Agent A indicated that prior to this survey they had no prior knowledge of the RPL process as a method of assessment to gain a qualification while, Agent C and Agent B indicated that they had little knowledge of the RPL.
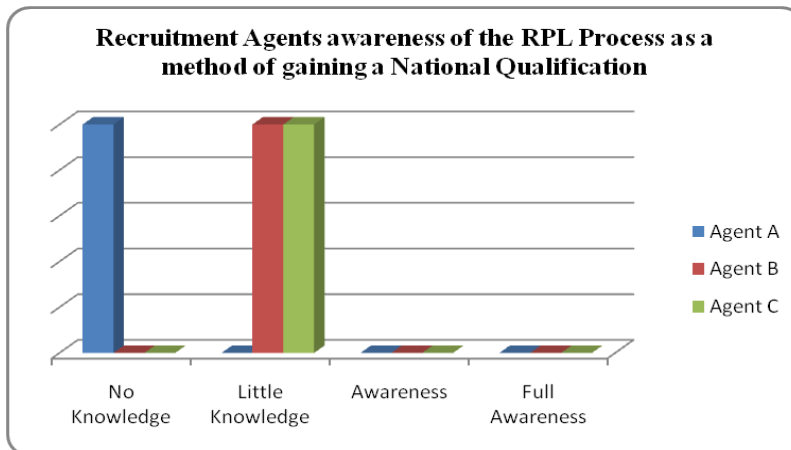
Figure 4.4: Employers awareness of the RPL Process as a method of gaining a National Qualification

Q. 8) **In your professional opinion, how relevant to a professional chef's career do you consider the RPL Process?**
On explanation of the RPL process Agents A and C indicated that they felt that the RPL process could be extremely relevant to a mature chef's career while, Agent B indicated that they felt it was relevant.

Q. 9) **How necessary is a formal professional qualification for the purpose of employment?**
Agent A indicated that a formal professional chefs qualification was a 'must have' for the purposes of employment while, Agents B and C felt that it was very necessary.

Q. 10) **From your experience dealing with industry, which is of more value to the employer; a formal qualification or prior relevant experience?**

From the agencies understanding of employers' expectations, Agents A and B indicated that they believed prior relevant experience was of more value to the employer while, Agent C indicated that formal qualifications were of more value.
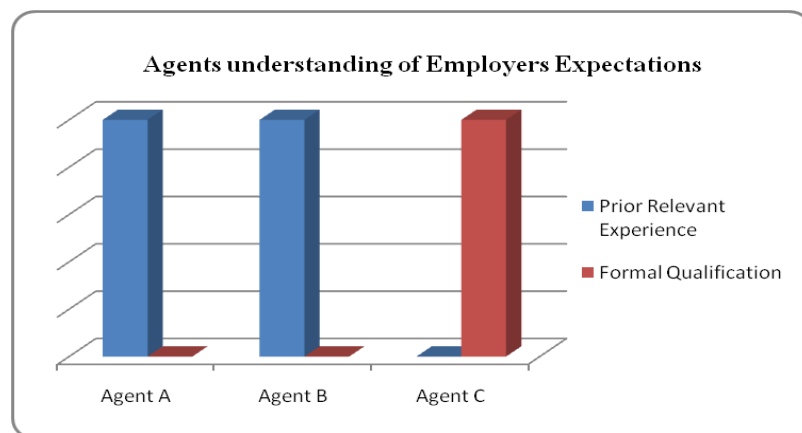
Figure 4.5: Prior Relevant Experience versus Formal Qualifications

Q. 11) **What percentage of your chef recruitment data base would be eligible for the RPL qualification process i.e. Chefs with extensive experience who do not hold a formal advanced qualification?**
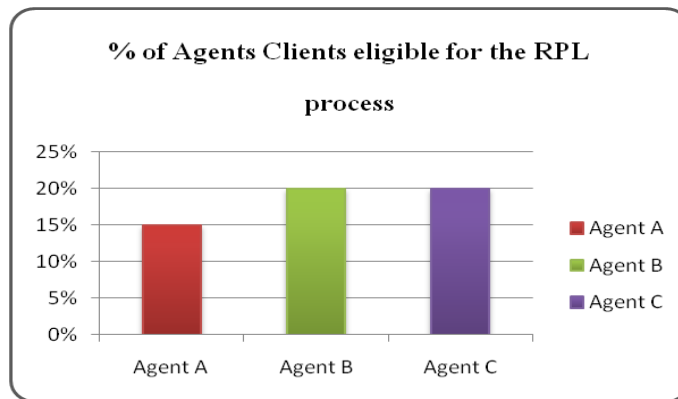
Figure 4.6: Percentage of agency chefs eligible for the RPL process

Q.12) **How likely would your company be to inform chef candidates of the RPL process if you believed that by assessing their C.V the candidates' employability status could benefit?**

All Agents responded that they would 'most likely' inform chef candidates of the RPL process. Two agencies indicated that it could only be good for their business as well.

Q.13) **Please indicate the most common national and international qualifications to be received an experienced professional chefs CV or application form.**

From a list of national and international culinary qualifications agents indicated that the most common to be received by an experienced chefs was as follows:
- Professional Cookery Level 1

- Professional Cookery Level 2

- City & Guilds 706/1

- City & Guilds 706/2

- City & Guilds 706/3 Advanced Pastry

- BA in Culinary Arts

City & Guilds 706/3 advanced Kitchen and Larder was not mentioned.
When asked to prioritise the four most desirable qualifications, all agents reported the City and Guild 706/2 to be the most important, all reported City & Guilds 706/1 to be the second highest in priority, BA in Culinary Arts was rated the third highest while the City & Guilds 706/3 and FETAC Professional Cookery Level 2 came in as the fourth most desirable qualifications

Q. 14) When a mature chef applies for a position of employment through your recruitment company, please rate the criteria below in order of importance?
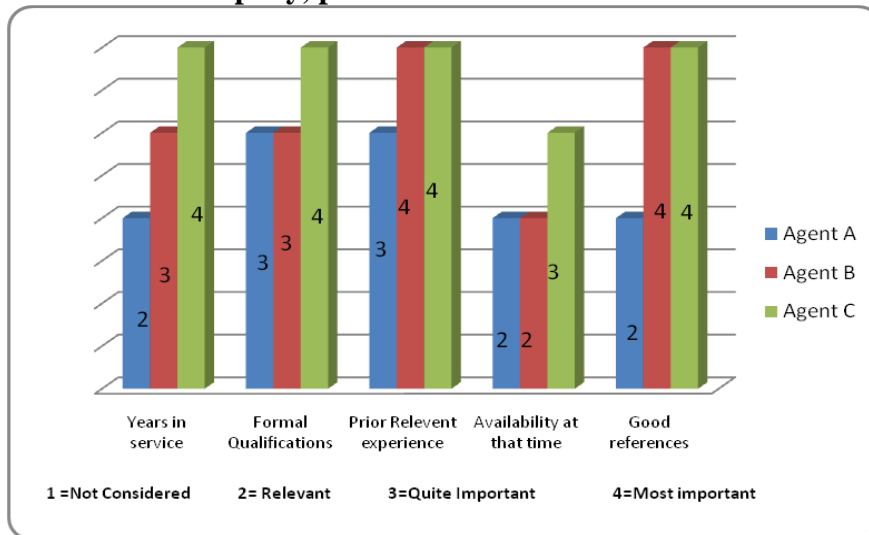
Figure 4.7: Criteria considered in the recruitment of a mature chef

Q. 15) When an employer decides 'not to consider' an experienced candidate for employment, please rate the reasons stated below.
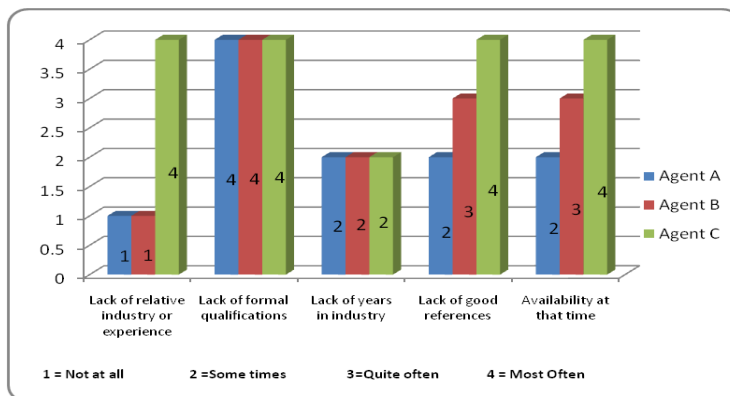
Figure 4.8: Reasons a professional chef may not be considered for a position

Q. 16) Please indicate which type of establishment you provide a service to?
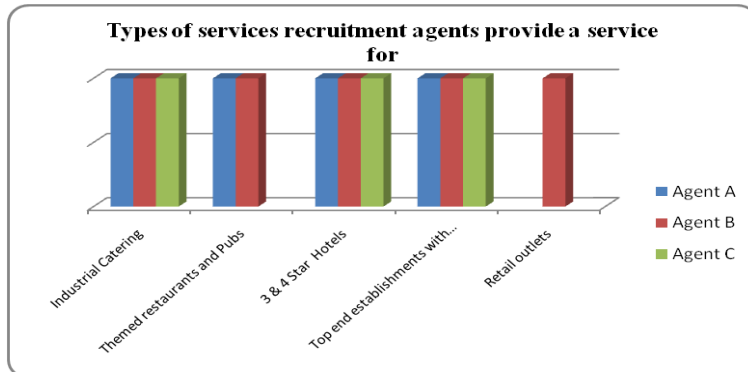
Figure 4.9: Types of services recruitment agents provide a service for

Q. 17) When taking on a new recruitment candidate for the position of professional chef in an 'Industrial Catering Establishment', how would the employer rate the following:
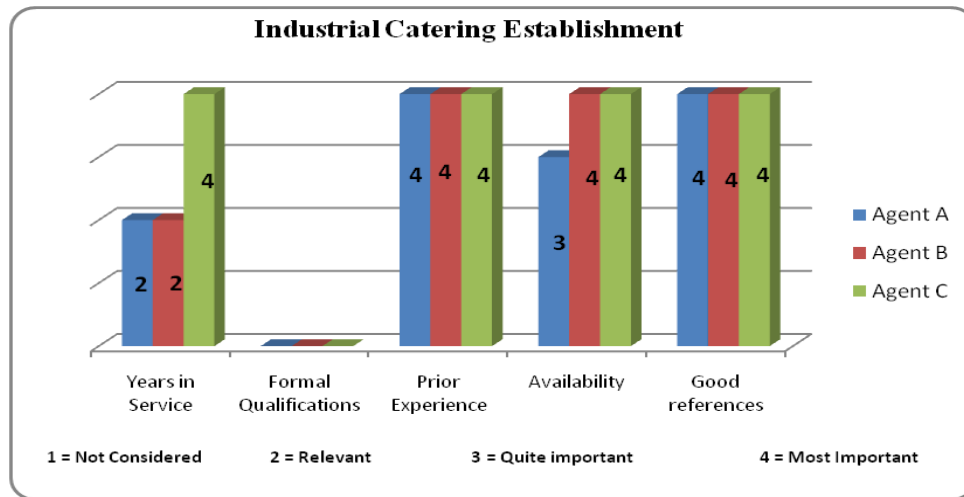
Figure 4.10: Criteria considered in the recruitment of a professional chef for an 'Industrial catering establishment'.

Q. 18) When taking on a new recruitment candidate for the position of professional chef in a 'Top end establishment with accolades' how would the employer rate the following.
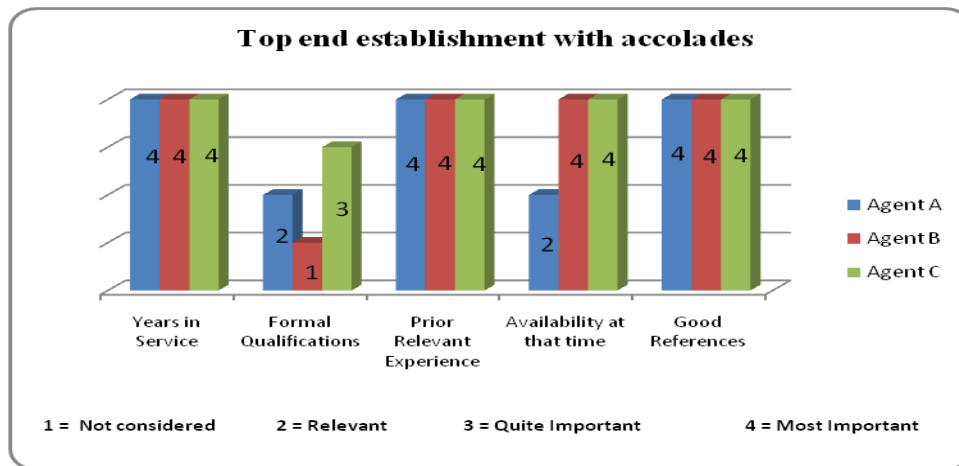
Figure 4.11: Criteria considered in the recruitment of a chef for a 'Top end establishment with accolades'

Q. 19) When taking on a new recruitment candidate for the position of professional chef in 'themed restaurants and pubs' how would the employer rate the following.
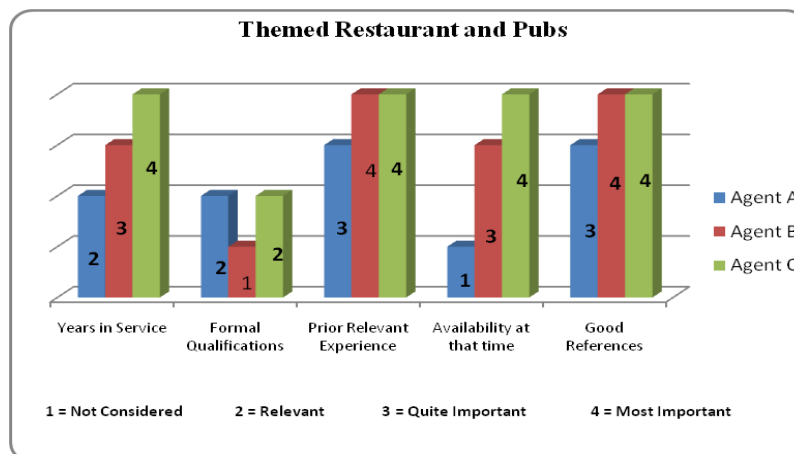
Figure 4.12: Criteria considered in the recruitment of a mature chef for a 'themed restaurant and pub'.

Q. 20) When taking on a new recruitment candidate for the position of professional chef in a 'Good quality restaurant with 3 & 4 AA Stars' how would the employer rate the following.

Figure 4.13: Criteria considered in the recruitment of a professional chef for a 'Good quality restaurant with 3 & 4AA Stars'.

4.3 Findings from Employer Questionnaires

Q. 1)   Please indicate what type of establishment you operate?

Table No 4.1: Types of establishments operated by respondent

Respondents (Establishment type)	Staff working hours
Industrial Catering	High Profile Bank – 6am to 3 pm
Restaurant	Privately owned – 10am to 10pm
4 Star Hotel	Hotel Group – 24 hrs
5 Star Hotel	Independent Hotel – 24 hrs
3 Star Hotel	Independent Hotel – 24 hr
Themed restaurant	Family run – 9am to 11.30pm
Restaurant with accolades	Upmarket – 9am to 11pm

Note - Working hours provides the researcher with the depth and range of specialist culinary areas available to learn and be responsible for in a kitchen e.g. Night shift (room service), breakfast skills, banqueting, lunch and dinner (one service or two per day).

Q. 2) Please indicate the number of years your company has been in business?
Table No 4.2: Number of years the employers' company has been in business

Respondents (Establishment type)	Number of years establishment is in business
Industrial Catering	50+
Restaurant	31+
4 Star Hotel	2
4 Star	50+
5 Star Hotel	50
3 Star Hotel	7
Themed restaurant	50+
Restaurant with accolades	2

Q. 3) Please indicate the number of chefs you currently employ
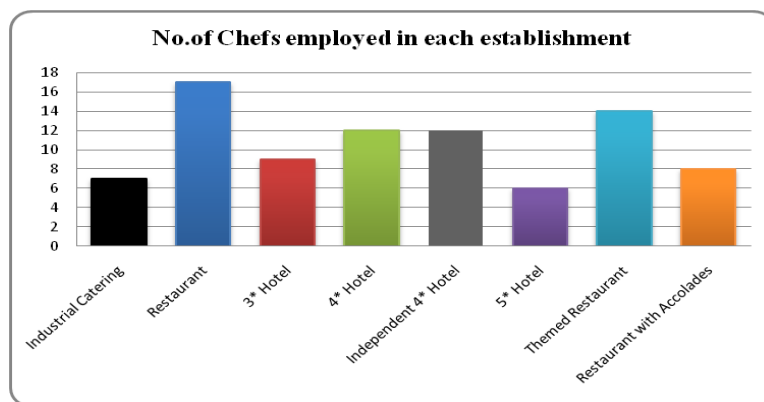
Figure 4.14: Number of chefs employed in each establishment

Q. 4)   Please indicate the number of 'sections' within your kitchen operation

No. of sections in Kitchen Brigade
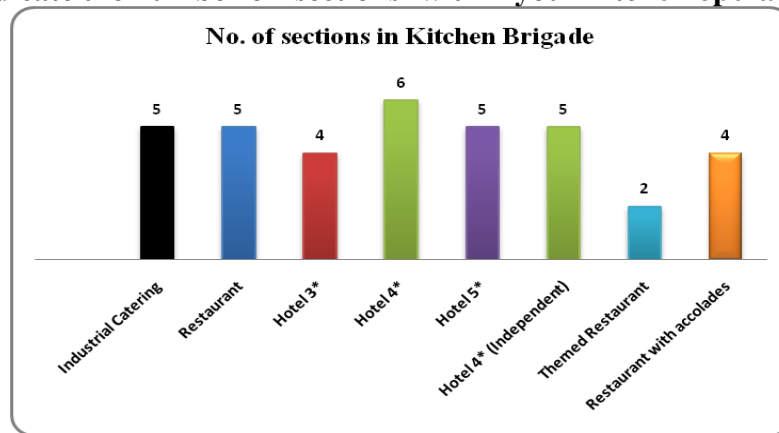
Figure 4.15: Number of sections in kitchen brigade

Q.5)   What percentage of your chefs currently hold an 'Advanced Craft Qualification'?

No. of chefs with an Advanced Qualification
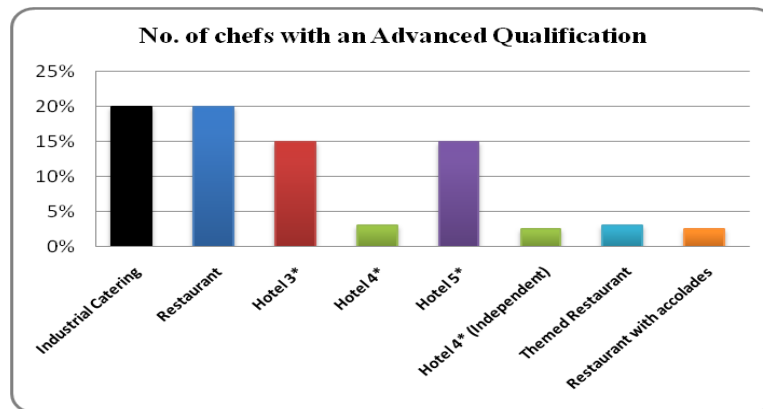
Figure 4.16: Percentage of chefs with an Advanced Craft Qualification

Q.6)   What percentage of your chefs currently hold a 'Formal Craft Qualification'?

The highest percentage was 20%, in the industrial catering sector. The manager explained this was due to three contributing factors. The first was company policy – employees must have a formal qualification before entering into a contract. The second reason mentioned was that this is such a sought-after job with many company perks such as the hours worked and above average pay and the third reason given was that the employer encourages and fully supports continuous professional development.

Of the two establishments with 15 percent, it was the managers themselves who had the advanced qualifications and rarely any staffs outside the management remit.
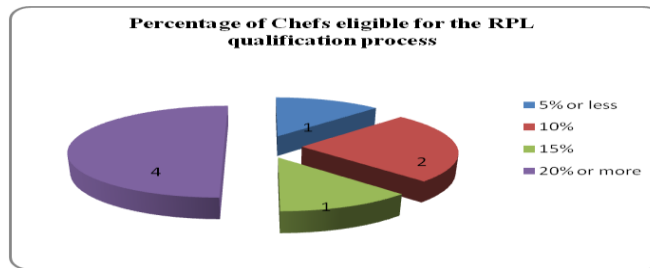
Figure 4.17: Percentage of chefs eligible for the RPL qualification process

Q. 7) Prior to being informed of this survey, were you aware of the RPL process as a form of gaining a national qualification?
Of the eight managers, five indicated that they were aware of the RPL process as a form of gaining national qualification, while three indicated that they were unaware.
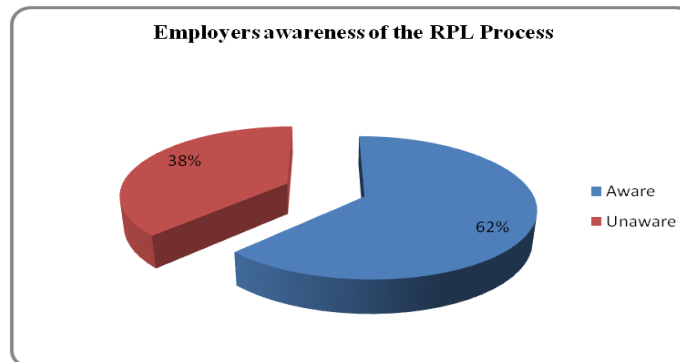
Figure 4.18: Employers awareness of the RPL process as a form of gaining a National Qualification.

Q7a. Awareness
Managers were then asked what percentage of their staff had achieved or gained qualifications using the process of RPL. In all cases, the managers indicated less than 5%. Only one chef (from England) was found to have used the RPL process.

Q.8) **In your professional opinion, how relevant to a mature chef's career do you consider the RPL Process to be?**

Table 4.3: Relevance of the RPL process to a mature chef's career

Managers Response	No Value	Irrelevant	Relevant	Of great value
Of 8	0	1	3	4

Q. 9) **How necessary is a formal professional chefs' qualification for the purpose of employability?**
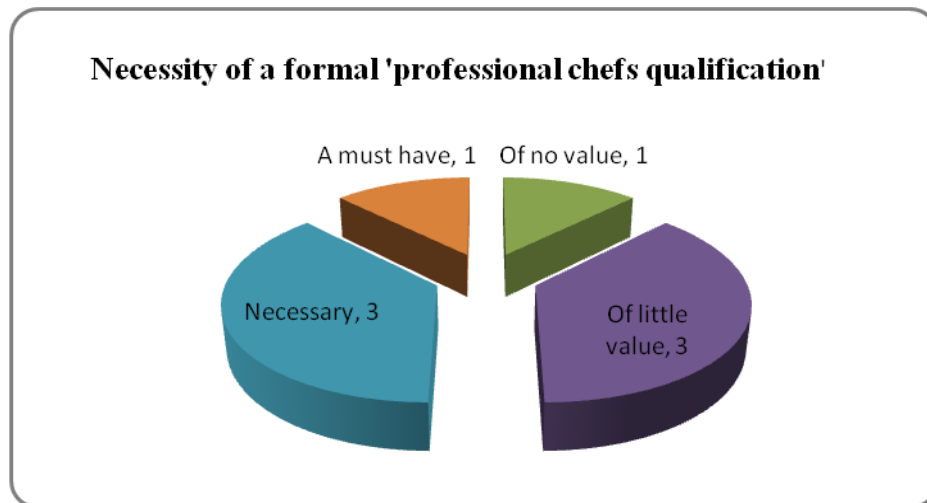
Figure 4.19: Employers view of formal professional chef qualifications for the purpose of employability.

Q. 10) **From your experience dealing with interviews i.e. 'professional chef's' which is of more value to the employer; a formal qualification of work experience with good references.**
Of the eight (8) managers seven (7) indicated that they believed prior relevant work experience is of more value to the employer, while only one (1) indicated that formal qualifications were of more value.

Q.11) **What percentage of your chefs are eligible for the RPL qualification process i.e. Chefs with extensive experience who do not hold a formal advanced qualification?**

Table 4.4: The percentage of chefs eligible for the RPL qualification process

Managers Response	-5%	10%	15%	20%+
Of 8	1	2	1	4

Q. 12) **From the list of national and international chef's qualifications, please indicate using numbers 1,2,3,4 in order of preference, the highest qualifications which you would expect for a professional chef?**

Table No. 4.5: Qualifications employers expect from mature chefs

Ranking	Qualification which employers would expect from mature chefs
1st	City & Guilds 706/2 City & Guilds 706/1 Professional Cookery Level 2 Professional Cookery Level 1
2nd	City and Guilds Advanced Larder & Hot Kitchen
3rd	NVQ Level 4 NVQ Level 3 NVQ Level 2 B.A in Culinary Arts
4th	City & Guilds Advanced Pastry

Q. 13) When a professional chef interviews for a position of employment within your establishment, please rate the following in order of importance?
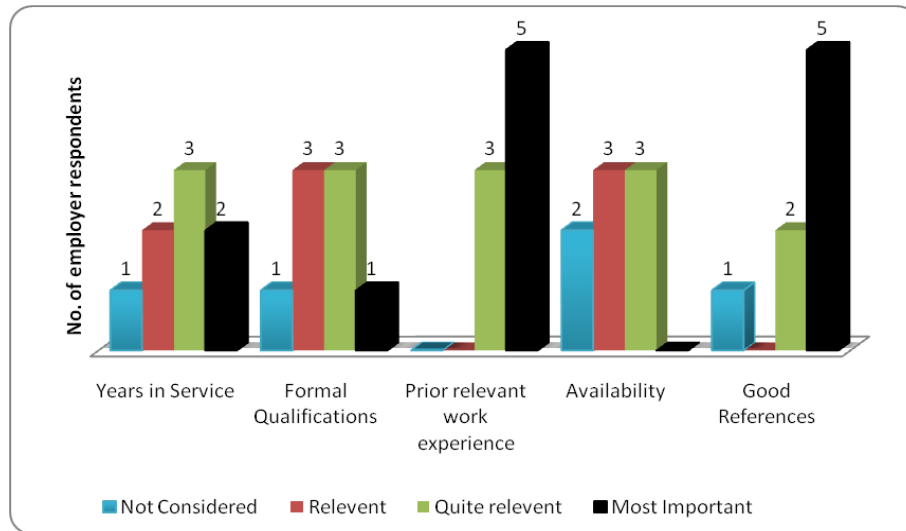

Figure 4.20: Criteria employers expect of a professional chef applicant

Q.14) When a mature employee is 'not considered' for the position, please rate the following possible reasons.
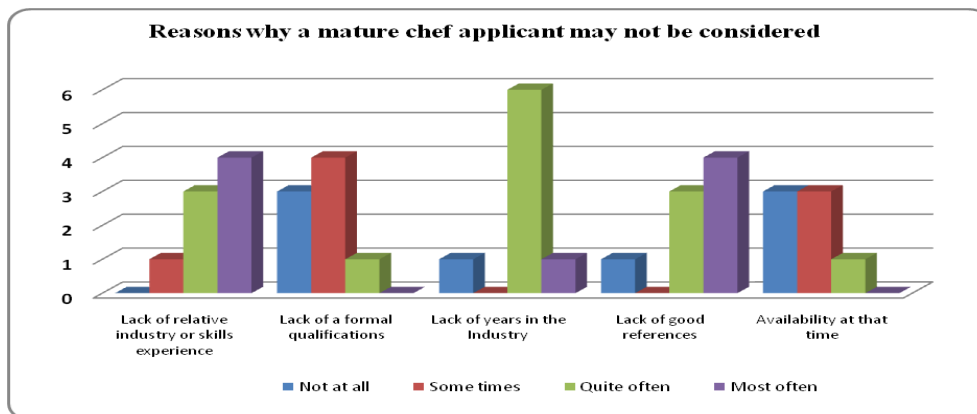

Figure 4.21: Reasons why a mature chef applicant may not be considered

Q. 15) As an employer, how do you view the Recognition of the Prior Learning process for chefs in terms of potential value to the industry?
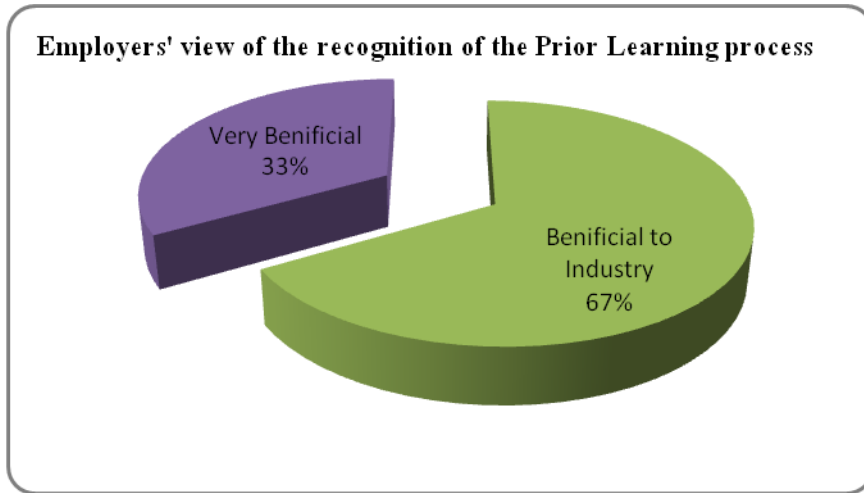
Figure 4.22: Employers view of the recognition of the Prior Learning Process

Q. 16) As an employer please highlight your level of interest in possibly using the RPL process as a form of further professional development.
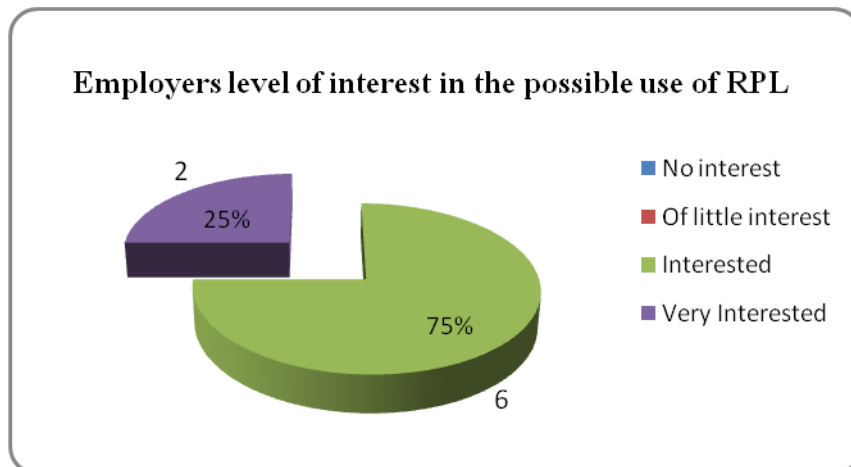

Figure 4.23: Employers level of interest in the possible interest in the use of RPL

4.4 Findings from Employee Questionnaires

Q. 1) Using the definitions below, please specify the category of your employer.
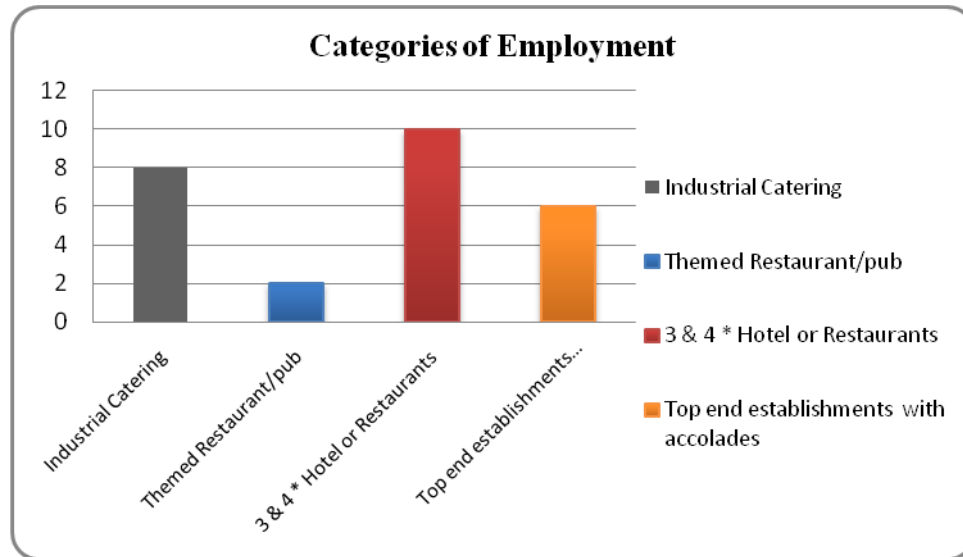

Figure 4.24:   Respondents employment categories

Q. 2) Please indicate the number of years you have been a professional chef?
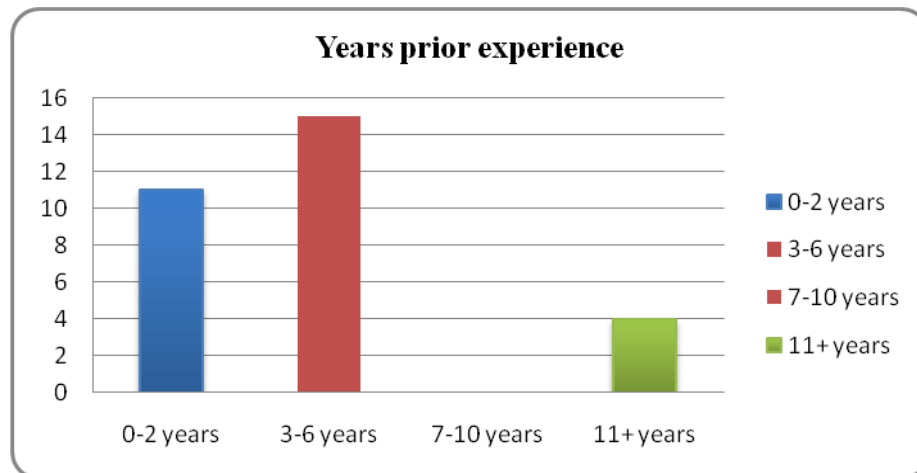

Figure 4.25: Employee respondent's years of prior work experience

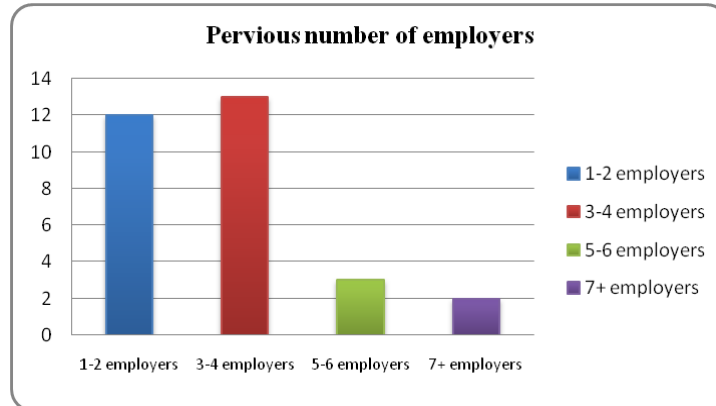**Q.3) Please indicate the number of previous employers you have had**

Figure 4.26: Number of employees pervious employers

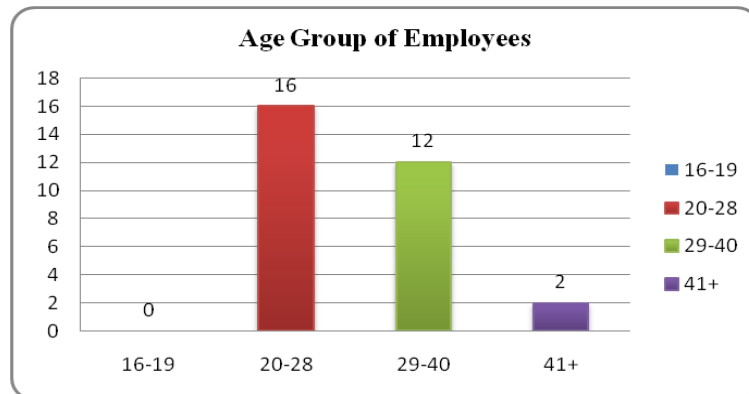**Q. 4) Please indicate which age category you belong to:**

Figure 4.27: Age Category of employees

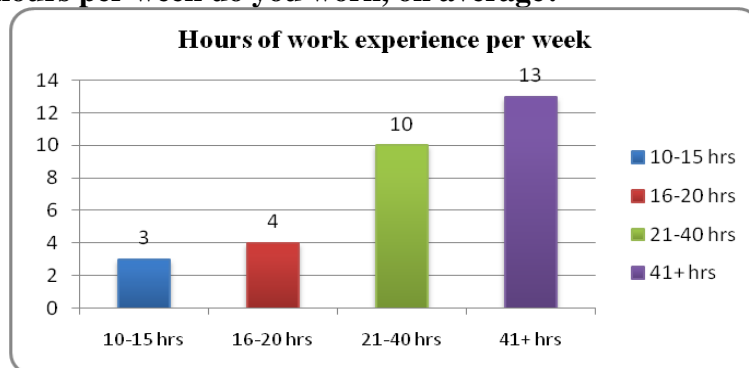**Q. 5) How many hours per week do you work, on average?**

Figure 4.28: Average hours of employees work experience.

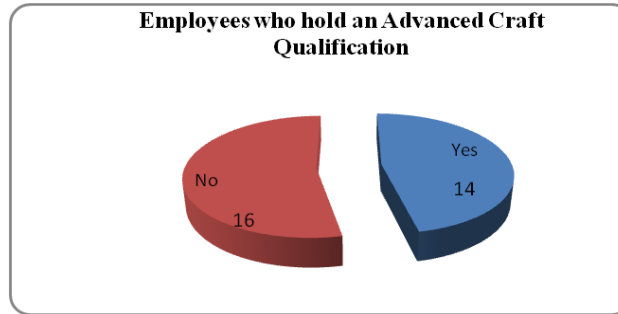**Q. 6) Do you have a formal qualification in professional cookery?**

Figure 4.29: Number of employees with an Advanced Craft Qualification

Q.6.a) Please which of the following is most important for your future career in industry as a professional chef.
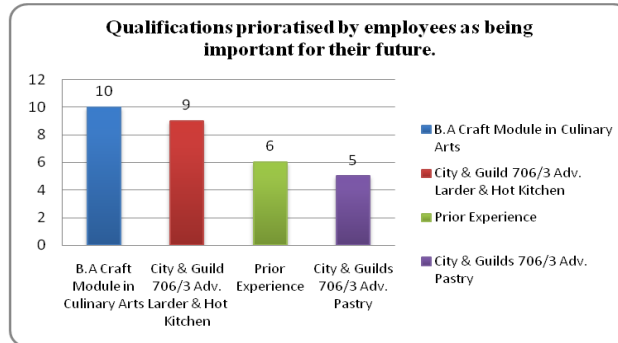

Figure 4.30: Qualifications viewed by employees as being important for their future.

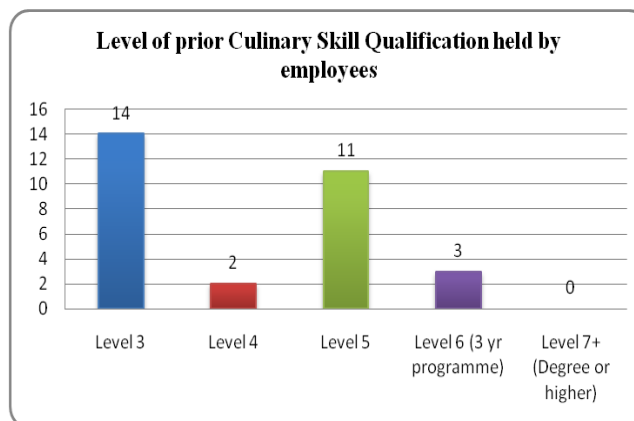**Q. 10) Please indicate which level of qualifications you have achieved.**

Figure 4.31: Employees current Level of prior culinary qualifications

Q.11) Prior to being informed of this survey, what was the level of your awareness regarding the RPL process as a form of gaining a national qualification?
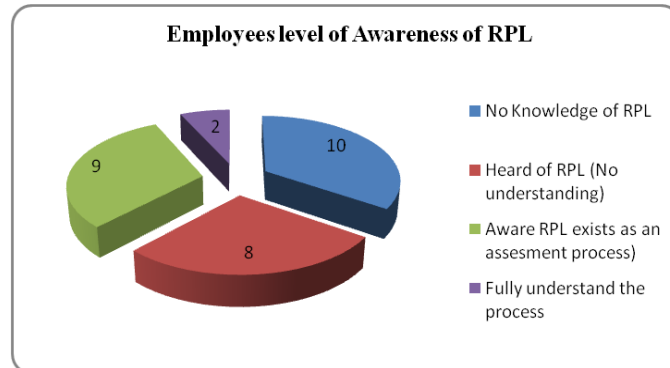
Figure 4.32: Employees level of awareness of the RPL process as a form of gaining a national qualification.

Q. 12) How necessary do you consider a formal professional chef's qualification to be for the purpose of employment?
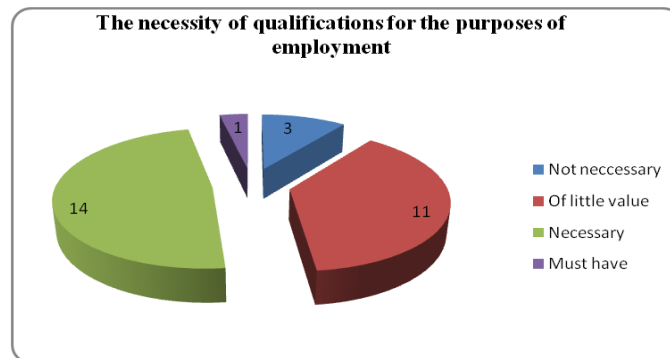
Figure 4.33: Employee views on the necessity of qualifications for the purposes of employment

Q. 14) Have you taken any professional development courses of further studies while working in employment?
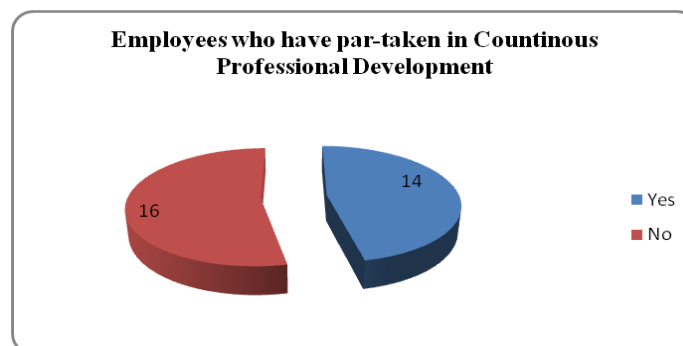
Figure 4.34: Number of employees who have taken Continuous Professional Development courses.

Q. 16) Please indicate the number of specialist sections on which you have experience?
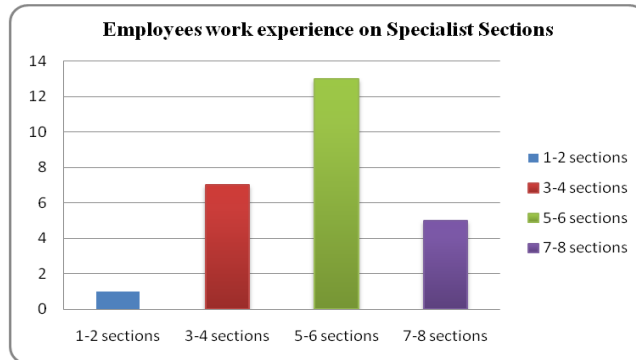
Figure 4.35: Number of specialist sections on which employees have experience

Q.17) Please highlight the qualifications which you believe (based on your understanding of the RPL process) you could apply for and condidentiality be accredited for based on your prior work experience.
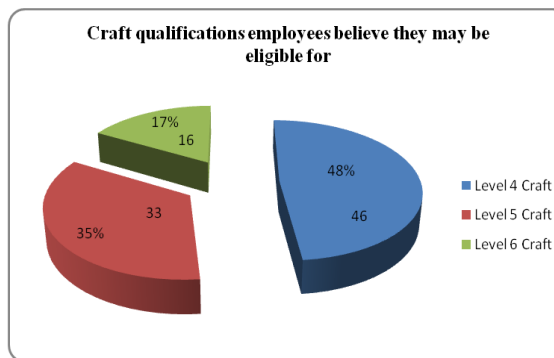

Figure 4.36: Craft qualifications employee believe they may be eligible for

Q.18) Please highlight your level of interest in applying for a qualification using the RPL process i.e. being assessed to see to if your experience matches the skills required to achievean official qualification?
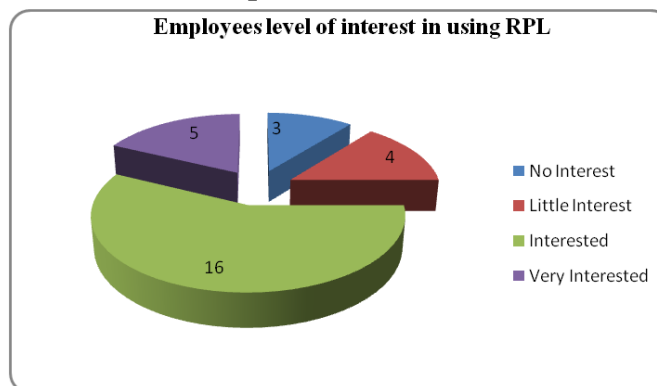
Figure 4.37: Employees level of interest in using the RPL Process

Q.19) When applying for employment as a chef, please rate the following statement on the basis of importance for obtaining a job?

Employees perception of criteria which affect employability
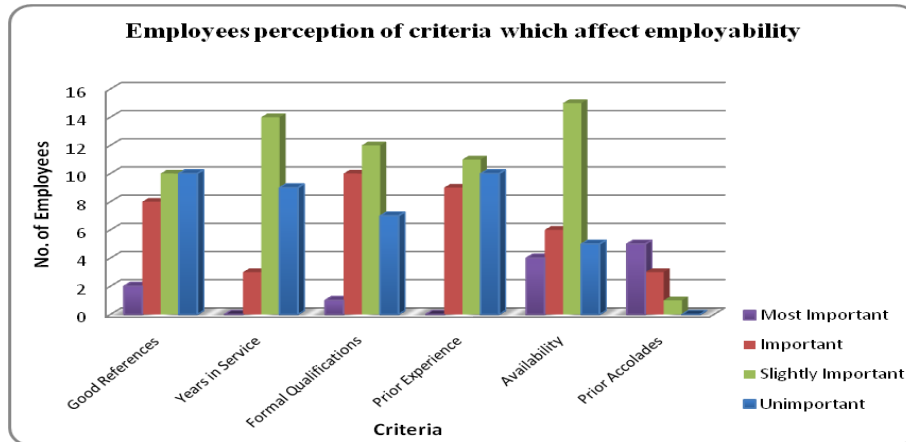
Figure 4.38: Employees perception of criteria which affect employability

Q. 20) Using a scale of 1 – 4, 4 being the most important please indicate the value that you give the RPL process and its value as an optional form of further or continous professional development.

The value employees gave RPL in relation to continuous professional development
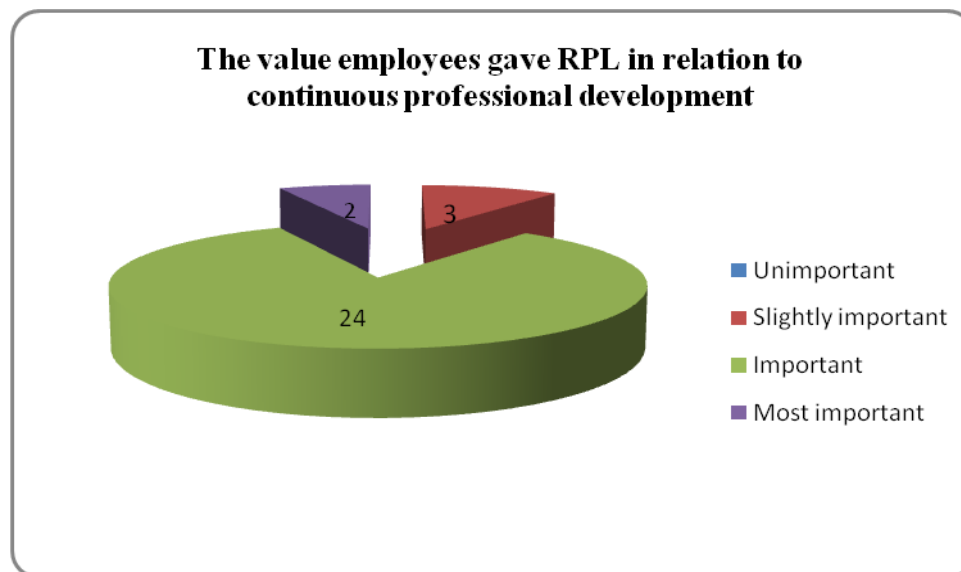
Figure 4.39: The value employees gave RPL in relation to continous professional development.

Q. 21) Please indicate using a rating of 1-4, how supportive your employers are in the area of continous professional development?
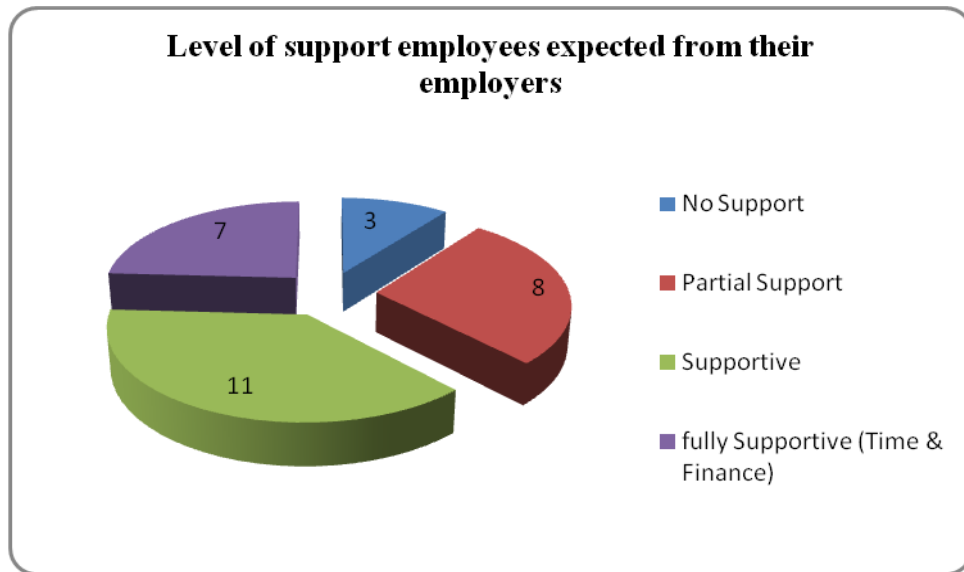
Figure 4.40: Level of support employees expected from their employers

4.5 Summary of Emerging Themes

4.5 1 The 'awareness and understanding' of the process of RPL within the Irish Hospitality Industry

Figure 4.4
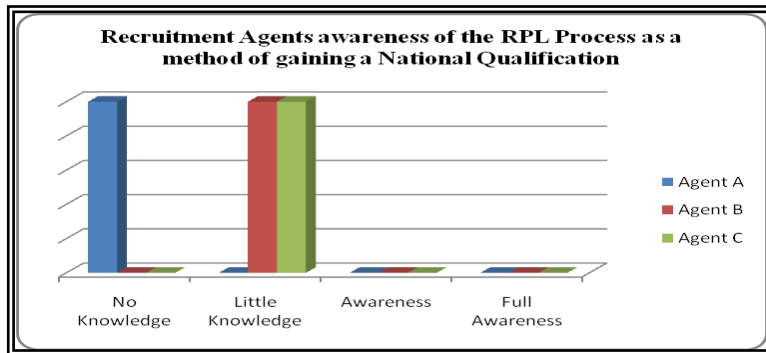
Figure 4.18
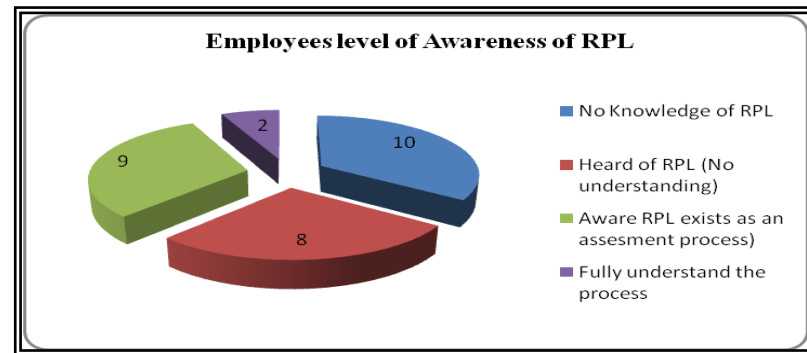
Figure 4.32
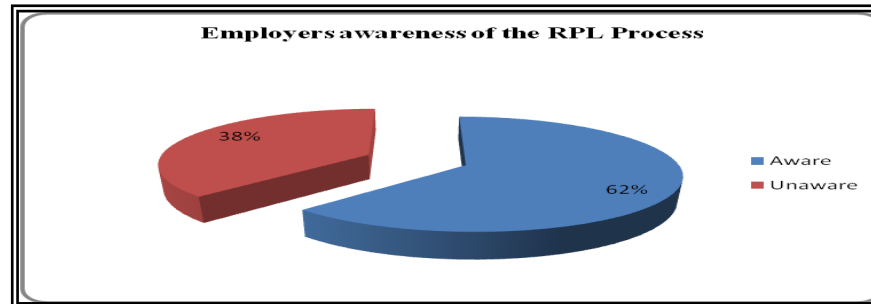
Data from the hospitality industry indicates distinct lack of awareness. Coupled with with the qualitative data gathered, a conclusion can be justified that there also exists a lack of information and in turn understanding regarding the process.

4.5.2 The 'Demand' for RPL of Advanced Culinary Modules

Figure 4.6
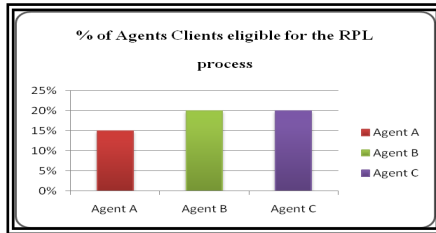
Figure 4.3
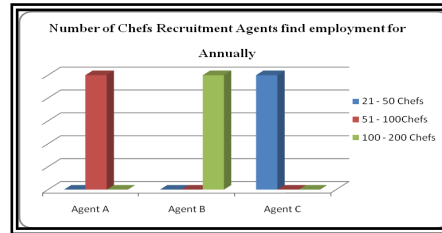
Figure 4.2
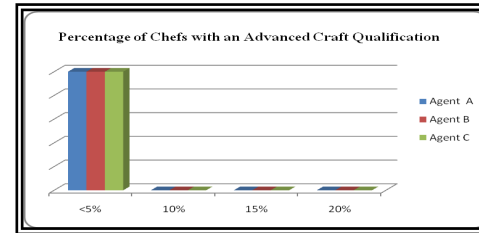
Fig 4.32
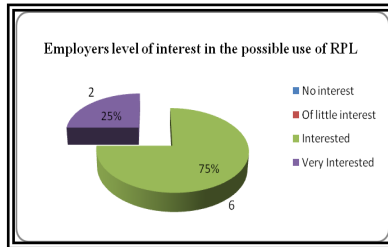
Figure 4.16
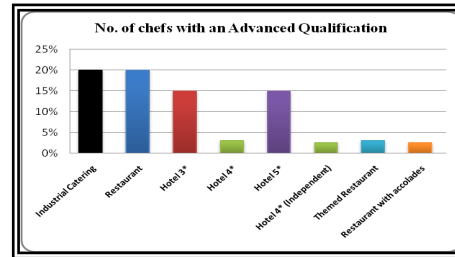
Figure 4.20
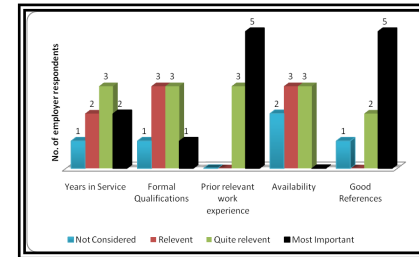
Figure 4.21
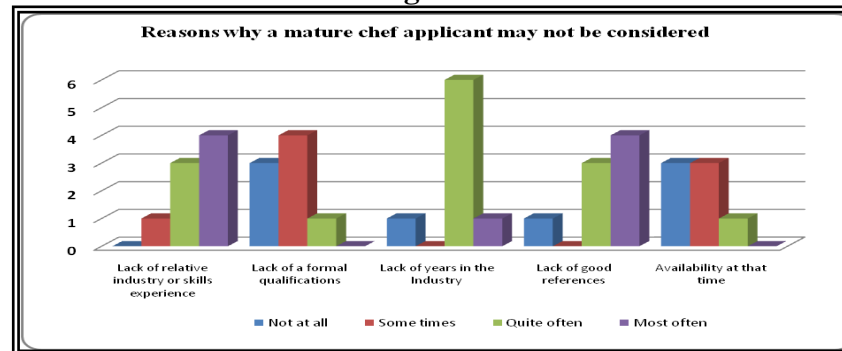
4.5.3 Data implying 'Opportunity' for RPL of Advanced Culinary Modules

Figure 4.36

Figure 4.37

Craft qualifications employees believe they may be eligible for

Employees level of interest in using RPL

Figure 4.40

Figure 4.39

Level of support employees expected from their employers

The value employees gave RPL in relation to continuous professional development
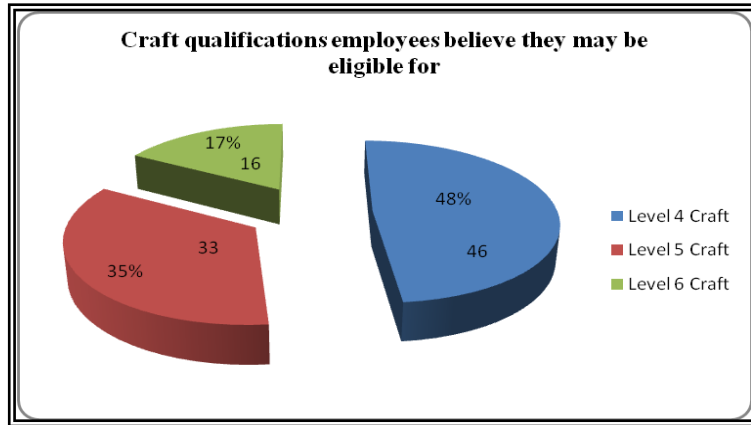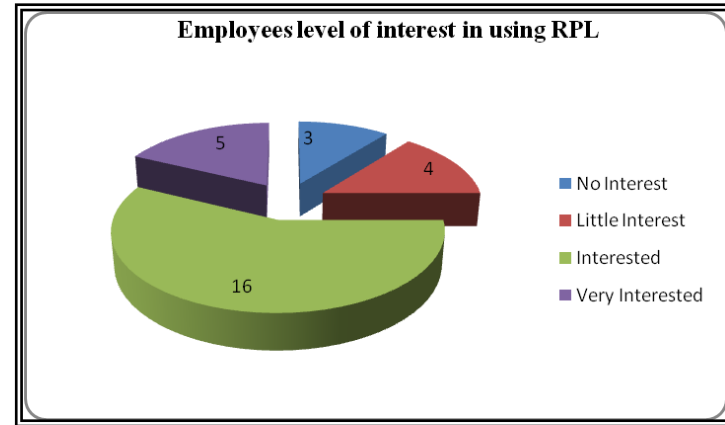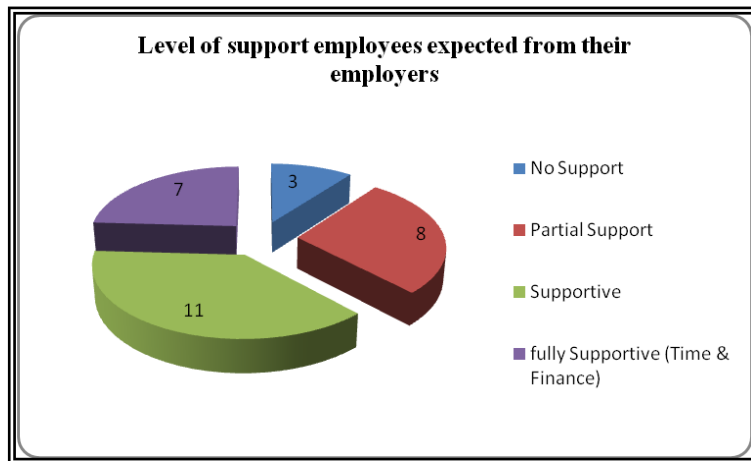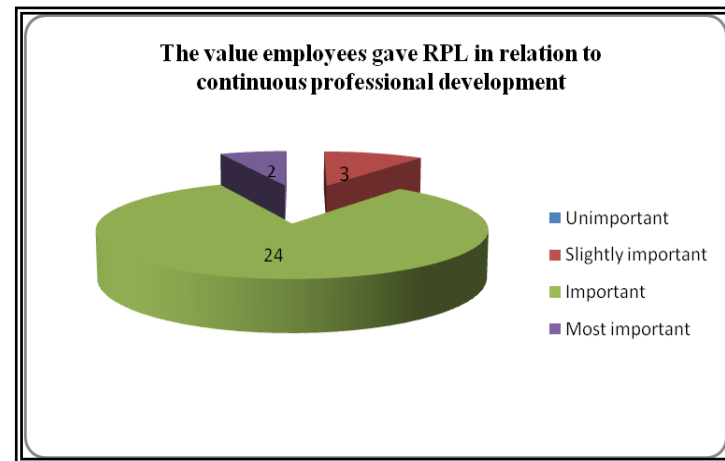
4.6   Summary of Thematic Findings

4.6.1   Recruitment Agencies

Within the recruitment sector the data firstly indicated that, based on their many hundreds of chef clients, less than 5% held an advanced (level 7 or greater) qualification, but that an average of 18% of their clients are eligible for the RPL process. After an explanation of the RPL process, Agents A and C indicated that they felt the RPL process could be extremely relevant to a mature chef's career while, Agent B indicated that they felt it was relevant.

4.6.2   Industry Employers

The respondents who employ chefs indicated they were overwhelmingly in favour of Prior Experience as a priority over qualifications when interviewing for a job. One hundred per cent of the employers acknowledged that RPL is very benificial to industry (Q. 15). All were found to be in favour of the RPL process being used if it were better understood. Data from question 14 highlights those chefs who are unsuccessful at interview stage tend to be those who have not had enough industry experience.

4.6 3   Professioanl Industry Chefs

Of the professional chef employees, all of the respondents believed they would be eligible for RPL while more that 60% expressed an interest in applying for accreditation (found to be true based on data from questions 2, 3, 4, 5 & 16). More than 75% believe that RPL is of value to their career progression while 65% of the chefs believed that their employer would support RPL as a form of continuous prosessional development.

Chapter 5

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

5.1   Introduction

The literature review in chapter 2 outlined the main policies regarding the implementation of RPL, highlighting the advantages, barriers and opportunities which RPL for professional chefs brings to the hospitality industry and culinary education sectors. The findings of chapter two in part, helped to structure the surveys presented to recruitment agencies, employers and chefs. These findings were further explored by way of in-depth interviews with professional experts in the hospitality industry and culinary education sectors. Chapter four presented the principle findings from the three surveys and the in-depth interviews. In this chapter five, those findings mentioned above, together with the informed research in chapter two and the researchers' theoretical perspective are discussed and analysed to formulate conclusions on specific emerging themes.

Chapter five is divided into six sections. Sections 5.2-5.4 discuss the primary research findings of the three survey questionnaires and the two in-depth interviews with education and industry sector experts; Fáilte Ireland and the Panel of Chefs of Ireland. The findings are discussed under themes as they relate to each other and the research objectives namely, (a) the awareness of the RPL process, (b) the demand for RPL in the culinary craft profession and (c) the opportunities which RPL may or may not present to the hospitality sector.

Section 5.5 discusses the opportunities for RPL promotion in the hospitality sector while section 5.6 reflects on the barriers to RPL that emerged from the research. The final section 5.7 summarises some of the best practice models of RPL in the culinary sector today.

5.2   To Explore the 'Awareness' of RPL within the Hospitality Sector

Since the introduction of RPL as a form of assessment, Merrifield, McIntyre, Osaigbovo (2000) identify that one of the major stumbling blocks to the implementation process of RPL within higher education is 'the lack of awareness' of RPL as an assessment process itself, reporting that 26 per cent of institutions do not include APEL in their prospectus and 76 per cent expect students to ask admissions officers or academic staff – assuming that students know enough about the existence and potential of APEL to ask (2000:20).

It is clearly evident from figures 4.4, 4.18 and 4.32 that in regard to the Irish culinary RPL process across all areas of the hospitality culinary sector; there is a distinct lack of understanding regarding the RPL process itself. Of the few respondents who are aware of RPL less than two percent actually understand how the process functions. Further indications from the in-depth interviewees highlight the fact that without a firm understanding or guidance of the actual RPL process itself; the promotion of and in particular the awareness of RPL is unlikely to grow. The data received also clearly indicates a major lack of awareness that RPL actually exists as a form of gaining academic credit for prior experience.

When questioned about the existing awareness of the RPL process within the Irish hospitality industry, McDonnell (2008) of Fáilte Ireland (ref. appendix B) responded by stating

> *there was some evidence going back as far as 1999 but that there may not have been too many applications. RPL was talked about by Fáilte Ireland and perhaps previously by its former awarding body CERT. 'However there are currently only 20 chefs registered to date. There's a big job to do to promote it (RPL), I don't think the industry are aware or they know about it!*

The reason given for this was that *'up until 6 months ago….it was very hit and miss, if somebody came to us (seeking RPL) we would do it but we never pushed for it'.* Mc Donnell (2008:1)

Mr Myles Moody, president of the Panel of Chefs of Ireland, was aware that chefs with existing qualifications could receive exemptions onto programmes however he was unaware that 'prior experience alone, could be assessed and presented as evidence and credit towards a certificate or advanced module. Moody also highlighted that although he was aware that this process existed, he had no understanding of how the process worked and was therefore not in a position to promote RPL to his many hundreds of culinary staff. '*Potentially there is a great demand for the RPL process as they are already sourcing alternative options to up skill staff from outside the country'* (Moody, 2008:2). Butler (2000) supports this point with the view that one of the single biggest supporting factors for a successful RPL process for managers, unions, staff and facilitators is the personal and visible commitment of a Director.

What may be considered both interesting and slightly disturbing was the fact that after many of their national meetings highlighting the need to up-skill the culinary workforce in Ireland, the Panel of Chefs of Ireland ended up turning away from Irish Culinary Institutes and awarding bodies and turned to Britain to address their issues. Until the interview with the researcher, they were unaware that another alternative existed.

The Panel of Chefs of Ireland have already signed an agreement with the Triple AAA - Applied Ability Awards, to send a team of suitable mentors across to England to be trained as work based assessors and mentors. The outcome of which will result in a British culinary qualification (City & Guilds) for both the assessors and the industry chefs.

What is even more alarming in this case is that after interviewing the head of this organisation Mr. Scott Anthony, the researcher found that within the specific confines of Culinary Craft, the Triple AAA programme, as an accredited qualification of City & Guilds and endorsed by all eight major culinary associations across Britain and Ireland, at no time considers prior work experience in its assessment process (Triple AAA, 2008). All candidates, at all levels, must complete a full programme which may take up to one year to complete including a written theory test and practical skills test

5.3   To Explore the 'Demand' for RPL within the Hospitality Sector

As outlined in Chapter 2, Murphy (2004) reports that many colleges across Ireland, after discussion of the RPL and AP(E)L process, declined to introduce this methodology of assessment. Among the reasons against the implementation of RPL, was that many colleges simply had no demand for RPL. One college turned away from its initial pro-RPL approach due to the over-cumbersome and time-consuming work, relative to the benefits of the learners (2004a:7). However, as realised in the previous chapter, demand may in some instances occur only where 'awareness' exists.

From the research data reported by the three recruitment agents interviewed, it is estimated that annually, from these three agencies alone, more than eight hundred chefs are recruited for employment (fig.4.3). Of the eight hundred, it is calculated that less than five percent currently hold an advanced craft certificate or qualification (fig. 4.2).

Prior to a mature chef applying for RPL they must first be deemed eligible. What is clearly apparent from the data is that most of the eight hundred chefs on the agencies' databases are eligible for RPL at levels 5 to 7. Of those chefs who do not hold an advanced craft qualification, a minimum of twenty percent are eligible to apply for RPL or at least one advanced culinary module at level 8 (fig. 4.36).

Eligibility for RPL as discussed in Chapter two (fig 2.1) is based on four different means.

1. Recording of the chefs years of prior experience to date;
2. The level of maturity by means of recording their age;

3. Recording how many specialist kitchen areas they have worked in to date;
4. Number of previous employers.

When chef employees were questioned, as to which was of more importance for their career for the purpose of employability; to have prior professional experience or hold a formally recognised qualification; it was found that both the employers and employees across all industry sectors recorded a fifty-fifty split (fig. 4.19 and 4.33). However, this is in contrast to the data from the employers' survey where it is recorded that the greatest reason why prospective employees are 'turned down' after interview is based on their lack of 'prior experience' (fig. 4.21). Furthermore, this was also the data reported by the recruitment agencies, whose responsibility it is to place fulltime chefs in positions of employment. In this instance the data revealed that for the purpose of employability, most employers value 'prior experience' and even 'good references' over 'formal qualifications' (figs. 4.10/11/12/13).

Two of the three agencies interviewed, record 'formal qualifications' as being the employers' least important criteria for the purpose of employability (fig.4.7) however, interestingly, the third agency, whose preference was *for* formal qualifications, explained that the reason for their choice was based on the 'type' of catering companies, namely 'public sector' industrial catering companies. In this instance, chefs are paid according to a national wage scale and are obliged to have a formal qualification before their application for employment is accepted.

Despite the fact that less than 15% of industry chefs are qualified to level 8 or above (fig 4.16) and the predominant view of employers and recruitment agencies that prior professional experience is more important for a chef's employment prospects; more than fifty percent of employers still desire that all chefs should obtain a formal advanced qualification in order to progress in their career (fig.4.19).

The combined summary of this data would suggest there is a demand for RPL at advanced entry.

From the interview with Mc Donnell (2008), head of Fáilte Ireland's RPL in culinary arts, it was recorded that there are four permanent training centres and four to five temporary training centres currently running specifically for the purpose of RPL within the hospitality industry. These centres are based in Donegal, Killarney, Wexford and the midlands Portloaise. Initially there was an assumption, evident from the number of training centres, that there was a demand for culinary RPL. However, up to the date the research interview had been held, only twenty chef applications

had been processed nationally. Mc Donnell implies that there is greater emphasis of RPL awareness and promotion for 'management based skills' than 'culinary craft skills' and that the focus of these centres is on accreditation for module or programmes from FETAC level 6 or lower and not any higher.

McDonnell believes that at this moment 'there is not a demand for RPL'. He further explains that the reason for this lies in the fact that it is not effectively promoted and for RPL to be effective there must be a qualified occupational assessor in place for each candidate and each mentor should be qualified equally or above the level of the candidate. In the case of specialist advanced craft applications, it seems there simply would not be enough qualified culinary experts to mentor or assess a large volume of candidates.

From personal communication Scott Anthony (2008), development director of the British Food Trust, makes reference to '*the big black hole which has been left since the early 1990s as a result of the City & Guilds 706/3 advanced craft certificate which no longer in circulation*'. It was due to lack of opportunity for employees and the high demand from British employers for more advanced craft skill to be brought back that the Triple AAA culinary craft certificate came about.

From an Irish culinary industry perspective, Moody (Appendix E:151) also highlights the lack of advanced culinary craft skills stating that '*I am seeing poor skill levels, craft skills, and I think this is coming from the fact that too much of the college based training is at academic level and has watered down these craft skills.*' Mr Moody also gave credence to work based learning which he felt would bring back the craft/apprentice working environment. This, in turn, can lead to the opportunity for the use of RPL in advanced craft skill. What seems astonishing about this comment is the fact that Erraught (1998) implies that the reasons a DIT degree in culinary arts was formed in was because mature industry chefs had not been equipped in their college training with the management skills necessary to function as effective managers. This perhaps suggests that the amount academic content which has replaced craft skills possibly exceeded its relevance to the needs of the hospitality industry or perhaps there is a specialist advanced craft stream needed within the current honours degree programme.

In relation to the promotion of RPL awareness among the Panel of Chefs, (Irelands largest and foremost culinary association), Moody (Ibid) states that '*the Panel would be very much in favour of promoting RPL as a way forward to enhance chefs career paths*'. In his experience, to date, there

are a lot of chefs in industry, affiliated to his association, currently holding minimum required qualifications who have not had, up to this point, an opportunity to get into further education due to the nature of the hospitality industry working hours. His rationale for this statement is that *'the higher the qualification and the more educated chefs are, is the difference between improving your career path even at an established level or remaining static.'* By promoting RPL, the Panel of Chefs of Ireland would provide an opportunity for career enhancement and progression for hundreds of existing chefs.

All employers record, that they would be in favour of the RPL process as is the case with more than two thirds of all employee chef respondents (figs. 4.22 and 4.37). This suggests that the process of RPL is most likely to be in great demand. Of the information obtained from the employers and the employees, certain data did not correlate. Employers identified that less than five percent of their chef employees currently hold an advanced qualification or accredited module however, more than forty percent of the chef employees identified that they did in fact have an advanced qualification or accredited module. Upon further investigation it was revealed that those chefs with an advanced qualification, were not all employed in a chef capacity using their culinary 'craft skills', but rather in a different food related discipline e.g. restaurant management and product development.

5.4   Opportunities which RPL may provide to the Culinary Education Sector.

In chapter two, UCAS (2007) reported that institutions may be using RPL as an opportunity to attract more part-time provision. This document suggests its use as an effective marketing tool with many positive attributes, which include the following:

- *APL may lead to an accelerated path to a qualification, and thus less time spent away from the workplace:*
- *APL may prove less costly than fees for taught modules:*
- *the process of reflection on practice may lead to new ideas/developments within the workplace.* UCAS (2007:6)

The DFES (2000) also includes RPL as an opportunity to promote lifelong learning that is inclusive of all age groups, committed to the development of systems to promote flexible entry, transfer, progression and accreditation of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Throughout industry, recruitment agencies report that for fulltime employed industry chefs, RPL would create a more effective opportunity 'in the work place' for chefs to gain the necessary advanced craft qualifications or modules for their CVs. In turn this would create an opportunity for recruitment agencies to offer the chef recruit a higher level position, thus benefiting from added credibility as an agency providing more highly qualified culinary staff. This highlights the additional benefits which RPL may provide to the agency in the form of commercial value, as more qualified chefs are recruited which in turn leads to a higher commission rate per chef based on the companies' terms of business with employers based on each chefs' salary. This suggests that within the hospitality industry there is a great deal of opportunity for RPL, particularly for experienced chefs.

Further to this, analysis from the employer and employee surveys highlight that ninety percent of the employee respondents viewed RPL as a valuable form of continuous professional development (Figs. 4.39, 4.23). More than two thirds of all employee chefs realised, after the RPL process was explained to them by way of the survey questionnaire (Fig.4.35 & 4.36) that they were eligible to apply for accreditation using the RPL process and more than eighty percent expressed an interest in actually applying for advanced CPD culinary craft modules (Fig. 4.37).

This seemingly high demand was in turn supported by the data from the employers, where it was found that 'all' employers believe that RPL is of great value and beneficial to the industry. Again 'all' employers expressed an interest in using RPL as a form of assessment (fig. 4.23) with more than eighty percent of them reporting a willingness to support their chefs using RPL, as a form of continuous professional development. It should be noted that (these results were obtained) only after the process of RPL was explained, where most respondents and interviewees were given a greater understanding of what the RPL process involves. Once again, this suggests that throughout the hospitality industry, there is a great advantage to be gained from promoting RPL and an even greater opportunity for mature chefs to gain advanced craft qualifications or modules.

5.5   Opportunity for RPL to be promoted in Irish Hospitality Industry

Mc Donnell (Appendix D:146) reports that *'up to 6 months ago... (culinary RPL) was very hit and miss, if somebody came to us we would do it but we never pushed it.'* When asked, how as a training provider they promoted RPL; it was the existing database of employers used for chef placements in hotels and restaurants who were advised of the process by their sales team.

Mc Donnell was asked if he had approached industry culinary experts such as the Panel of Chefs of Ireland. He responded that he had not. This information suggests that perhaps Fáilte Ireland, by not approaching the Panel of Chefs of Ireland and association who clearly express an interest in the RPL process and have hundreds of professional chef members and associated staff; have missed out on an opportunity to promote RPL nationally.

Anthony (2008) maintains that the key to a successful qualification aimed at industry chefs is to build a development programme within the kitchens which can be used as a progression tool for all staff to use and in turn gain accreditation.

Moody (Appendix E:151) reported that '*there is a lot of chefs out there (in industry) with minimum qualifications, there hasn't been up to this point, an opportunity for them to get into further education*. RPL could probably be best used as a form of continuous professional development'. The Panel of Chefs are willing to advertise to all their members by way of their website and more to raise awareness of RPL if needs be. When asked if he could suggest possible avenues of support in the promotion of RPL for industry chefs, Moody (2008: ibid) of the Panel of Chefs of Ireland, gave the following suggestions:

> *I suppose as (an association) we hold monthly meetings on a regional basis, I suppose it wouldn't be too difficult to set up a programme of information evenings. Another way we could promote (RPL) is through our website or through our monthly enzine which is an online magazine. I think we have numerous opportunities to promote it and I agree that it is a necessity that we are not training up enough skilled people within the industry.*

When asked how many industry chefs, directly linked to the Panel of Chefs of Ireland could receive information and awareness of RPL, Moody replied '*Over 200 active members – I think the Panel would be very much in favour of promoting RPL as a way forward for career paths and I think that it's something that we should be more involved with given the opportunity by the training industry or whoever is the accreditation body in this country'.* There are potentially hundreds of mature applicants linked to the association.

5.6   Barriers which may hinder RPL

When referring to the existing barriers which potentially face the RPL process within the culinary sector as discussed in section 5.2, a distinct lack of understanding and awareness of RPL particularly within the hospitality industry and recruitment sectors still exists.

It was identified by the recruitment agencies that the lack of advanced craft qualifications was likely to hinder employment progression when applying for a 'senior level' position. It is also identified by the employers, that an advanced craft qualification is desired for the purpose of employability. However, as Moody of the Panel of Chefs of Ireland brings to our attention, for many years chefs did not have the opportunity to attend college, due to the extensive working hours and time which the hospitality industry sector demands of its staff. He further explains that this in fact may well be unsustainable as '*the demands of the industry are dictating that people with higher qualifications are getting the better jobs, so if you've been in a work place environment for a long time at a certain level, I think you need to up-skill or up-layer for want of a better explanation!*' Moody (2008, Appendix E:151). McDonnell (2008, Appendix D:148) admits that even for Fáilte Ireland as leaders in the culinary education RPL process '*there's a big job to do to promote it (RPL), I don't think the industry are aware or they know about it !*'.

Section 2.7 (p23) refers to barriers which may be presented to applicants. Heeks (2003) and Bowman et al. (2003) report that although an RPL claim may save the candidate some money, it can involve extensive time in collecting and presenting evidence of prior learning, in particular, the amount of paperwork gathering which can be associated with RPL assessments and in some instances the students '*were often unable to locate the evidence required*' by industry (Bowman et al., 2003:8). This leads to RPL becoming a major turn-off for both the provider and the candidate. Also, in relation to the culinary 'education sector', it is most likely the implementation process that is the cause of so many issues.

Cox and Green (2000) specifically target aspects of cost, labour time and funding sources. *'In order to have RPL provision truly embedded in higher education these issues would need to be resolved, in a way that was reassuringly cost effective for institutions'.* Furthermore, they identify that staff show little trust in the quality assurance processes of validity, sufficiency, currency relevant to appropriate evidence (Cox & Green, 2001:6). The following reasons for this lack of trust were identified:

- *mature students are not necessarily self-directing;*
- *students need considerable help in preparing an APEL claim and in understanding what is a sensible claim to make;*
- *some students may receive credit that enabled them to gain advance standing onto a course, without necessarily having developed cognitive abilities;*

- *The lack of awareness, by staff and students, combined with the newness of the RPL concepts led students to feel isolated by the APEL process*. (Ibid.:7)

Wheelahan (2002) advocates these points inferring that all best practice models of RPL point to the importance of support and advice being available to candidates. Support and advice are clearly identified as one of the core stages in the RPL process. She further emphasises that relatively little attention is paid to the process of translation, and suggests that *'it is necessary to distinguish between RPL as a process and RPL as an outcome.'* (2002:42).

5.7   Models of good RPL practice within the culinary arts sector.

Examples of occurring RPL practice in culinary arts were taken from four training providers namely – Westminster Kingsway College, London; Innovative Educators, New Zealand, Fáilte Ireland, republic of Ireland; and Caloola Skills Training provider, Australia. A comparative analysis of these culinary training providers shows that all use the 'portfolio' method for gathering evidence of prior learning and work experience. However, with the exception of Fáilte Ireland, all other providers employ a seemingly more intense almost rigorous system to address quality assurance aspects such as credibility and reliability.

The RPL application process for Fáilte Ireland consists firstly of attending an information day. At this stage there has been no prior screening by the provider in order to assess prior experience. The applicant will then be interviewed and answer a set of culinary knowledge questions. The provider will then determine the appropriate level of RPL and a single skills test day is then planned (if required) on the provider's training premises. Should the applicant need further assistance in the work place the provider will allocate an appropriate work place mentor usually a Chef, however not necessarily a qualified mentor. The mentor is in place for work place guidance whereas the appointed assessor is in place to give advice on the assessment process. At this stage Mc Donnell (2008) makes a point that applicants do not use a 'portfolio of evidence' but more a book of questions related to performance. A portfolio is only required if the level is deemed as 'higher level' – above FETAC level 6. Chefs identified as needing further evidence or support may never come into physical contact with their assessor but rather the assessor is contactable by telephone or email where there exists a policy in place to answer any queries within 48hrs. Interestingly, when questioned about the quality assurance in place for the RPL process it was noted that Fáilte Ireland assessors currently hold a TDLB D32 and D34 qualification. Strangely, these qualifications are both British awards for completion of a comprehensive assessor (D32) and verifier (D34)

programmes which take a minimum of six months each to complete. It was also noted that every assessor would have experience teaching at FETAC level 6. However, external moderation of the RPL process and its final outcomes would need to be addresses by the awarding body itself FETAC. When asked how higher level 'craft skills' were assessed, Lampkin (2009) head of RPL within FETAC, responded by saying that higher level advanced craft skills are no longer assessed at further education level but are now in the hands of higher level education providers.

This scenario would suggest that professional working chefs in Ireland seeking to further their craft skills beyond level 6 are left with two options. The first is to join a fulltime culinary degree programme which is rarely conducive to the fulltime working hours of most chefs. The second option is to seek a part-time or CPD advanced craft module. To date, of the ten state culinary providers in Ireland, only two institutes provide such a CPD module, the DIT and GMIT.

It was reported at a meeting with the head of the culinary arts department at DIT that because of the cost of food ingredients necessary for such a module; most institutes have either dropped this module or programme from their part-time programmes or raised the registration fees to a level whereby it has become so expensive that few if any students, since 2008, have registered. This is the case in DIT from what was, prior to 2008, a CPD module in very high demand (Erraught, 2008). This phenomenon has also occurred at Dundalk IT.

Therefore, a catch twenty two situation has once again occurred similar to the 1980s for professional chefs who wish to improve upon their craft skill level. Where do they register to be trained if they cannot or do not wish to attend a fulltime culinary degree programme?

In relation to assessment, other providers mentioned in chapter two, combine a mixture of methodologies including special projects, performance skills testing in the work place, video evidence, oral presentations and essays.

It was found that within Westminster Kingsway College, specific RPL quality assurance guidance materials are issued to the applicants, the assessors and the work place mentors. Each RPL assessor is required to have completed a formal qualification to ensure their competence and understanding of the RPL process. The emphasis, in this instance, is on the preparatory training of assessors and verifiers in particular within Work Based Learning curricula. In order for this institution to deliver and assess programmes or modules using the RPL process in the work place, it is a requirement of the British 'Office for Standards in Education' OFSTED (2008) and the British Hospitality

Awarding Body (HAB) that all assessors and verifiers are trained and qualified (D32 and D34) competent specialists in their profession. In comparison to Fáilte Ireland's current model for culinary disciplines Mc Donnell states that although the qualifications are awarded by FETAC *'there has yet to be any form of external verification of their RPL assessment practice for professional chefs'*.

In a further example at the Caloola Skills Training, this assessment process is performed over two days. This begins with a skills demonstration 'in the work place kitchens' in order to verify the extent of the menu and its relevance to the level of award being applied for. This is followed by a theoretical knowledge test again pitched at the level required. Very similar to the Triple AAA culinary programme which believes that the result of a practical skills scan assessment is the primary source for the credibility of their programme. In turn, any identified weaknesses are developed into a training action plan which will then be addressed in the workplace with their trained mentor together with further video and theoretical resources available online. (Scott Anthony, 2008)

This form of action is taken before the candidate interview process takes place. By implementing such rigorous methods of quality assurance, it would seem that both the provider and industry partners alleviate any possible credibility concerns.

With the exception of Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), who use an existing RPL model which caps its accreditation at a maximum limit of 50% of the units within any one programme; what is not set in stone across most culinary providers is the amount of RPL credit which may be accepted.

Chapter Six

Conclusions

6.1   Introduction

Chapter six presents the principle conclusions from the data analysed in chapter five, more specifically relating to the aims and objectives of this thesis. The conclusions are drawn based on the three main research areas (1) The culinary industry sector, (2) The Culinary education sector and (3) The review of the literature on RPL. These conclusions are then followed by recommendations to Culinary Institutes who deliver advanced (level 7 and greater) culinary craft modules and qualifications or continuous professional development modules. Further recommendations have been aimed towards the culinary awarding body - Fáilte Ireland and the World Congress of Irish Chefs - The Panel of Chefs of Ireland.

6.2   The Hospitality Industry Sector - The employers' perspective

There are few industry employers who understand or are aware of the RPL process within the hospitality industry. After a brief description and presentation of the process all employers are in support of the RPL process and believe it is very beneficial to their place of work.

The majority of employers acknowledge that they prefer prior relevant experience over formal qualifications for the purpose of employability however they also acknowledge that formal qualifications are necessary for the purpose of progression and that this process is a suitable form of assessment which they will support should it become more available and publicised in particular with their human resource departments.

The following statements are an overall representation of the employers' view on the RPL process.

- RPL would motivate self-development and add career satisfaction and '*RPL will give chefs something solid to aim for and extend their knowledge of skills and procedures, in turn improving this industry*'. (D Hotel, Operations Manager 2008)
- '*The RPL process will help young and mature chefs learn and become part of a workplace apprenticeship in a natural environment. This is more important than written documentation as they will be surrounded by high standards. Documentation can be*

accounted for by their superiors. The quantity and quality of chefs are no longer available so we must nourish what we do have' (Head Chef, Rosso Restaurant, 2008).

- *'Formal accreditation of prior learning would benchmark this subjective area.'* (General Manager, Monasterboice Inn, 2008)

6.3   Recruitment Agencies' Perspective

Most recruitment agencies in Ireland, specific to professional chefs, are unaware that the RPL process exists. Most agencies have access via a profile data base to hundreds of professional chefs CVs and are aware of their current and potential eligbility for level 7 and above CPD modules and programmes. The agencies are keen to create a demand for RPL process as they stand to gain financially when their recruits gain further and higher qualifications.   An average of 18% of their client data base are eligable for the RPL process. Agencies should be considered an integral part of any national RPL awareness campaignes.

6.4   The Employees' Perspective (The Professional Chef)

Most employees believe prior work experience has more 'value' than a formal qualification and believe that employers are of the same opinion. There is a distinct lack of awareness and understanding of the RPL process, however after a short verbal and written presentation of the process, employees are very keen to self assess themselves. Professional chefs look upon RPL as a valuable progression tool and are motivated to access this form of assessment. Most professional chefs are currently eligible for RPL modules and programmes at levels 6 and many at level 7 and 8. They are also confident that their employer is in favour of supporting and funding this assessment opportunity should the chance arise. In particular, RPL would be favoured to match modules of continuous professional development if the objectives of the modules were made known to Industry.

6.5   The Education Sector's Perspective

There is a gap in the education sector for professional industry based chefs seeking advanced culinary craft skills. FETAC assess and award craft based programmes and modules up to level 6 and consider advanced craft skills as the responsibility of higher education providers. Higher education providers of culinary craft modules put an emphasis on the academic modules rather than the craft modules due to the burdening costs demanded of such modules. Higher education

providers consider advanced craft skills as more suited to further education providers. Chapter four confirms a demand for advanced craft modules and so therefore it would seem likely that RPL is the one realistic option together with a work based learning strategy.

Since 1999 there has been a major lack of awareness and understanding of the RPL process primarily due to the lack of advertising and promotion within the culinary sector. This has resulted in little demand on a national basis and a great deal of lost opportunity. A national RPL model exists which is aimed at level 6 qualifications and below (Fáilte Ireland, 2008). The reality seems to be that although the culinary profession employs many thousands of professional chefs, the percentage of chefs who currently hold any form of advanced craft qualification is below fifteen percent. Professional chefs have never specifically been targeted by educators for RPL and in turn this has possibly resulted in a lack of physical resources in the form of mentors and assessors who have the knowledge and understanding to implement and control the RPL process. RPL for professional chefs has rather, been available as Accreditation of Prior Certification (APC) as opposed to Recognition of Prior (experiential) Learning.

The main target for the process of RPL within the culinary profession lies directly within the national hospitality workforce. Clearly a greater effort must be made to create a national awareness of the opportunities which RPL can present employers and their employees. It would seem the responsibility lies with those who have the knowledge and resources to inform industry i.e. the awarding bodies and education providers, of which there are a total of ten in the Republic of Ireland. To date, it seems the national focus for raising RPL awareness has been to target the education sector as they, in effect, are responsible for delivering and assessing the outcomes of the awards and urgently need to implement the process by 2010. Although this strategy has begun nationally, the researcher believes that models of good RPL practice should be sought for all specialist craft disciplines and not 'one model suits all'.

6.6   Summary

RPL is viewed as a useful mechanism for bridging the gap between informal, experiential learning and more formal academic learning and for this reason RPL is more suited to work based learning, in particular craft orientated forms of employment. However, what becomes abundantly clear from this research is that most stakeholders in the RPL process cannot successfully move forward with its implementation without the assistance of trained or qualified RPL educators to guide them through the process. Throughout the RPL process as a whole, there are specific preventative measures to ensure less confusion namely, that the process itself should not be overly time consuming for the provider or the candidates nor should the system be overly complicated.

In order to achieve credibility and acceptance, the system should also be cost effective both for the potential candidates and the administrators. If not, this may instinctively become a deterrent.

The lack of understanding and awareness by education staff, prospective students, working professionals and employers combined with the relative newness of the national RPL framework highlights the need to promote the process in a credible manner. Bateman (2002) views these administrative issues as the cause for concern rather the RPL concept itself.

In order that the process holds further credence, industry experts should be invited to, and where possible, have input into RPL seminars and into determining what is considered acceptable RPL evidence. As a former senior lecturer for Work Based Learning in Culinary Arts, it is the researchers' view that collecting and maintaining evidence of skills development should be regarded as a skill in itself. The assessment of culinary craft will, to a certain extent, always be reliant upon professional judgement and sometimes seen as being less robust hence the need for qualified occupational experts to implement the RPL process.

It would seem that there is a great demand and plenty of opportunity for RPL of higher level professional chef programmes and modules.

Chapter Seven
Recommendations

7.1   Introduction

Considering the aims and objectives of the thesis and taking into account the researcher's conclusions in chapter six, the following recommendations were developed.

This chapter concludes the thesis with a critique of the researcher's own work. Suggestions are put forward regarding areas of possible future research, which might illuminate the issues uncovered in this thesis.

7.2   Recommendations for the Irish Hospitality Industry

The first recommendation to the hospitality industry is to buy into in-house development programmes (work-based learning) which are framed around existing higher level culinary modules or programmes which can in turn be used for accreditation purposes. Hand in hand with this, a resource tool should be developed for professional chefs in the form of a book and DVD which detail the assessment objectives pertaining to continuous professional development of advanced modules. Included in this book should be examples of best practice portfolio work together with recipes and photographs of dishes containing advanced skills relevant to each level sought. Ideally, this book should be compiled and written jointly between members of both the culinary industry and education sectors. This resource tool can then act as an aid to developing awareness and understanding of RPL in the culinary profession and bring cohesiveness to the industry and education sectors. This may also instil confidence in our own national standards promoting an alternative to and more appropriate form of work based assessment than is currently offered by City & Guilds.

7.3   Recommendations for Irish Culinary Education Providers

In order to prevent barriers from developing, awarding bodies can do better by providing information about the RPL process, giving clear guidance at department level about assessment criteria. Occupational experts must be trained to assess and conduct RPL, and resources must be developed which provide clear mechanisms of support throughout the process.

The researcher recommends that representatives from all national culinary providers form an RPL committee to discuss and share a common approach and a working consensus in order to create a partnership network which will give credibility to the RPL process and instil confidence in the system. Continuous evaluation may then inform a set of national standards.

7.4   Recommendations for RPL Training and Assessment

A specific workshop should be adopted by all culinary providers to train their staff in the processes of delivering higher level advanced craft 'work based learning programmes' using RPL as a form of assessment. Qualified and experienced culinary occupational experts need to be appointed as external verifiers/examiners by the awarding bodies and education providers in order to quality assure the national culinary RPL process thereby alleviating any ambiguity within the assessment process and ensure that when an applicant from one provider applies to another, that reliability will not be questioned.

7.5   Recommendations for Industry Awareness

In order to take advantage of the many hundreds of professional chefs in Ireland who are eligible for RPL and who are proactively turning to other more 'time consuming' and possibly less relevant forms of continuous professional development; culinary educators need to form closer links with the culinary industry and invite employers, employees, recruitment agencies and hospitality associations to promote and discuss the RPL process. This can be addressed by inviting all partners to participate in RPL awareness meetings. As proven in Letterkenny Institute of Technology, the development of a specific RPL industry liaison person has resulted in a dramatic increase in applications from industry employees and employers (Doherty, 2008).

7.6   Recommendation of an RPL Model specific to professional chef students at the DIT

The researcher suggests implementing a two phase progression model for work based professional chefs seeking RPL assessment at Level 7 or above.

An RPL process similar to the following should be used in the culinary arts department at the DIT for prospective students.

7.6.1   Model Process

RPL Phase 1

Part-time: By work-based learning contracts in relation to module learning outcomes (Figure 7.1). Applicants apply to DIT for progression to Higher Level 8 craft based modules.

RPL Phase 2

Portfolio of evidence: By registering for the programme or module and compiling a portfolio of evidence comprising of documents and artefacts which demonstrate achievement and competence of the learning required for the progression award under the guidance of an occupational expert academic mentor over one academic year (Figure 7.2). Applicant self-assessment guide is then used to determine the content of the learning contract

7.6.2   Rationale for this Model

The modularisation of programmes in the DIT and the use of learning outcomes considerably enhance possibilities for both WBL and RPL for workforce development and achievement of higher levels of accreditation. So too does the facility to achieve a full award on the basis of significant learning. This model reflects the move to a model of higher level learning based on achievement of learning outcomes rather than on time-served in fulltime programmes at college and the growing interest in international standards of qualifications for sectors/professions. This model produces an alternative route to qualifications envisaged in the Irish hospitality industry of frameworks of qualifications and related levels of learning which take into account the National Framework of Qualifications (NQF) the Bologna Process, European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and developments in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Additionally, it reflects the growing interest in recognition of non-formal and informal learning evident in the policy initiatives of Cedefop, the OECD and the EU, as well as by the NQAI at all levels of the NQF.

7.6.3   The Learning Contracts

The option of completing e.g. a skills module for professional development and recognition of prior learning for entry and exemptions purposes or missing core elements of a module at level 8 in the workplace, will encompass the use of a work-based learning contract. The contract would be used to set targets to achieve compulsory missing outcomes which are required to assure currency, validity and rigour of the assessment process.

The use of learning contracts or agreements in work-based higher education is now well-established, making it possible for learners to design all or part of their programme around their work activities and negotiate both their intended learning outcomes (Lester, 2009).

The learning contract itself is a structured negotiated agreement between an applicant and the subject tutor which assists in the design and planning of outcomes within a learning project. The contract may be individual or group-based as is the case in many work-based learning centres and in each case, the applicant or student should retain control of the learning process and be responsible for the evidence of learning. The emphasis is on making each activity relevant to those professional and personal needs of the student which are consistent with the aims of the programme or module (UTS, 2009).

Murphy (2008) indicates that a learning contract will generally have the following elements:

a. *A set of expected learning outcomes (What I need to Learn)*
b. *A strategy to achieve the learning outcomes (What I will do to achieve it)*
c. *The product or evidence that the agreed learning has been achieved (What will I submit for assessment)*
d. *Assessment criteria (How I am to be assessed)*
e. *Timescale (When I will produce agreed evidence, finish activities and submit)*
f. *Signature of both parties.*   Murphy (2008:1)

7.6.4   Quality Assurance

The parameters of what is and what is not negotiable should be clear in the contract so that the standards in the programme and award are not compromised. The model should have sufficient academic rigour to maintain credibility for all parties both in the process and the award.

7.6.5   Acceptable Forms of Culinary Craft Evidence for RPL

The most likely forms of evidence prior to application and upon completion of the required Work Based Learning Contract may include the following list:

1. C.V. (What you have done in the past- your experience)
2. Menu (What you are expected to produce in your current job)
3. References (From previous and current employers confirming your experience and skills)

4. Employment Appraisals (Any performance review documents from previous employment)

5. Qualifications (A list of all qualifications you have to-date including those achieved abroad)

6. A Written Research Based Project (A theory project agreed in the terms of the WBL contract)

7. Video or Photographic Evidence of Performance (A demonstration of your practical craft skill)

Judging the outcomes of the interview process, should there be any doubt as to the authenticity or competence of the applicant, then a practical assessment may be requested.
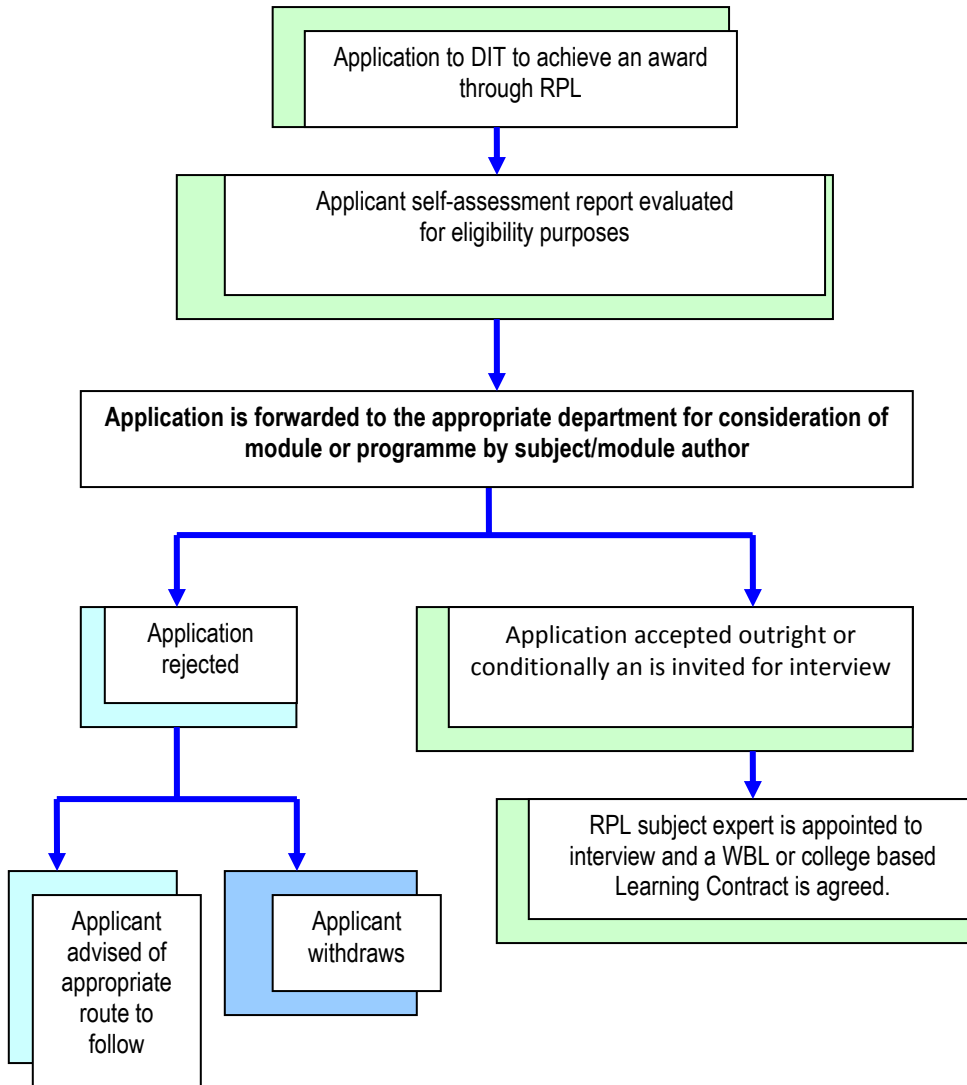
Figure 7.1
RPL Model for BA in Culinary Arts at DIT
(Adapted from Murphy & Allen, 2009)
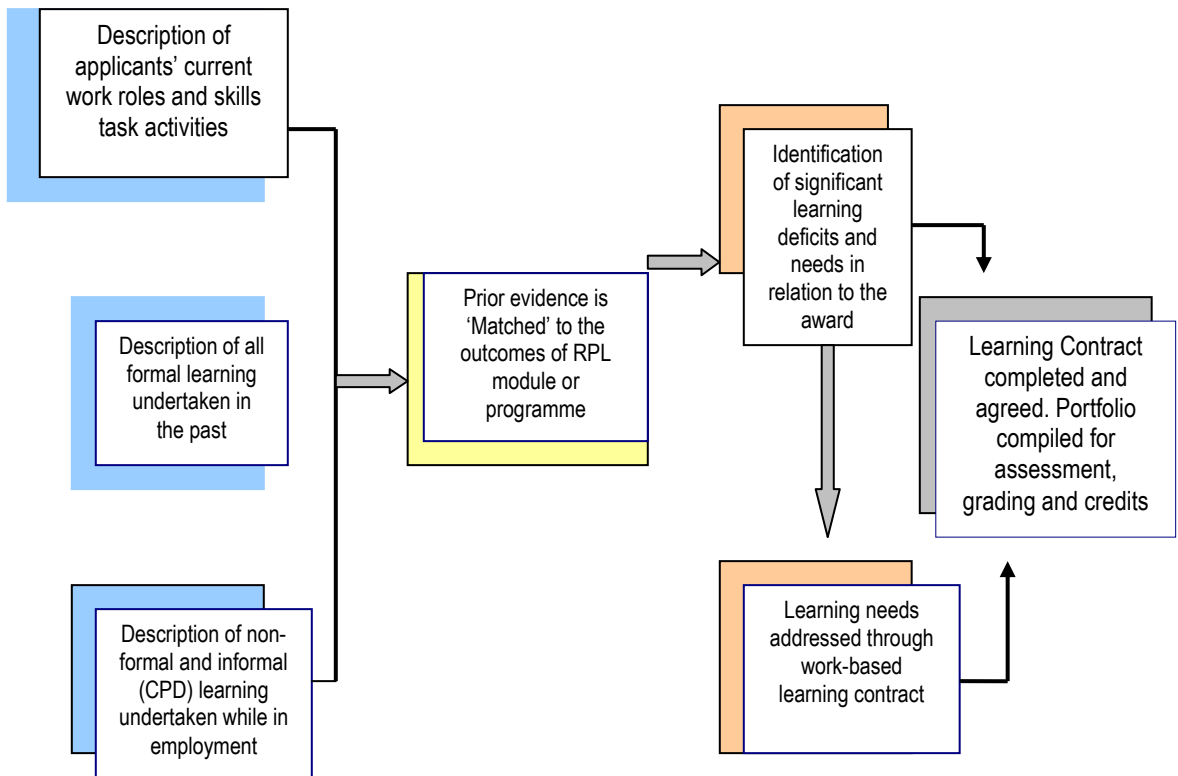
Figure 7.2
RPL process after Learning Contract is agreed

ENDNOTE

A Critique by the Researcher

The research subject was based around the researcher's personal endeavour to highlight legitimate and credible ways to inform hospitality industry chefs and employers how to up skill using the RPL assessment process. Within four months of the research beginning, a major coincidence occurred. RPL became the subject of great attention and debate at international and national level. Suddenly the research went from a preferred subject to explore, to a national prerequisite for all third level education providers to be implemented across Ireland. As a result, most literature became swiftly outdated. Attending national RPL information meetings became imperative.

As a result of the research interviews and questions, education providers have begun to further explore their delivery models. Cross-border meetings have already taken place between Irish and British awarding bodies and culinary industry associations regarding the process of assessment, industry mentorship and the structure of assessment in work-based qualifications.

I have begun compiling literature for the development of a resource book 'Professional Recognition in the Kitchen' which specifically focuses on the RPL for 'advanced culinary craft modules' for professional chefs. The researcher would like to complete and promote this project on a national basis.

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Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recruitment Agency - Survey Questionnaire

Statement of ethics

I am currently a lecturer in the Culinary Arts department of the (DIT) Dublin Institute of Technology. My career background in the hospitality industry is a progression of fourteen years as a professional chef up to 5 Star management level and includes restaurant consultancy and industry based training. My career to date in education as a lecturer in Culinary Arts spans over ten years.

I am in the process of a research study for a master's thesis, the aim of which focuses on mature chefs in industry and the value of formal qualification versus practical experience. The intension is to assess the need for and awareness of the Recognition of Prior Learning process (RLP) and ultimately to find if indeed there is a demand for this accreditation process.

The RPL process, assesses a mature professionals prior learning and or past work experience. In some cases an individual (the employee) may have many years prior and extensive experience in which case they may be accredited a formal qualification without having to attend an entire third level college programme.

The following questionnaire is designed to gather as much relevant information as is needed to form my conclusions and perhaps recommendations.

The rights of all participants will be acknowledged and respected at all times. All participants have the right to withdraw at any time.

As an academic I undertake to carry out this research within the guidelines of the ethics committee of the DIT observing the highest standards of ethics, maintaining integrity at all times regarding the gathering and storing of all data. I will only report information which is

in the domain of the public and within the law. Strictest confidentiality and anonymity will be observed at all stages throughout the research. A complete and honest account will be reported.

Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire.

The estimated time of completion is 10 minutes. Please note that all individual findings will remain confidential and I would ask that you answer all questions as fully as possible. Should you encounter any problems concerning this questionnaire or if you have any additional comments, please use the blank sheet at the back of the questionnaire or contact me at the telephone number or email address provided.

Dermot Seberry
MA Teaching and Learning
Dublin Institute of Technology
Dermot.seberry@dit.ie   01 4027574 / 0863246292

Please Fill in/Tick the Relevant Boxes Below

Q 1   Type of Industry service you provide

Q2   Number of years in business

Q3   Number of catering establishments you provide your services to

Q4   Number of main competitors providing the same services to industry in Ireland

Q5   What percentage of your Chef recruitment candidates hold an 'advanced Craft Qualification'?

1
2

1= 5% or less
2= 10% - 14%

3
4

3 =15% - 19%
4 = 20% or more

Q6   Annually, how many Chefs do you assist in finding professional employment for?

1= 10 – 20
2 = 21 – 50

1
2

3 = 51 – 100
4 = 100 – 200+

3
4

Q7   Prior to the information regarding this survey, to what level were you aware of the

   RPL process as a form of gaining a national qualification?

1= No Knowledge
2 = little knowledge

1
2

3 = Aware of the process
4 = fully aware

3
4

Q8   In your professional opinion, how relevant do you consider the RPL process to be in the career of a mature Chefs? If your answer is 3 or 4 please state why?

1
2

1= of no value
2 = Not Relevant

3
4

3 = Very relevant
4 = of excellent value

WHY?............

Q9   How necessary is a formal professional qualification for a "mature chef" for the purpose of employability? ? If your answer is 3 or 4 please state why?

1
2

1= of no particular value
2 = Not necessary

3
4

3 = Very necessary
4 =A must have

Why?......Foreign chefs skills, ageism and black mail of positions.

Q10   From your experience dealing with Industry, which is of primary value to the Employer seeking to employ a chef?

1
2

= *A formal Qualification*
= prior relevant experience with good references

Q11   What percentage of your CHEF recruitment candidates would be eligible for the RPL qualification process i.e. Chefs with extensive experience who do not hold a formal advanced qualification?

1
2

1= 5%
2= 10%

3
4

3 =15%
4 = 20%+

Q12   How likely would your company be to inform Chef Candidate's of the RPL process if you believed that by assessing their CV the candidates' employability status could benefit?

1
2

1= Would never
2 = Not likely

3
4

3 = Likely
4 = Most likely

Q13   From the following list of national and international culinary qualifications, please highlight those which you receive on candidate application forms by circling the corresponding number/s?

Professional cookery Level 1	**1**
Professional cookery Level 2	**2**
Professional cookery Level 3 advanced	**3**
City & Guilds 706/1	**4**
City & Guild 706/2	**5**
City & Guilds 706/3 advanced Larder and Hot Kitchen	**6**
City & Guilds 706/3 advanced Pastry	**7**
BA in Culinary Arts	**8**
NVQ Level 4	**9**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Q14   **When a mature chef applies for a position of employment through your recruitment company, please rate the following in order of importance**?

1= Not considered
2= relevant
3= Quite important
4= Most important

.	1	2	3	4
Years in service				
Formal Qualifications				
Prior relevant experience				

	1	2	3	4
Availability at that time				
Appearance and attitude				
Good references				
Please state if there other relevant factors of employability in the column below and rate accordingly.				

Q15 **When an employer decides "*not to consider*" a mature candidate for employment, please rate the following reasons.**

1= Not at all
2= Some times
3= Quite often
4= Most often

.	1	2	3	4
Lack of relative industry or skills experience				
Lack of a formal qualification				
Lack of years in industry				
Lack of good references				
Appearance and attitude				
Availability at that time				
Please state if there any other reasons in the column below and rate accordingly				

Q 16 **Types of Catering operation**

The researcher has assumed that the above answers may be different depending on the type of establishment. Please tick the types of establishment you provide a service for.

❒ Industrial Catering – banks,

❒ Themed restaurants & Pub's

❒ Good quality restaurants 3 & 4 AA Star Hotels and Restaurants

❒ Top end establishment with accolades - 5 Star and

❒ Hospitals, Schools …..

Other please specify

Michelin Star

Q 17   When taking on a new recruitment candidate for the position of mature Chef in an **"Industrial catering establishment",** how would the employer rate the following:

1= Not considered
2= relevant
3= Quite important
4= Most important

Please use the following rating	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

	1	2	3	4
Years in service				
Formal Qualifications				
Prior relevant experience				
Availability at that time				
Good references				
Please state if there other relevant factors of employability which differ from above to do specifically with "industrial catering establishments" and rate accordingly				

Q 18   When taking on a new recruitment candidate for the position of mature Chef in a **"Top end establishment with accolades",** how would the employer rate the following:

1= Not considered
2= relevant
3= Quite important
4= Most important

Please rate the following	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Years in service				
Formal Qualifications				
Prior relevant experience				

	1	2	3	4
Availability at that time				
Good references				
Please state if there other relevant factors of employability which differ from above to do specifically with "Top end establishment with accolades" and rate accordingly				

Q 19 When taking on a new recruitment candidate for the position of mature Chef in **"themed restaurants & pubs"** how would the employer rate the following:

1= Not considered
2= relevant
3= Quite important
4= Most important

Please rate the following	1	2	3	4
Years in service				
Formal Qualifications				
Prior relevant experience				
Availability at that time				
Good references				
Please state if there other relevant factors of employability which differ from above to do specifically with "themed restaurants & pubs" and rate accordingly				

Q 20 When taking on a new recruitment candidate for the position of mature Chef in a "**Good quality restaurants with 3 & 4 AA Stars",** how would the employer rate the following:

1= Not considered
2= relevant
3= Quite important
4= Most important

Please rate the following	1	2	3	4
Years in service				
Formal Qualifications				

Prior relevant experience				
Availability at that time				
Good references				
Please state if there other relevant factors of employability which differ from above to do specifically with "Good quality restaurants 3 & 4 AA Stars" and rate accordingly				

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire, this is of immense value to the outcome of the research. I will update you with my findings and conclusions upon completion of this survey.

Dermot K. Seberry
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Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Employee Questionnaire

Statement of ethics

I am currently a lecturer in the Culinary Arts department of the (DIT) Dublin Institute of Technology. My career background in the hospitality industry is a progression of fourteen years as a professional chef up to 5 Star management level and includes restaurant consultancy and industry based training. My career to date in education as a lecturer in Culinary Arts spans over ten years.

I am in the process of a research study for a master's thesis, the aim of which focuses on mature chefs in industry and the value of formal qualification versus practical experience. The intension is to assess the need for and awareness of the Recognition of Prior Learning process (RLP) and ultimately to find if indeed there is a demand for this accreditation process to gain a qualification.

The RPL process, assesses the prior learning and or past work experience of a mature professional. In some cases an individual (an employee) may have many years prior and extensive experience in which case they may be accredited a qualification without having to attend an entire third level college programme.

The following questionnaire is designed to gather as much relevant information as is needed to form my conclusions and perhaps recommendations.

The rights of all participants will be acknowledged and respected at all times. All participants have the right to withdraw at any time.

As an academic I undertake to carry out this research within the guidelines of the ethics committee of the DIT observing the highest standards of ethics, maintaining integrity at all times regarding the gathering and storing of all data. I will only report information which is in the domain of the public and within the law. Strictest confidentiality and anonymity will be observed at all stages throughout the research. A complete and honest account will be reported.

Please fill in/tick the relevant boxes below

Q1 – Using the definitions below, please specify the category of your employer. Enter the corresponding number1, 2, 3or 4 in this box. ☐

1 = Industrial Catering – banks, hospitals, schools …..

2 = Themed restaurants & Pubs

3 = Good food guide restaurants 3 & 4 AA Star Hotels and Restaurants

4 = Top end establishment with accolades - 5 Star and Michelin Star

5 = Other please specify

Q2 - Number of years you have been a professional Chef**?**

☐

Q 3- Number of previous employers you have worked for?

☐

Q 4 - Which age category do you fit?

1
2

1= 16 to 19
2= 20 to 28

3
4

3 =29 to 40
4 =40 to 65

Q 5 - How many hours per week do you work, on average?

1
2

1= 10 - 15
2 = 16 - 20

3
4

3 = 21 - 40
4 = 41+

Q 6 - Are you a member of a professional body or culinary association?

☐ 1

| 2 | *1= Yes* |

2= No

Q 7 - Have you competed in competition ?

| 1 | *1= Yes* |
| 2 | 2= No |

If the answer is yes, please state the name/s of the organisations below and answer Question's (7a).

Q 7a – Please rate the following statements on the basis of employability?

1= Not considered
2= relevant
3= Quite important
4= Most important

	1	2	3	4
All chefs should gain experience before a formal qualification				
Competition work has enhanced the level of my craft skills				
Being an active member of a professional body enhances my employability status				
College education has prepared me best for work in industry				
Please state if there other relevant factors of employability in the column below and rate them accordingly.				

Q8 - Do you have a formal culinary qualification?

| 1 | *1= Yes* |
| 2 | 2= No |

If the answer is yes, please answer questions 8 (a) otherwise go to **question 9**.

Q 8a - Which of the following Chefs qualifications do you currently hold?

Please circle the corresponding number/s - MULTIPLE RESPONSE POSSIBLE

Professional cookery Level 1	**1**
Professional cookery Level 2	**2**
Professional cookery Level 3 advanced	**3**
City & Guilds 706/1	**4**
City & Guild 706/2	**5**
City & Guilds 706/3 advanced Larder and Hot Kitchen	**6**
City & Guilds 706/3 advanced Pastry	**7**
BA in Culinary Arts	**8**
NVQ Level 4	**9**
NVQ Level 3	**10**
NVQ Level 2	**11**
NCCB	**12**
Prior Industry Experience	**13**

Please rate from **1** to **4** in the boxes below, the four most important for your future career in industry as a professional chef. Use the corresponding numbers provided. Example: if you think City & Guilds 706/1 is the most important, place **4** inside box number **1.**
Box 1 for the most important and **Box** 4 for the least important

1   **2**   **3**   **4**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

the RPL process as a form of gaining a national qualification?

1
2

1 = totally unaware
2 = unaware

3
4

3 = aware
4 = fully aware

Q 10 – *In your professional opinion, how necessary do you consider a formal professional qualification to be for the purpose of employability as a mature Chef?*

1
2

1= of no particular value
2 = Necessary

3
4

3 = Very necessary
4 =A must have

Q 11 - *From your experience in employment which of the following is of greater priority to the employer?*

1
2

1= A formal Qualification
2= Relevant prior experience with good references

Q 12 - Have you taken any continuing professional development craft courses while working in employment?

	1

| 2 | 1 = Yes |

2 = No

If yes to the answer, please circle (the corresponding numbers) which of the qualifications below you have achieved.

Q12 a

List of Qualifications	
Professional cookery Level 1	1
Professional cookery Level 2	2
Professional cookery Level 3 advanced	3
City & Guilds 706/1	4
City & Guild 706/2	5
City & Guilds 706/3 advanced Larder and Hot Kitchen	6
City & Guilds 706/3 advanced Pastry	7
BA in Culinary Arts	8
NVQ Level 4	9
NVQ Level 3	10
NVQ Level 2	11
NCCB	12
Please list below	13

Q 13

For the purpose of assessing the extent of you prior experience relevant to an RPL qualification, please circle the areas in which you are fully competent to work, using the corresponding number/s -

List of sections/departments within a commercial kitchen	
Starters - Hot or Cold section	1
Vegetable section	2
Main course - section meat & fish	3
Sauce section	4
Breakfast Chef	5
Night Chef /Room service	6
Pastry section	7
Competition work	8
Other please specify below :	9

Q 14

From the following list of RPL craft qualifications, please CIRCLE those which you believe yourself to be competent enough for an accredited qualification.

COLD LARDER QUALIFICACTIONS	

Level 1 - Cold Larder work (including basic meat & Fish preparation)	1
Level 2 - Cold Larder work (including Chutneys, dressings, terrines)	2
Level 3 - Advanced Larder work (including butchery, buffet work and competition work)	3
HOT KITCHEN QUALIFICATIONS	
Level 1 – Hot Kitchen skills (includes a range of cooking principles using meat, Fish and vegetables preparation)	4
Level 2 – Hot Kitchen (includes a range menu dishes using multiple cooking styles)	5
Level 3 - Advanced Hot Kitchen (includes ability to create dishes from a mystery basket to quality restaurant standard.)	6
PASTRY QUALIFICATIONS	
Level 1 – Pastry (includes a range of basic dough and pastry products including hot and cold desserts products)	7
Level 2 – Pastry (includes a range of complex dough and pastry products including A la carte hot and cold desserts products)	8
Level 3 - Advanced Pastry (includes ability to create dishes using chocolate and sugar work skills to restaurant and competition standard.)	9
OTHER QUALIFICATIONS WHICH MAY NOT BE LISTED	10
Please list below	

Q 15 – Highlight your level of interest in applying for a qualification using the RPL process

| 1 | *1* – no interest
| 2 | *2 –little interest*

| 3 | 3 - interested
| 4 | *4 – very interested*

Q 16 - Please tick the types of establishment you have worked in or are currently working.

❒ Industrial Catering – banks, hospitals, schools …..

❒ Themed restaurants & Pubs

❒ Good quality restaurants 3 & 4 AA Star Hotels and Restaurants

❒ Top end establishment with accolades - 5 Star and Michelin Star

❒ Other please specify

Q 17 – In order to be successful when applying for employment as a Chef, please rate the following statements on the basis of their importance?

1= Not considered

	1	2	3	4
Good references				
Years in service				
Formal Qualifications				
Prior relevant experience				
Availability at that time				
Success in competition work				
Please state if there other relevant factors of employability in the column below and rate them accordingly				

Q 18 *In your professional opinion how relevant is the RPL process as a form of*

continuous professional development?

1
2

1= of no value
2 = Not Relevant

3
4

3 = Relevant
4 = Very relevant

Q 19 *How supportive is your*   *employer towards "continuing*
professional development" for staff?

1
2

1= not supportive
2 = partially supportive

3
4

3 = supportive
4 = fully supportive

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire, this is of immense value to the outcome of the research. I will update you with my findings and conclusions upon completion of this survey.

Dermot K. Seberry
Lecturer in Culinary Arts

Dublin Institute of Technology
01 4027574 – dseberry@dit.ie

Appendix C
Employer Questionnaire

Accreditation of Prior Learning (RPL)

Employer Questionnaire.

Statement of ethics

I am in the process of a research study for a Master Degree, the aim of which focuses on mature chefs in industry and the value of formal qualification versus practical experience. The intension is to assess the need for and awareness of accreditation for p work experience or (RPL), and ultimately to find if indeed there is a demand for this accreditation process.

My career background in the hospitality industry is a progression of fourteen years at 5 Star level as a professional chef and includes restaurant consultancy and industry based training. I have also lectured for over ten years in Culinary Arts across Britain and Ireland.

The APL process, assesses a mature professionals' prior learning and or past work experience. In some cases an individual (the employee) may have many years prior and extensive experience in which case they may be accredited a formal qualification without having to attend an entire third level college programme.

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Please Fill in/Tick the Relevant Boxes Below

Q 1   Please indicate the type of establishment you manage.

❒   Industrial Catering – banks, hospitals, schools …..   ❒ Themed restaurants or Pub   ❒ High quality restaurants 3 & 4 AA Star Hotels and Restaurants

❒ Top end establishment with accolades - 5 Star and Michelin Star   ❒ Other please specify

Q2   Number of years in business

Q3   Number of Chefs employed

Q4   Number of "sections" within the kitchen brigade

Q5   What percentage of your Chef's currently hold an "advanced Craft

qualification"?

1
2

1= 5% or less
2= 10%

3
4

3 =15%
4 = 20%+

Q6   How many Chefs do you employ each year?

1= 2 or less

1
2

2 = 2 -3

3 = 3-5

3
4

4 = 5 plus

Q7   Prior to being informed of this survey, were you aware of the APL process as a form of gaining a national advanced qualification?

1
2

1= Yes
2= No

Q7a   What percentage of your staff have used the APL process to gain a qualification?

1= 1-5

1
2

2 = 6 - 10

3 = 10 - 20

3
4

4 = 20 +

Q8   In your professional opinion, how relevant to a senior Chefs Career do you consider the APL process to be?

1= of no value

1
2

2 = Not Relevant

3 = Very relevant

3
4

4 = of excellent value

Q9   In your professional opinion how necessary is a "formal" professional chefs qualification for the purpose of employability?

1
2

1= of no value
2 =of little value

3
4

3 = necessary
4 =A must have

Q10   From your experience dealing with interviews i.e. "senior chef", which is of more value to the employer?

1
2

1= A formal Qualification
2= Extensive prior experience with good references

Q11   What percentage of your team are currently eligible to use the APL qualification process i.e. Chefs with experience who do not hold an advanced formal qualification?

1
2

1= 5% or less
2= 10%

3
4

3 =15%
4 = 20% or more

Q12

From the following list of qualifications, please circle those which you believe a "Senior Chef" should achieve for the purpose of *employability* or *continuous professional development?*

List of Qualifications	
Professional cookery Level 1	1
Professional cookery Level 2	2
Professional cookery Level 3 advanced	3
A module in advanced Cold Kitchen Skills -	4
A module in advanced Hot Kitchen skills -	5
A module in advanced Pastry skills -	6
	7
BA in Culinary Arts	8
NVQ Level 4	9
NVQ Level 3	10
NVQ Level 2	11
NCCB	12
Please list below	13

| | | | | |

Q13 **When a senior chef interviews for a position of employment within your establishment, please rate the following in order of importance**?

1= Not considered
2= relevant
3= Quite important
4= Most important

.	1	2	3	4
Years in service				
Formal Qualifications				
Prior relevant experience				
Availability at that time				
Good references				
Success in competition work				
Please state if there other relevant factors of employability in the column below				

Q14 **When a senior employee is "*not considered"* for the position, please rate the following possible reasons.**

1= Not at all
2= Some times
3= Quite often
4= Most often

.	1	2	3	4
Lack of relative industry or skills experience				
Lack of a formal qualification				
Lack of years in industry				
Lack of good references				
Availability at that time				
Please state if there any other reasons in the column below and rate accordingly				

Q 15

As an employer, please rate the "Accreditation of Prior Learning" process as a form of continuous professional developmental for industry chefs?

1

1 = of no value | 3 | 3 = beneficial to industry
2 = of little value | 4 | 4 = very beneficial

Q 15a - If you have answered 3 or 4, your opinion why is of great value to this process.

Q 16

      As an employer, please highlight your level of interest in using the APL process as a form of Continuous Professional Development for staff.

1		3
2		4

1 = no interest   3 = interested
2 = of little interest   4 = very interested

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire, this is of immense value to the outcome of the research. I will update you with my findings and conclusions upon completion of this survey.

Dermot K Seberry
0863246292
Lecturer in Culinary Arts
Dublin Institute of Technology

Appendix D
Transcript of RPL interview between Dermot Seberry and Padraigh McDonnell of Failte Ireland.

DS –   RPL Meeting between Dermot Seberry and Pádraig Mc Donnell, Tuesday the 20th of November 2007, Pádraig thank you for your time I wonder if you r give me a brief introduction to yourself, who you and a description of your position here in Fáilte Iraland.

PM –   Yes my name is Pádraig McDonnell, I work for Fáilte Ireland, I have been with Fáilte Ireland for the past 20 years, my background is in the hotel industry in restaurant service. I came into Fáilte Ireland as a restaurant instructor progressed then onto training centre manager responsible for basic skills training of the hotel industry. Now I am the manager for skills training in Fáilte Ireland responsible for all the Skills training that takes across all the centres.

DS -   How many centres are there in total?

PM -   We have four permanent training centres and four to five temporary training centres in rural places purely on demand place like Donegal, Kilarney, Wexford and the midlands Portloais. No matter where the demand would be we would operate have

also developed a new programme where we have over 60 centres for people who want to return into the work force to give them a taster helping with weddings, working a week end perhaps part-time or 10 to 3 or whatever the children are home whatever time suit them so that would be our main and we would focus mainly on level 4 FETAC.

DS -   How long have you been involved in RPL/APL for Fáilte Ireland?

PM -   I would say up till now all in all 6 months, I would have had very little involvement before that.

DS -   As far as you are aware, how long has RPL existed as an assessment process in Fáilte Ireland?

PM -   I searched through some files before this interview and found some evidence going back as far as 1999 I came across 1 but there may not have been too many I don't think it was pushed. It was talked about by Fáilte Ireland and perhaps previously probably with CERT.

DS -   What about the demand in general for RPL in Industry, RPL or APL how many different areas do you cover and how popular is it?

PM -   Culinary kitchen, restaurant, bar and accommodation would be the 4 areas at craft level and we would do 3 areas at advanced level which would be restaurant, bar and accommodation that would be up to a maximum of level 6.

DS -   Across the centres how many 'Chef' candidates would you have on the programme?

PM –   Up to 80% would tend to be culinary, 80% it could even be more while in the restaurant, bar and accommodation there would be very, very little.

DS -   Do you have any idea of numbers of chefs enrolled?

PM -   em, up to 6 months ago no I don't it was very hit and miss if somebody came to us we would do it but we never pushed eh, since our department took over we have been set targets and our target for next year will probably be about 150 top put through at pass level. If they continue to set a target we don't know, we may exceed it we may not

DS -   I guess the demand will grow in the early stages and eventually plateau

PM -   Yes, more and more people are getting certificates earlier on in life where as before it was "out to work immediately"

DS -   How many Chefs would you have currently on the RPL programme?

PM -   At the moment we have about 20! We are going to have our first skills test on Saturday and then we have a few more in the pipe line after that.

DS -   I've been looking at Models of practice internationally models that others countries use would you mind explaining the model that you use from conception, where somebody applies up to the certification. The process that they have to go through.

PM -   Yes, em, the process that our department have developed for it, em, we go out. Do you want me to talk about the advertising and how we get out there and..

DS -   We will discuss the marketing aspect at a later stage, if we just begin with the application stage.

PM -   OK, a call will come into the office, we have a look at the application form and we send them out a letter about an information day. We have pre-planned information days. We find that if people come and they belong to a team or a group of people doing a similar process they usually feel part of it, comfortable and they usually exchange emails. We bring them in, no set numbers it could be five or ten and we bring them in for between two hours to three hours and we go through the process of APL what we expect of them and then we appoint them a mentor and we go through what the mentor has to do and the one thing we do is emphasise that the mentor is there for advice not to do the thing for them. We tell them how to communicate with the mentor. Rather than on the other en d of a phone line we found the most appropriate way to communicate was by email as the mentor could be as far away as Donegal. Any questions can we addressed in the email and we have set ourselves a deadline of 48 hrs to answer. If at that stage it may need a phone cal then we would make a phone call.

DS -   And just before this stage is there a criteria on the application form that they would have to pass before being accepted on the programme.

PM -   No! we would have brought them to the information day. This is where there will be changes, as I say we are just starting out and this will change to having criteria. At the information day they will bring along a CV. The groups are small there are not masses amounts of people, ye know maybe 5 to 10 people so there is plenty of time to have one to one discussions with them and if we tell them "I don't think this programme is particularly suitable for you" and "perhaps you might think of looking at another area" we would try and channel them in to courses available or perhaps they should start off at day-release. The idea of bringing everyone in was not…ye know… they must have some interest in training!

DS -   8 min and would you give them a set criteria of for example a set of dishes to look at.

PM -   before!

DS -   yes for example a set of dishes which would cover the range of skills that maybe required.

PM -   well, what we did was give them a check list, an audit checklist. It was for example a "do you understand boiling?" the answer is yes or no. What we have done now is taken the principles of cookery and asked them "what do you understand by this method? Please explain the method?" and gone through the whole system like that so they would have to have the knowledge in order to be able to answer this. They may not get 100%. All he time they are filling that in they are linking with their mentor who would be a qualified chef who would have the qualifications to teach

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the level that they are mentoring. The mentor who is teaching at level 6, he must have at least taught it at level 6.

DS -   So that covers the quality assurance aspect

PM -   ye, we have also separated the mentor and the assessor, we found that that was one of the little flaws that was in it, that it was often the same person, so the mentor gets the book, checks off the book, may not be happy and sends it back o the person.

DS -   that book is a portfolio of evidence? Or what is it…

PM -   its questions on the processes what they have done, it's not really a portfolio of evidence. At higher level we do more portfolio but for craft it's more questioning that they can do it which goes back to the mentor who decides that the person is eligible for a skills test. The person is invited for a skills test then we appoint an assessor and we carry out the assessment in one of our 4 training centres. em, the assessors that would be assessing would be qualified assessors

External disruption – folder 1 005/005

DS -   the assessors

PM -   again they would have qualified assessors from the city and guilds they would have D32 or D34 they would also have taught to a level 6 so they would know what the standard would be. The Chef is invited in for a skills test, they would be issued a menu that morning covering as many skills as possible when carrying out the test. We usually have a ratio of 1 to five assessors to chefs and all of the time they would be marking their skills, their hygiene and during the assessment we would be asking them general knowledge questions, reassuring ourselves that they do know what's in their books. Then they would put up 2 or 4 portions of the dish and it is tested. There will also have to be, we will inform FETAC we a skills test is being carried out that they may send a….

DS -   an external verifier

PM -   an external assessor to it. Up till now we have never had one but we will be insisting that do at least one or two then we recommend them for certification. So that's the plan, the model at the minute.

DS -   very good.

Pm -   Probably if we were to look at a flaw in the criteria at the moment is the fact that people turn up expecting to get on the programme when they are just simply not qualified so we are debating what is best to do it.

DS -   Have you come up against any barriers to the setting up of the process? When you were re-valuating your application form would that have been the only area to re-evaluate?

PM -   Initially we used to make a judgement based just on the application form weather the person could go forward or not and we taught this was unfair, in hindsight im not sure weather it was totally unfair, I think we are going to revisit that. As for barriers, because of the department we are in its one of our core tasks for the year, we don't see any internal barriers, once we keep within the boundaries of FETAC and that we also keep the level of certificate, that were not see to be giving out certificates willy nilly I don't think there is any barriers and that's one thing that were very very conscience of..

Ds -   so the lack of barriers, does that suggest that there is a quite a good demand for RPL or

Pm -   em, ok well the barrier for internal no! the barriers for external, there's a big job to do to promote it, I don't think the industry are aware or they know about it !
Folder 1 005/005   3:37

DS -   that's actually my next question, how is awareness in industry both for industry staff and employers? What kind of marketing strategy have you got and awareness strategy do you use?

PM -   What have promoted it through the IHF and the RAI

DS -   sorry could RAF and IHI !!?

PM -   the Irish Hotel federation and the Restaurant Association of Ireland and will be talking to the Catering Managers association. We have a whole of people entering hotels around the country for marketing and things like placements so its going to be part of everyone's brief to be a kin of sales person for all our programmes. In that way we've got into Adare Manor. Recently we did an information day at one of their employee meetings with 50 people there. As each one came in we asked them how many years they had been working there and we calculated that there was over 900 years of experience in the room and none of them had a qualification. So what we did was try to sell it There biggest barrier was fear. We highlighted the fact that we will not point out that you don't know this or you don't know that so we ended up with six or seven but we recon it will be a slow process then when others see these being presented with their certificates they would then say well, if she can do! it I can do it!
We also held a meeting to get the colleges on board or rather to let them know how we do it.

DS -   So you target Institutions, organisations..?

PM -   Institutions, organisations any where there are people interested in certification and training and we reckon that this is the only way to go forward.

DS -   The qualifications themselves are for the employees, how the employers reach to the process. 1 005/005   637

PM -   I think the only way the employers come on board is with education so we make them aware of it, There is a fee of €85 im not sure if the employee has to pay it or the employer has to pay it. I think sometimes the employer feels that if the employee gets the education and the training then the employee will simply leave, wont stick around which is probably a little narrow minded. We will have to encourage the employer to educate the staff because we are not able to get to all the employees, definitely wont.

DS -   What would say are the key drivers to the whole process is it things like policy or a demand for it.

PM -   em, at this stage I don't think there is a demand for it because I don't think there is enough awareness of it. The thing that's driving it is the APL department, myself and the team and our targets. Setting targets and achieving our targets are what motivates us. We set ourselves realistic targets to achieve.

DS -   Would you say that those targets are a result of policy?

PM -   Probably on a higher level and upwards. Failte Ireland director will be pushing that we have an APL process working now. I see an area that may come in is the hospital catering where employment is driven by certificates.
If they have a level 6 they will get onto a higher pay scale but im not sure too many people working in hospitals would be able for level 6. They may be very good at

institutional cooking but where they may not have the skills at level 6.   1 005/005
9 30

DS - `   And finally, from your experience so far with RPL obviously policy is there and it
must be implemented, could you give some recommendations, what would be the
top two or three key areas of importance when setting up a system for RPL?
PM -   Well policy you have to abide by policy!
DS -   but when setting up RPL could you give some idea of how, recommendation for
setting the up process.
PM -   You have to have people responsible for it, its no good having it as an add on "by
the way your responsible for APL next Monday". You have to give the resources,
financial and human resources to the job. Other than that If it's just a tag on its not
going to work. I think the people have to have the interest aswell, the people that
are selling the product that's going to be there have to have the interest to do it and
I think they have to have the know how, they need to know the industry. It's no
good having somebody in an office that has never worked in the industry.
DS -   If policy demands that they have this, where does one get this information is it at
open days? Does FETAC have open days?

PM -   FETAC do have an APL department. Angela Lamkin is responsible for APL and
pushing it. They have been throughout Europe looking at different processes and so
on but I think the passion and the resources must be put into it!! 1 005/005   11.20
DS -   Padraig, thank you very much for your time
PM -   thank you, well I hope you got some answers that you were looking for.

Finished

Appendix E
Transcript of RPL interview between Dermot Seberry and Myles Moody CEO of the Panel of Chefs of Ireland

DS –   Interview on the 18th of December with Myles Moody the CEO of the Panel of
Chefs of Ireland, Myles thank you for coming along, if you wouldn't mind giving a
brief intro into who you are and what your about with regards to industry and with
in the Panel please.
MM –   My name is Myles Moody, I have been a chef for in excess of 25 years and at
present I'm the CEO of the Panel of chefs of Ireland. I've held other positions in the
past. I've competed in the world competition, I have been involved in running the
WACS world congress (*Culinary World Championships*) competition and Chef
Ireland (*Irish National culinary championships*)on a number of occasions. For a day
job I actually work as group Executive Chef with the compass group as Executive
chef for Ireland for the Eurest side of the business which is business and industry
based. I've been in that position for the past three years and before that I worked for
compass on a site and before that I worked in fine dining and hotels.

DS -   and the Panel of chefs, would you give us a brief overview what it's about the Panel themselves please.

MM -   OK well I suppose we'd like to think of the Panel of Chefs as the umbrella professional chefs and organisation for Ireland. It has been in existence since 1958 so its our 50th anniversary in 2008. Basically it's designed around skills for chefs, promoting craft skills and promotes chefs in industry through competition and learning and we try and organise ourselves on a regional basis and send teams of chefs to the culinary Olympics and Hotelympia (*a European wide competition*) through national sponsorship and we run local meeting where we would run food meetings and that sort of thing.

DS -   So its completely national?

MM -   Yes

DS -   So you have branches of?

MM -   yea we'd have different branches around the country, the biggest branch is in Leinster based in Dublin. There's one in the south east which takes in Waterford and Wexford, Tipperary and Killkenny region. Then you've got one in Munster which takes in some of Tipperary obviously, Cork, Kerry and Limerick area. One in the west which takes in the west of Ireland and one in the North West which takes in Donegal, Monaghan, Sligo, Leitrim that area.

DS -   Myles, in your experience to date, in industry, do you honestly think there is a demand for work based training?

MM -   I've come to believe in the past year or two that there is a greater demand than there has been in the past for work based learning and this is based on the fact that in industry at the moment I am seeing poor skill levels and craft skills and I think this is coming from the fact that too much of the college based training is at academic level and has watered down the craft skills. So hopefully by work based training we would bring back the craft/apprentice working environment if it were controlled in a proper manner.

DS -   Myles the focus of the interview here is RPL the Recognition of Prior Learning, before this interview was arranged, what was your knowledge or awareness of the recognition of or accreditation for prior learning as a work based qualification.

MM -   Em, I suppose I wouldn't have only come to my attention with the BA in Culinary Arts (at DIT) and some colleges are now recognising that work based learning as part of the modular process for degree orientation, so if you have a 706/1, 706/2 or 706/3 you are probably given credit towards your arts degree, access to or it gains you on to the course based on your work based place learning.

DS -   (010/012/4:33) and based on what you understand of RPL, do you believe this could be of benefit to an unqualified Senior Chef for example or should I say a Senior Chef who has no advanced qualifications, do you think it is of any benefit to get an advanced qualification?

MM -   I think in the present climate it is always beneficial to have a qualification and the higher the qualification in my opinion and the more educated you are its always the difference between improving your career path even at an established level or staying static. My opinion is that we all need to continue learning and that if you can achieve, well the demands of the industry I suppose are dictating that people with higher qualifications are getting the better jobs, so if you've been in a work

place environment for a long time at a certain level, I think you need to up-skill or up-layer for want of a better explanation!

DS -   So use it as a continuous professional development?

MM -   yes to use as continuous professional development is probably best *(described)*

DS -   010/012/05:37 Have you heard of or know of any other alternatives that chefs could use where RPL is not involved, industry based, work based programme?

MM -   Not up to recently with experienced chefs with minimum qualifications to be honest, I suppose there is a lot of chefs out there with a minimum qualification, there hasn't been up to this point an opportunity to get into further education based on their work place based learning and that's across more industries have our own, that's become more relevant, from that point of view the Panel of Chefs do know where work based learning is becoming a feature for instance in the UK there is the AAA programme which is at the moment focused on more basic skills, craft skills going back to more apprentice based programme.

DS -   Myles , would you consider any proportion of your members of the Panel of Chefs of Ireland to be qualified to be an assessor or a mentor fro programmes such as the AAA or RPL, do you think they are at that level. .

MM -   Yes and no, yes from the point of view that they have the skills required and the craft skills required based on the fact that a lot of them will have judged a lot of culinary competitions, involved in international culinary competition and competing in international competition, they probably haven't been trained or would need training in assessing and in order to get proficiency in assessing people for mentoring or even for assessing exams. I believe there's a difference between judging a competition and assessing someone's skills for a career based opportunity so, yes I probably feel they have the skills but need to be trained in the core principles of what an assessor needs to do. They have a lot of potential, there's a good core of people with a lot of potential to be an assessor.

DS -   How many members do you have?

MM -   Active members approximately 200 so they go from different members, here are core senior members with really good core skills of probably 60 people that would have serious competitors or operated at quite a high level as international judges at Catex, Hotelympia and Aerfort and that sort of thing. (international competition)

DS -   Do you think the Panel would consider promoting RPL amongst their senior chefs who have a lack of advanced qualifications or for example those competition chefs with extremely high skills.

MM –   011/012/02:22 - Yes, actually I think the Panel would be very much in favour of promoting RPL as a way forward for career paths and I think that its something that we should be more involved given the opportunity by the training industry or whoever is the accreditation body in this country. I suppose even as we stand there's a small proportion of our members are taking up BA degrees all over the country weather it be Waterford, Cork, Tallagh or also in Cathal Brugha Street.

DS -   If I were to ask you for advice, I know I have interviewed many people from different organisations, how do we get word out there that there is an alternative to a full – time college programme, work based learning, RPL this AAA programme? how would you promote/market that are you in a position to send out word to all your members? How do reckon you could promote it?

MM - Em, I suppose we hold monthly meetings on a regional basis, so I suppose it wouldn't be too difficult to put set up a programme of information evenings. Another way we could promote is through our website or through our monthly ezine which is an online magazine so I think we have numerous opportunities to promote it and I agree that it is a necessity that we are not training up enough skilled people within the industry.

DS - How many people do you believe you could get through to using this method?

MM - em, it's hard to quantify that!

DS – in excess of?

MM – eh you put me on the spot!

DS - would it be in excess of 100 chefs

MM - I think we could actually, if we, through networking and things like that it could be a much, much bigger number. I think like any product its how its marketed and how its supported and the belief system behind it so if its that work based placed learning is the way forward and there's a big buy in from he members the networking of the opportunity would be expediential as distinct to just weather and die.

DS - Myles that was the final question and thank you for your participation