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Home Economics and Food Literacy: An Investigation into the Factors Influencing the Effective Delivery of Food Literacy Curricula in Irish Post Primary Schools as Perceived by Key Stakeholders

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Home Economics & Food Literacy:
**An Investigation into the Factors Influencing the
Effective Delivery of Food Literacy Curricula in
Irish Post Primary Schools, as Perceived by Key
Stakeholders.**

Aisling Geraghty

May 2021

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for M.A. in Gastronomy and Food Studies; Technological University Dublin, School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology.

Supervisor: James Fox.

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of MA Gastronomy and Food Studies is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work. This thesis was prepared according to the regulations of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for an award in any other Institute or University. The Institute has permission to keep, to lend or to copy this thesis in whole or in part, on condition that any such use of the material of the thesis be duly acknowledged.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

While the origins of quiche may be French, its appeal to all, especially to us in Ireland, is irrefutable. If I recall rightly, it was one of the dishes that dominated my days of Home Economics study in Scoil Dara in Kilcock. We seemed to be always making quiches with Mrs Griffin.

Why was this so? Though I didn't realise it then, we were not only learning to make this notorious tart, we were also learning to feed ourselves and others, to transform raw ingredients, such as flour, eggs, milk and cream into something edible and beautiful.

J.P. McMahon, 2020

Abstract.

In 2018 the new Junior Cycle specification for home economics was introduced. This year also saw the recommendation by the Irish State to make home economics compulsory for all Junior Cycle students. Home economics is a multifaceted, interdisciplinary subject that seeks to empower students with the skills to cultivate reflective, critical decision-making abilities they require to deal with practical perennial problems. Food literacy exists as a key contextual strand to home economics, and to this new Junior Cycle curriculum in particular. This study seeks to identify influences, both positive and negative, that impact on the effective delivery of food literacy curricula, as perceived by key stakeholders.

Employing an inductive approach and an interpretivist epistemology, a series of semi structured interviews were conducted with home economics teachers, working in both the post primary and tertiary sectors. The results of these interviews guided the format of subsequent focus groups, conducted online, with a diverse cohort of former students of home economics.

The fostering of a positive relationship with food, emerged as a key principle of all food literacy syllabi. This relationship benefits from strong leadership, both within the home economics classroom and in the wider school management structures. Effective pedagogy that embeds both theoretical and practical methodologies, while placing the student at the centre of learning, was found to be influential in nurturing this positive relationship. An authentic teaching and learning experience, devoid of rhetoric, was

found to be enhanced through continuous professional development and extensive collaboration between home economics teachers.

It is recommended that educational communities strive to create environments where school wide food literacy programmes, anchored in home economics, are established. A commitment by government to adequate resourcing is essential in such an environment. This approach recognises the multi-faceted reality of food literacy while calling on the extensive knowledge and pedagogical skills of the home economics teacher. In an era of ongoing educational change, it is hoped that these findings and recommendations will benefit home economics professionals, both in post primary and third level, and inform future evaluation of the Senior Cycle home economics curriculum.

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Glossary & Abbreviations:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ATHE | Association of Teachers of Home Economics (Ireland) |
| JCT | Junior Cycle for Teachers |
| Junior Cycle Specification | New Junior Cert Curriculum |
| NCCA | National Council for Curriculum and Assessment |

Chapter 1: Introduction.

1.1 Justification

As with many involved in the food industry, award winning Irish chef and home economics ambassador, Neven Maguire, was forced to pivot his business model over the past fourteen months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Opting to upload daily tutorials to social media, Maguire was struck by the demand for simple, back to basic recipes (Digby, September, 2020). Of particular preference was a request for chicken curry, a staple in the home economics cookery schedule. Pre-pandemic, another renowned Irish chef Darina Allen, observing a downward trend in cookery skills amongst young people, called for home economics to be made compulsory, noting “there are youngsters now who can't make toast” (Bramhill, 2019).

The ability to cook is only one element of the complex matrix of food literacy. Teaching someone to cook, however, is a critical tool in the pedagogy of food literacy. References to food literacy have “grown exponentially” (Renwick *et al.*, 2020, p. 14) in the past three decades with academics variously defining it as a broad, complex notion (Begley *et al.*, 2018; Slater, 2017; Truman *et al.*, 2017). This research project investigates what key educational stakeholders, namely home economics teachers and students in Ireland, understand by the term food literacy.

The rationale for defining food literacy is to potentially enrich professional practice within the Irish post primary context. Specifically, a working explanation will define the parameters of food literacy within post primary education, which will in turn enhance pedagogical approaches.

As we observe a rise in interest in all realms of gastronomy, alongside escalating levels of nutritional imbalance, home economics continues to be the only subject in the Irish school system explicitly delivering food literacy curricula, both theoretical and practical, to adolescents. The 2018 recommendation by the Irish State to introduce Junior Cycle home economics as a compulsory subject for all students reflected the currency the subject presently holds in the task of nurturing food literacy skills in young people.

This recommendation corresponded with the introduction of a new Junior Cycle specification for home economics. A core component of this curriculum is food

literacy. Adopting child centred methodologies and formative assessment, and granting agency to the individual teacher to alter aspects of the syllabus according to the needs of the students, this specification reflects contemporary Ireland, in terms of the changing food environment.

Ahead of the Irish States radical aspiration being realised, this thesis proposes to interview key stakeholders within the Irish post primary sector, to ascertain perceived influences on the effective delivery of food literacy curricula within this educational setting. Research similar to this proposal has been undertaken elsewhere (Nanayakkara *et al.*, 2018; Ronto *et al.*, 2017; Vidgen and Gallegos, 2011; Stinson, 2010), though not in Ireland. Such research endeavours to give voice to the lived experience of educational practitioners at the coalface. The interviews would give a contemporary “holistic snapshot” (Alshenqeti, 2014, p. 39) of the real challenges facing educators delivering food literacy curricula to Irish adolescents. Furthermore, the qualitative research would lend itself to what Bryman describes as “thick descriptions” (2012, p. 277) of real experiences of teachers and students within the home economics classroom.

The rise in the use of the term food literacy has coincided with what Caraher and Lang labels a “culinary skills transition” (2001). They posit that this refers to incidences when “whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables and down throats” (p. 1). The convergence of this supposed cooking skills transitions with heightened interest in food literacy creates an impetus for investigation of these topics here in Ireland.

The professional experience of the researcher is a driving force behind this study. As a practising home economics teacher, the researcher has witnessed first-hand the tangible changes in the Irish foodscape, evident in the microcosm of the home economics classroom. These alterations range from increased cultural diversity in food consumed, to diminishing know how around basic food preparation. Moreover, the researcher has personal experience of the disparity between the wider perception of home economics and the real potential of the subject to effect change. Arising from this changing landscape the researcher wishes to explore the role and relevance of home economics in delivering effective food literacy in contemporary Ireland.

1.2 Aim and Objectives.

The aim of this research project is to explore the factors that influence the effective delivery of food literacy curricula, from the perspective of stakeholders within the Irish post primary education sector.

In order to pursue this aim, the following objectives are presented:

- Define the term food literacy.
- Explore the existence of a culinary skills transition in Ireland, as perceived by key stakeholders.
- Investigate where food literacy is situated within post primary education.
- Identify factors which influence the effective delivery of food literacy curricula, as perceived by stakeholders.
- Examine what changes such individuals would like to see introduced in order to enhance food literacy within post primary education.

1.3 Content Outline.

Chapter 2; Literature Review will investigate existing literature around the topic of food literacy. In particular current definitions of food literacy will be evaluated. The concept of a culinary skills transition will be explored, as will the placement of home economics as a subject delivering food literacy curricula in post primary schools. The researcher will examine academic studies on international best practice in the delivery of this subject, in an attempt to elicit barriers and enablers. Finally, this chapter will evaluate the existing literature within the Irish context.

Chapter 3; Methodology will outline the epistemological approach underpinning the study and justify the research methods employed. Anticipated limitations will be enumerated.

Chapter 4; Findings will present the findings following data analysis from the primary research phase and will collate the findings through coding of participant responses. The coded responses will be mined and cross referenced resulting in the presentation of emerging themes that will provide the topics for discussion in *Chapter 5*.

Chapter 5; Discussion and Recommendations interprets the data and draws conclusions in conjunction with existing research and literature. Conclusions drawn will inform the presentation of recommendations for future research and practise.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The modern era has witnessed significant innovations in terms of food production, manipulation and transportation, and driven countries such as Ireland to what Tim Lang terms a “permanent eating economy” (2013). This economy is populated with what Begley and Gallegos deems to be a “passive consumer, unwilling or unable to make informed decisions about the food they eat” (2010b, p. 26).

Vidgen writes of “the paradox of unprecedented access to nutrition information and food, alongside escalating levels of overweight and obesity, related to unhealthy diets” (2014, p. 5). Slater believes that “as a society we have never been more food centered while at the same time so far removed from the food we eat; figuratively and literally” (2017, p. 17). Coveney writes that “food is never just “food” but is always symbolic of other capabilities and capacities depending on the lens used” (2014, p. 6). McMichael asserts that “food is not just a commodity, but a way of life with deep material and symbolic power for most people in the world” (2000, p. 31).

Emerging from this ongoing debate around food, diet and health the term food literacy has arisen in recent years, acting as a catch all buzzword for food related knowledge. Vidgen, who attributes the first use of the term to The American Dietetic Association in 1990 (2016, p. 18), believes its use has increased “exponentially” (p. 28) and considers food literacy to be “inconsistently defined and measured” (2016, p. 3). Truman *et al.* suggests that it is a “prevalent term, broadly applied”, insisting that “evidence-based conceptions of food literacy are needed in light of the term's popularity in health promotion and educational interventions designed to increase food skills and knowledge that contribute to overall health” (2017, p. 365).

This chapter will examine existing definitions of food literacy and seek to classify these definitions. The concept of a culinary skills transition will be introduced and its perceived implications on food literacy explored. The role of home economics in delivering food literacy curricula, both within the Irish post primary sector and internationally, will be examined, incorporating influences on its delivery and efficacy of assessment

2.1 Defining Food Literacy.

Much has been written in recent times as to what specifically constitutes food literacy (Truman *et al.* 2017; Cullen *et al.* 2015; Prendergast & Dewhurst, 2012). Velardo argues that “there is no consensus regarding a definition of food literacy” (2015, p. 386). Vidgen and Gallegos believe there to be “no shared understanding of its meaning or what its components might include” (2011, p. 14). Nowatschin suggests food literacy is a “term used to describe a range of food-related knowledge and skills that are needed, and which many individuals in our urbanized society are lacking” (2014, p. 27). Begley *et al.* describes food literacy as “the behaviours involved in planning, purchasing, preparing, and eating food and is critical for achieving healthy dietary intakes” (2018, p. 1). Bailey *et al.* posit that food literacy has developed as a framework to “connect food-related knowledge, cooking skills, and capacity to foster and develop food and nutritional knowledge to assist in changing dietary behaviour” (2019, p. 2893). Vidgen believes the scope of food literacy to be broad, conferring different values in health, education, life skills and sustainability (2014, p. 24), succinctly defining it as “a term to describe the everyday practicalities associated with healthy eating” (2014, p. 21). Brooks and Begley envisage food literacy as the “reconceptualising of peoples’ practical skills to achieve dietary guidelines” (2014, p. 158). While Vidgen acknowledges that the benefits of improved food literacy are likely to extend well beyond achievement of such dietary guidelines (Vidgen and Gallegos, 2014, p. 58). Prendergast and Dewhurst suggest that food related life skills are transferable skills and can impact on the progression of other skills such as coordination and psycho-motor, organisation and management, and analytical skills in adolescents (2012, p. 248).

2.2 Classification of Definitions.

Anderson and Falkenberg identify three concepts that contribute to different understandings of food literacy. Firstly, the notion that food literacy is about language literacy and associated aptitudes connected to reading and writing text, and the acquisition and comprehension of pertinent knowledge (2016, p. 88). Gillis states that “food literacy is one of multiple literacies needed to function in today’s world” (2016, p. 85). Through their qualitative research involving a cohort of “food experts” (2011,

p. 116), Fordyce-Voorham found that “food literacy was seen mainly as an individual’s ability to read, understand, and act upon labels on fresh, frozen, canned, frozen (sic), processed, and takeout food” (p. 119). In Block *et al.*’s version, “food literacy has three main components: conceptual or declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and the ability, opportunity, and motivation to apply or use that knowledge” (2011, p. 7). Luke and Freebody argue that literacy, in the original sense of the word, is about “the extent to which people and communities ... can take part, fluently, effectively and critically, in the various text and discourse-based events that characterize contemporary semiotic societies and economies” (2003, p. 52). Food literacy, by extension, empowers individuals to create meaning from food related signs and symbols, visual and linguistic.

The second notion that Anderson and Falkenberg identify emanates from the idea that food/nutrition concerns are primarily health concerns (2016, p. 89). They argue that this category recognises food literacy as a sub section of health literacy. Anderson and Falkenberg assert that this starting point of conceptualising food/nutrition literacy seems to be the most common in the food/nutrition literacy literature, which, they argue, should not surprise, considering that “the concept of food literacy has emerged from the earlier use of the term health literacy” (Desjardins and Haliburton, 2013, p. 13). Howard and Brichta describe food literacy as a subset of health literacy, noting how being food literate is recognised as significant because of the influence it bears on one’s health (2013, p. 8). Literature that focuses on ones relationship with food often bases the merit of this relationship primarily on the role it plays in nutritional health (Anderson and Falkenberg, 2016, p. 89). Anderson and Falkenberg refer to Vidgen and Gallegos in highlighting this: “in defining food literacy and identifying its components, this study provides an insight into the everyday practicalities of meeting nutrition recommendations” (Vidgen & Gallegos, 2014, p. 57). They acknowledge that some conceptualisations are based on a combination of the first two approaches (2016, p. 88). Benn asserts that “food literacy is currently discussed as an aim of food education in the western world, partly inspired by a fundamental literacy understanding and partly of health literacy or other related literacy areas to food” (2014, p. 13).

Anderson and Falkenberg's final categorisation considers that food literacy is about the relationship that people have or should have with food more generally, particularly with planning and managing, selecting, preparing, and eating food (2016, p. 88). Cullen *et al.* concurs, defining food literacy as

The ability of an individual to understand food in a way that they develop a positive relationship with it, including food skills and practices across the lifespan in order to navigate, engage, and participate within a complex food system. It's the ability to make decisions to support the achievement of personal health and a sustainable food system considering environmental, social, economic, cultural and political components

Cullen *et al.*, 2015, p. 4

Moreover, Anderson and Falkenberg link this positive relationship to critical literacy. They refer to Nutbeam (2000), who states that critical food literacy is derived from the notion of critical literacy, as it has been used in language literacy. This is evident in the WHO definition of health literacy, which, Nutbeam argues, attests that "literacy is not simply a set of functional capabilities, it comprises a set of skills that enable people to participate more fully in society, and to exert a higher degree of control over every day events" (Nutbeam, 2008, p. 2075). Anderson and Falkenberg note how some conceptualisations speak of the significance of food literacy for people's empowerment, but fail to specifically include critical literacy into the actual conceptualisation of being food literate. For example, Vidgen defines food literacy as

The scaffolding that empowers individuals, households, communities or nations to protect diet quality through change and strengthen dietary resilience over time. It is composed of a collection of inter-related knowledge, skills and behaviours required to plan, manage, select, prepare and eat food to meet needs and determine intake.

Vidgen, 2014, p. 54.

A scoping review undertaken by Truman *et al.* concluded that the majority of conceptualisations of food literacy focuses on critical knowledge (53%), stressing

information attainment and comprehension (2017, p. 369). Slater concludes that food literacy is a “critical tool in a complex foodscape” (2017, p. 14). Sumner believes food literacy to be “the ability to “read the world” in terms of food” (2015, p. 130) This foodscape is “highly contextual” (Vidgen, 2014, p. 133), and “what we eat constantly changes in response to the world around us” (Vidgen, 2016, p. 1) This dynamic context is underscored by Vidgen who points out that “globally, the food system and the relationship of the individual to that system, continues to change and grow in complexity” (2014, p. 1).

Begley and Vidgen note that while food literacy includes every activity associated with food, “stakeholders and context often determine the intent of food literacy” (2016, p. 17). Bailey *et al.* conclude that “while the science of nutrition is context free, its application is embedded in context” (2019, p. 2984). While Lang *et al.* assert that food literacy needs to be recognised as an essential life skill (1999, p. 37), Vidgen insists that this skill “should reflect the different lives people live” (2014, p. 25) Vidgen believes that “research to define food literacy, its components and relationship to nutrition, therefore, necessitates an exploration of the influence of context”. (2014, p. 29).

2.3 Culinary Skills Transition.

Further complexity arises through the emergence of what Caraher and Lang labels a “culinary skills transition”. They posit that this refers to incidences when “whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables and down throats” (2001, p.1). Vidgen suggests that food literacy, acting as a scaffold construct, may be the underlying factor that protects nutritional quality during these transitions, supporting dietary resilience over time (2014, p. 4). Qualitative research undertaken by Ronto *et al.* in Australia concluded that adolescents could act as “agents of change in the home environment by increasing families’ food literacy and consequently change their unhealthy dietary behaviours” (2016, p. 332). Children transferring food preparation skills taught in school to parents at home was identified as one such example. Similarly, Ensaff *et al.* conducting qualitative research in the United Kingdom also identified children as agents of change effecting dietary behaviour within families, citing greater participation in the planning, purchasing and preparation of family meals (2015, p. 463).

Employing mixed methods in Canada, Slater *et al.* observed that the wider food and nutrition landscape is besieged with nutritionally poor fast and convenience foods which “support busy family lifestyles, yet diminishes interest in and valuing of home food preparation skills” that are central to home economics education (2013, p. 622) The study noted that arising from this, students undertaking home economics increasingly do not have the most basic of food preparation skills to nurture.

2.4 The Post Primary School and Home Economics.

Adolescence is identified as a critical formative period in which eating behaviours are established with the potential to influence long-term health (Utter et al., 2018; Sawyer *et al.*, 2012). Unhealthy dietary behaviours during adolescence are an identified risk factor for non-communicable diseases such as overweight and obesity (Viner *et al.*, 2012, p. 1641). *The Family and Consumer Science Body of Knowledge* recognise social institutions such as families, schools, or community groups, create “transition points” for individuals as they grow and develop (FCS, 2010, p. 9). In its 2016 publication *A Healthy Weight for Ireland*, the Department of Health identified schools as places of importance in providing information and guidance on a healthy lifestyle (p. 19). Anderson and Falkenberg identify “school education as society’s most prominent tool for literacy education” (2016, p. 87). Brooks and Begley argue that cultivating adolescent food literacy is not only likely to empower this target group to achieve physical health, but also have “strong connections to social and emotional health” (2014, p. 158). Vaitkeviciute *et al.* assert that food literacy has the ability to alter adolescent dietary behaviour (2015, p. 656). Research undertaken on behalf of Safefood (Ireland) concluded that those who were taught to cook as adolescents had better cooking skills and a better diet as adults (Hollywood *et al.*, 2017). Bailey *et al.* found that food literacy interventions conducted in a secondary-school setting have demonstrated a positive impact on healthy food and nutritional knowledge (2019, p. 2891) Slater acknowledges the role of educators in this challenge, arguing that home economics professionals need to be at the forefront of food literacy education as a way of address eroding food knowledge and dependence on highly processed foods: “Home economics professionals have the training, skill, foresight, and leadership to be at the front of a food literacy movement” (Slater, 2017, p.19). Reid *et al.* contend that statutory and non-statutory educational bodies need to guarantee that adolescents

are able to improve their food literacy through well-resourced home economics programmes (2015, p. 551).

The subject of home economics has featured in Irish schools and on the school curriculum since before the formation of the Free State in 1922. McSweeney recounts how ‘domestic economy’ was an optional subject taught in national schools in Ireland from the late 1800s and in second level schools from 1883 (2014, p. 19). This era understood the subject to be “the science which teaches the right management of the family home” (p. 19). McCloat and Caraher note that a survey of parents in 1903 found “it is the most useful thing that has ever been taught, and will bring comfort to our homes” (2019, p. 380). While variations have occurred in terms of course content, nomenclature and availability, the principles underpinning the subject have remained largely unchanged, and are reflected most recently in the Department of Education and Skills assertion that:

The aim of junior cycle Home Economics is to ‘develop students’ knowledge, attitudes, understanding, skills and values to achieve optimal, healthy and sustainable living for every person as an individual, and as a member of families and society.

DES 2017, p. 5.

The value of home economics, according to Pendergast “is that it does not teach a skill for the sake of that skill, it teaches for application, it teaches informed decision-making in various scenarios, it teaches evaluative and critical thinking skills, and it empowers individuals – no matter what their circumstances” (2003, p. 8).

A core element of home economics concerns food literacy. The new Junior Cycle Home Economics Specification, introduced in 2018, defines food literacy as involving “the inter-related knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours which are required to plan, prepare and cook food” (p.26). Curiously, no reference is made to the provenance of food.

Home economics is presently offered as an optional subject for three years at junior cycle, and two years at senior cycle. The Association of Teachers of Home Economics

(ATHE) have long advocated for their subject to be made compulsory. Presenting before the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs, ATHE President, Maria Hickey asserted that this move would “put food literacy of our young people at the forefront of the agenda” (2018, p. 1). In 2018 the Irish government recommended making home economics a compulsory subject for all students for the three years of junior cycle.

2.5 International Best Practice; Barriers and Enablers.

International research has identified particular factors affecting the success of home economics as a vehicle for food literacy. Bailey *et al.* advocate surveying home economics teachers’ attitudes to and perceptions of food literacy programmes as they “may provide an additional insight into the field of food literacy” (2019, p. 2892). Tully, employing a multi-method approach in the United Kingdom, found that “the teaching of cooking in schools has over time been subject to various prejudices and barriers, with constraints imposed on its provision and threats to its survival as an educational subject” (2015, p. 16) .

Ronto *et al.* indicate that financial constraints continue to be a barrier, with the study noting how lack of financial resources was a major factor that prevented food literacy education and healthy dietary behaviours of adolescents in Australia (2017, p. 326).

Employing qualitative research through the interviewing of teachers of home economics in Australia, Ronto *et al.* further identifies insufficient class contact time as a key obstacle in curriculum delivery (2017, p. 328). This impediment is intrinsically linked with the perceived status of home economics within the school and beyond. Ronto *et al.* established that home economics teachers believe their subject is “seen as a comparatively less important subject for adolescents in Australian high schools by school curriculum leaders and parents” (2017, p. 333). Contributors reported how their subject often competed with other “more academic” subjects in terms of time (p. 328). Subjects such as maths and science were deemed to be of greater significance than food-related life skills, by school staff. The primary cause for this was the notion that home economics comprises only rudimentary food preparation such as “baking cakes

and biscuits” (p. 328). Participants indicated that high schools didn't see the scope of home economics (p. 328).

Contemporary qualitative research conducted in Ireland correlated with these findings. Investigating home economics teachers experience of enacting curriculum policy, McCloat and Caraher addressed the notion that home economics is not considered an academic subject (2020, p. 449). Participants in this study commented on a “hierarchy of subjects” with home economics often considered as “only a baking class” (p. 449).

Similar negative attitudes were also attributed to parents, with participants reporting experience of parents exerting pressure on their adolescent children to focus on more academic subjects. These attitudes, teachers suggested, may be due to outdated perceptions of home economics that fail to reflect the contemporary reach of the subject in increasing adolescent’s food literacy (Ronto *et al.*, 2017, p. 328). Pendergast *et al.* state that “home economics has struggled to maintain a positive identity in modern society due to criticism for creating and reinforcing negative stereotypes of women” (2013, p. 273). Slater states that home economics education is seen as less valuable than math and science for future career planning; outdated curriculum and teaching infrastructure. (2013, p. 617). Leading Irish chef, Darina Allen concurs with this, asserting "I've realised a whole generation was encouraged to have a career rather than have cooking as a skill and that is a big problem with our education system” (Bramhill, 2019).

Ronto *et als.* recognised the need to link theory with practice through practical hands on lessons (2017, p. 329). Brooks and Begley found a “changing nature and demise of practical cooking and food preparation skills within the secondary school curriculum from a focus on “hands on” cooking skills to a more theoretical approach”, which they concluded “decreases the likelihood of development of food preparation skills through this avenue” (2014, p. 159). Mac Con Iomaire and Lydon posit that a “reduction of allocated hours to practical skills learning in schools may have further implications for future skills learning and wider culinary culture” (2011, p. 10).

The Ronto *et al.* study noted the tendency to focus on developing basic food skills during compulsory delivery of home economics. Time constraints dictated this focus

as teachers want to equip students with food skills as they will not have any other curriculum based opportunity to build these essential life skills (2017, p. 329). Respondents stated that the time was “insufficient to develop sustainable food-related life skills and introduce broader concepts of food literacy such as environmental sustainability” (p. 329). Qualitative research conducted in Sweden by Hoijer noted how lessons were often described as being “too few and too short”, with participants lamenting the fact that students rarely had time to weigh ingredients or prepare their work stations themselves, with these tasks normally falling to the teacher, ahead of the lesson. (2011, p. 516).

Ronto *et al.* detected that school food environments were often seen to be non-supportive (2017, p. 332). Hawkes *et al.* believe environmental factors strongly influence adolescents’ dietary behaviour (2015, p. 2410). Initiatives that improve post primary food environments have been recognised as a promising approach for improving dietary behaviours during adolescence (Viner *et al.*, 2012, p. 1649). Chatterjee *et al.*, conducting qualitative research in the USA, reinforced this conclusion around broader environments, including availability of food in school, that contradicted the mission of school food literacy programmes; “you need something from 9-5 because if they are hungry, McDonalds is right there” (2016, p. 4). Within the Irish context, the challenge of easily accessible, cheap food in close proximity to schools has garnered attention in recent years. Indeed, the report that recommended making home economics mandatory, as a response to tackling the crisis of childhood obesity, also calls for a ban on fast food outlets within a certain distance of schools (Edwards, 2018).

While the task of improving adolescent’s knowledge and skills of food and nutrition is important, these alone are unlikely to improve their dietary behaviours (Dick & Ferguson, 2015, p. 5). The domains of learning within education can be classified as cognitive domain (knowledge), psychomotor domain (skills) and affective domain (attitudes) (Hoque, 2016, p. 45). Pierre and Oughton posit that

Affective learning inculcates the values and beliefs we place on the information we engage with. It refers to our attitudes and willingness to take part in new things, and ability to make decisions about how we operate and behave in a variety of circumstances.

2007, p. 1

Hodelin believes that “the message that home economists promote is values, attitudes and lifestyle. This message transcends time and culture and are grounded in human betterment and should never be unclear or misunderstood” (2008, p. 19). The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), outlining the pedagogies that underpin home economics education, note how the subject, “through an integrated approach, focuses on maximising potential from experiential learning by facilitating students to reach the more challenging cognitive and affective levels of Experiential Learning Cycle” (NCCA Background Paper, p. 26). Former chief inspector of the Department of Education and Skills noted that “the integration and application of theoretical knowledge combined with the development of practical skills are at the core of Home Economics” (Stack, 2008, p. iii). Yet research conducted by McSweeney found that pedagogy in the Irish home economics classrooms may not be of the best quality:

There is little time available to address the broader aims of the subject, to contextualise the learning and to develop practical skills. The level of student enjoyment and motivation is negatively impacted.

2014, p. 238

The influence of the external environment, both positively and negatively, is reiterated by Colatruglio and Slater who asserts that “food literacy extends beyond nutritional recommendations and cookery lessons, to fostering important and vital connections between food, people, health and the environment both theoretically and practically” (2014, p. 39) Stinson suggests that “food literacy education could take place within many contexts in a school building itself, not just in a classroom” (2010, p. 26). This qualitative research study conducted in Canada argues that positioning food literacy as an essential objective for a teacher or school, deems it necessary to incorporate food

lessons at every opportunity. The study references a regional physical education programme entitled *Ultimate Body and Mind* within which there is a unit on food and nutrition. Certain outdoor education classes also require that students learn to prepare food suitable for a multi-day hiking trip (2010, p. 21)

Renwick found that “at the micro level, cooking classes often overlook the real lives of people and their circumstances that make it impossible to act differently” (2020, p. 17). Chaterjee *et al.* concurred with this finding, recognising stakeholder influence and involvement, such as parents and students, as key. Moreover, culturally appropriate recipes were deemed essential (2016, p. 1). Recognising the role of context, Chaterjee *et al.* suggested broadening the stakeholders to include involvement of local restaurants and eateries in the mission to improve food literacy (2016, p. 1).

Conducting research in Northern Ireland McKinley *et al.* noted how nutrition education programmes may easily tackle barriers such as the misperception that healthy foods take a long time to prepare but these same programmes may struggle to overcome other challenges such as the lack of available, attractive and affordable healthy foods in the school canteen (2005, p. 551). Obstacles such as these, McKinley concludes, demand significant state investment, alterations at policy level and assurance from a variety of stakeholders and thus, represent long term objectives (p. 542).

While unhealthy dietary behaviours during adolescence have been identified as a risk factor for non-communicable diseases such as overweight and obesity (Baird *et al.*, 2017; Viner *et al.*, 2012), Renwick observes how advocates often argue that the domination of nutrient-centred practice, education, and research has not been effective in improving health or disease prevention (2020, p. 20) Vidgen and Gallegos research on food literacy interventions in Australia noted the tendency to apply a narrow lens on this broad subject, observing that “nutrition was considered from a punitive, obesity prevention perspective, rather than a health promoting, nourishing perspective” (2014, p. 8). Caraher warns against the linking of food literacy to only one agenda, such as obesity, as this diminishes its importance in the broader context and threatens to cut short investment in the area (Caraher & Seeley, 2010). The practise of employing a broad lens in ones understanding of the nature of food literacy, Renwick states, “is

familiar territory for home economics professionals [sic] and is an opportunity to share their expertise” (2020, p. 19).

2.6 Evaluation.

Recognising the contextual reality exposes a difficulty in evaluating the success of particular food literacy programmes. Truman *et al.* state “this expansiveness presents a significant challenge for developing ways to measure food literacy: if there are thirty eight ways to describe the concept, then food literacy “achieved” by one standard may not count as food literacy achieved by another standard” (2017, p. 366). Renwick and Smith assert that “assessment and evaluation research on (food literacy) programs is limited” (2020, p. 19). Truman *et al.* concede that “how to measure food literacy is particularly challenging for educational interventions designed to teach it” (2017, p. 370). Steering research in Australian high schools, Brooks and Begley posit that adolescent food literacy programmes present a set of challenges unique to the target group: “Engaging and motivating adolescent participants, as well as addressing determinants of eating behaviours” are recognised as key difficulties (2014, p. 168).

2.7 Conclusion.

Reflecting on the myriad of definitions of food literacy outlined in this chapter, and considering the established factors that influence the delivery of food literacy curricula, chapter three will investigate the perceptions of key stakeholders in the Irish post primary sector.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction.

The philosophy driving this study pertains to the purpose and quality of education and its axial meaning in empowering adolescents to improve their lives through enhanced food literacy. This chapter articulates the purpose of the study, the major research questions (MRQ) and the research objectives that influenced the choice of methodology. The rationale for the research design is also justified. The chosen methods outlined in this chapter are based on a theoretical foundation which Grant and Osanloo (2016, p. 12) refer to as the “blueprint” for primary research which “provides an explanatory stance for our pursuits and actions” (Hiller, 2016, p. 100).

3.2 Epistemological Underpinning.

Hiller asserts that epistemological conventions provide “justification for research decisions and indicate beliefs regarding the relationship between the knower and the known” (2014, p. 100). An interpretive perspective considers all knowledge to be grounded in our particular experiences; it is subjective and intrinsically linked to the natural contexts in which we live our lives and is thus ontologically relativist (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). According to Saunders *et al.* interpretivism emphasises that human beings differ from physical phenomena as they create meanings: “Empirically, interpretivists focus on individuals’ lived experiences and cultural artefacts, and seek to include their participants’ as well as their own interpretations into their research. (2007, p. 160).

Bryman reminds us that theory is also important to the researcher because it provides a “backcloth and rationale for the research that is being conducted”. (2012, p. 63). Employing an inductive approach and an interpretivist epistemology, various concepts and theories emerged from the secondary research.

3.3 Research Aim.

It is important that the research aim is defined in order to choose the theoretical framework and relevant epistemology (King, 2004). The aim of this research is to explore factors that influence food literacy, from the perspective of stakeholders within the Irish post primary education sector. This aim required an examination of the use and understanding of the term food literacy in order to establish a definition of the term

and ascertain factors which influence its development in adolescent students of home economics.

3.4 Research Objectives.

The objective of this research is to determine factors that influence food literacy within Irish post primary schools, as perceived by protagonists in this sector. The recommendation by the Irish State to introduce home economics as a compulsory subject at Junior Cycle has been widely welcomed, cited as “one of the most effective health promotion strategies available to combat poor dietary choices and unhealthy eating practices and, consequently, assist in achieving the aims of *A Healthy Weight for Ireland 2016-2025*” (McCloat, 2018).

The objectives of this thesis are to:

- Define the term food literacy.
- Explore the existence of a culinary skills transition in Ireland, as perceived by key stakeholders.
- Investigate where food literacy is situated within post primary education.
- Identify factors which influence the effective delivery of food literacy curricula, as perceived by stakeholders.
- Examine what changes such individuals would like to see introduced in order to enhance food literacy within post primary education.

An overarching objective in the mind of the researcher is to give voice to the lived experience of central characters involved in delivering food literacy curricula at post primary level. The researcher endeavours to identify both benefits and barriers to further enhancement of food literacy that may have real implications for teaching learning and living practice in the future. In particular, to identify the role that home economics play in this complex matrix.

3.5 Research Methodology.

Given that this research concerns human behaviour, the primary research undertaken in this project is qualitative in nature. The goal of most qualitative studies is “to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of some aspect of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases” (Polit and Beck, 2010, p. 1451).

3.6 Research Methods.

Dawson asserts that the qualitative researcher “does not ‘do’ research ‘on’ people, but instead works with them, acting as a facilitator” (2009, p. 17). The chosen research method for this study is semi structured interviews and focus groups, the aim of both being to identify any perceived influences on the delivery of food literacy curricula within the post primary sector.

3.7 Semi Structured Interviews.

Interviews are the most commonly used data collection method (Taylor, 2005, p. 37) and the semi-structured format is the most frequently used interview technique in qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p. 1). Tierney and Dilley suggest that that within the research field of education, more so than any other field, the qualitative interview has become prevalent (2001, p. 453), as this method allows for the selection of what Devers and Frankel term “information rich” individuals that “provide the greatest insight into the research question” (2000, p. 264). Tierney and Dilley argue that “qualitative interviewing can be used to gather information that cannot be obtained using other methods” (2001, p. 456).

Semi-structured interviews rely on a bank of primary questions, formulated by the researcher, to safeguard a link with the literature review and to maintain focus throughout. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree state that the iterative nature of the qualitative research process, in which initial data analysis coincides with data collection, often results in modifying questions as the researcher absorbs more about the topic (2006, p. 316). Questions that are ineffective at prompting relevant information can be dismissed and new ones added throughout the process. The interviewer should be prepared to “depart from the planned itinerary during the interview because digressions can be very productive as they follow the interviewee’s interest and knowledge” (Johnson, in DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316). Tierney and Dilley concur with this point noting that interviews do not exist with “epistemological vacuums” and that “interview practices are not set in methodological stone” (2001, p. 15).

Denzin and Lincoln suggest that “all research is interpretive; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (2008, p. 31), and so while semi structured interviews allow the respondents the

freedom to voice their opinions, the researcher must be cognisant of interpretations that may be informed by one's own beliefs and values. To this end, the researcher should refrain from commenting or sharing their own views. Interpretation of data will be provided in chapter 5.

3.7.1 Justification for Semi Structured Interviews.

Semi structured interviews were selected as the chosen research tool so as to realise the objective of giving voice to the lived experience of educators and policy makers involved in food literacy and home economics at post primary level. Fontana and Frey (2003) posit that the interview process is a “meaning making” (p. 68) process and a “mode of enquiry” (p. 69) that involves “understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 70). This method permits the researcher to direct the interview and ensure relevant questions are addressed, while facilitating participants in sharing their own insights and experiences. This is particularly important, to ensure empirical analysis, given that participants range from diverse backgrounds, disciplines and demographics.

3.7.2 Interview Sample.

Given that the researcher is herself a practising home economics teacher, consideration was given to convenience sampling that would allow for efficient access to personal networks. However, this method is considered to be the “least rigorous approach” (Farrugia, 2019, p. 70) and diminishes the data rich responses sought.

A sample of practising home economics teachers with a strong presence on particular social media platforms (Twitter and Instagram) were invited to participate. This approach was taken as such participants were deemed to be expert in their field, opinionated and articulate, therefore satisfying the needs of this study. Moreover, their apparent familiarity with digital media implied greater potential for participating in remote interviews, due to the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic restrictions.

In order to give an empirical perspective of the subject matter, interview participants also included a number of academics in the field of home economics education. These participants were contacted via email and provided with a cover letter (Appendix A) outlining the research and associated rationale.

3.7.3 Sample Size.

Literature suggests it is difficult to unequivocally determine how many interviews are required to conduct such research. Indeed, experts often answer this query ambiguously with “it depends” (Baker and Edwards, 2012, p. 12). Warren (2012, p. 425) recommends a minimum of twenty to thirty interviews, while Baker and Edwards suggest a pool of thirty (2012, p. 10). One approach involves assessing saturation point, the point at which no new theoretical insights are forthcoming to the researcher. This issue can be further complicated by comparing code saturation against meaning saturation (Hennink *et al.*, 2016).

Given the limited scope of this thesis it is proposed to interview a sample of seven, comprising four home economics teachers and three individuals employed at tertiary level of home economics. This number, while smaller than some recommend, is manageable within the time allocation. Charmaz speculates that small samples can produce “a study with depth and significance depending on the initial and emergent research questions and how the researcher chose the participants, conducted the study and constructed the analysis” (2012, p. 22). It is hoped that the subsequent thematic analysis will realise this goal

3.7.4 Interview Structure.

Following agreement to participate, appointments were made to carry out the interviews. Due to COVID 19 restrictions all interviews were conducted online via the digital cloud platform Zoom. While this was not initially considered to be the optimum medium it was necessary in the pandemic climate. Indeed, the pandemic created a unique environment where online communication became familiar to many who had no previous interaction with this medium. Digital media reduces the face to face familiarity but offers geographic advantages, convenient for both interviewer and participant (Mann and Stewart 2001, p. 608). Furthermore, James and Busher suggest that online interviews may encourage “spontaneous interactions between the participant and the researcher” (2011, p. 246). Highlighting the benefits available also to the researcher, James and Busher comment how online research allows research to be conducted virtually “with geographically dispersed groups and individuals” (2011, p. 246). An additional advantage of hosting interviews through Zoom was the option to record content without the need for additional devices such as a dictaphone.

Crucial in the success of such interviews is the relationship the researcher nurtures with each participant. A specific strength in this research project was that the researcher, a home economics teacher, could lean on personal experience in the post primary school setting. This enabled a conversation framed by mutual respect and understanding, that led to in depth discussions, thus unearthing significant data. Ratcliffe (2002, p. 23), states that it is unusual for an interviewer to have the expertise and aptitude in a particular domain to fulfil this condition. This shared experience leads to what Douglas describes as creative interviewing, referring primarily to the researcher, not the participant. “Creative interviewing involves the use of many strategies and tactics of interaction, largely based on an understanding of friendly feelings and intimacy, to optimise co-operative, mutual disclosure and creative search for mutual understanding” (Douglas 1985, cited in Mac Con Iomaire, 2010, p. 9). A creative approach leads to the “disclosure and probing of details that may not have been revealed to a researcher from another field” (Mac Con Iomaire, 2010, p. 9).

All interviews were conducted by the researcher. In advance of the interviews participants were provided with a written outline of the project. This explanation included the nature of the interview and a brief description of the topics that would be covered. Participants were provided with a consent form that detailed the intended use of the interview material, and allowed for the interview to be stopped at any point (Appendix A). This consent form, introduction letter and interview procedures were all carried out in line with, and with the permission of, the TU Dublin ethics committee. Interview transcripts are available in Appendix C. Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes in duration. The researcher took additional written notes during the interviews but they were also digitally recorded in full, with participant’s permission.

All participants remained anonymous throughout the process and were allocated a code name in the analysis stage of the thesis. Furthermore participants reserved the right to retract their data and participation in the study up to the submission date. Indeed, one participant availed of this option, requesting access to the typed transcript after the interview. This participant opted to amend certain comments.

Morgan (1997, cited in Kitchen, 2013, p. 269)) asserts there to be four stages to an interview. Firstly, the introduction stage during which the participants role in the post primary sector was ascertained. While the name and address of their current or

previous school were not relevant to the study, the sector within which they work, i.e. post primary or tertiary, was noted. Next, the opening development where participants were invited to elaborate on their own understanding of food literacy. Participants were invited to consider a set of quotes relating to food literacy, in advance of the interview (Appendix B). These quotes served as the true starting point for the interview. Thirdly, the body of the interview exploring where the interviewee experienced food literacy within the post primary school setting, perceived barriers and enablers to further development of this food literacy and where they would like to see changes within the sector and so forth. This section also probed the participants understanding of a culinary skills transition. Finally, the conclusion to include any other insights or opinions that the interviewee would like to share. This arrangement was followed throughout the individual interviews and proved useful.

3.8 Focus Groups.

Focus groups were also used in this research study. Beck *et al.* defines focus groups as “an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics” (in Wilkinson, 1998, p. 181). The purpose of the focus groups was to explore the impact home economics had on these individual’s lives, beyond their school years, in terms of food literacy. The focus groups also sought to elucidate past students’ opinions on the role of home economics in teaching food literacy and the relevance of home economics in contemporary Ireland.

3.8.1 Focus Group Justification.

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis argue that focus groups, which they consider as “collective conversations” offer a particularly fruitful method for “thinking through” qualitative research (2013, p. 1). This method was selected in order to gather opinions of past students of home economics. While not professional in their expertise, student voices represent those of key stakeholders, if not *the* key stakeholders and so demand attention. Moreover, Shields argues that “notwithstanding the importance placed on stakeholder perceptions in evaluation ... it is more common for educators and researchers to talk about students than to hear from them” (2003, p. 1).

Wilkinson suggests that focus groups can be used in a final follow-up phase, as was the case in this study, “to pursue an interesting finding” or “simply to add richness and depth to a project” (1998, p. 184).

3.8.2 Focus Group Cohort.

Seven participants contributed to the initial focus group. This cohort had all studied home economics in school, and the fact that they had responded via the TU Dublin Food Forum indicated they had continued their studies and/or career paths within the food arena. The researcher felt this may have influenced their perception of home economics. Thus, it was decided to moderate a second focus group with former home economics students whose subsequent studies/employment deviated from any food related area. Five such participants were recruited via the previous participants. Such “snowball sampling” is a particularly useful approach to use in order to gather a satisfactory sample size in a relatively fast manner (Denscombe, 2014, p. 43).

3.8.3 Focus Group Structure.

As with the interview schedule, participants were provided with a set of seven guiding questions to consider in advance of the focus group. The conversations were conducted online, via zoom and lasted thirty minutes. Wilkinson reminds us how “crucially, focus groups involve the interaction of group participants with each other as well as with the moderator, and it is the collection of this kind of interactive data which distinguishes the focus group from the one-to-one interview” (1998, p. 182). Accordingly, Fontana and Frey assert that specific skills are required to conduct a focus group, including flexibility, objectiveness, empathy, persuasiveness and listening. Furthermore, importance is given to ensuring equal participation within the group so as to achieve the “fullest coverage of the topic” (2003, p. 73). Thus, the questions were used as icebreakers to start and direct conversations, rather than dominating the discourse.

The schedule of these questions were almost identical, structured around eight questions (Appendix D). For the purposes of analysis, data from the two groups were amalgamated. The questions were informed by the findings of the interviews. However, given the different backgrounds between the cohorts, i.e. teachers versus students, the language was altered. The code of home economics and food literacy was presented as *Food Education and Culinary Skills*, including recipes, acquired in home economics that participants continued to use beyond school. Barriers and enablers

became *Factors Influencing the Opinion of Home Economics*, and also incorporated suggested improvements to the subject. Stakeholders was omitted as a question, given the students limited experience of the wider school community. Similarly, the term pedagogy was disposed of, with the topic subsumed by the question concerning *The Role of the Teacher*. Finally, the issue of a culinary skills transition was addressed via the question concerning the *Value of Home Economics in Contemporary Ireland*.

3.9 Data Analysis.

Reflecting on the epistemological underpinnings of the primary research and the aims of this study, thematic analysis was selected as the chosen method of data analysis.

3.9.1 Thematic Analysis.

Data collected through online interviews was subjected to thematic analysis, defined by Braun and Clarke as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (2006, p. 6). The first stage of thematic analysis involves organising the data, where recorded interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim, using an online app, otter.ai. The next stage involves the generation of categories, where the data was classified under particular domains. Both stages represent a process of immersion in the data, seeking familiarisation with responses. The third stage comprised the coding of the data, a stage that demanded rigorous re-examination and refinement, evolving into the fourth stage where emerging codes were reviewed and analysed in relation to each other, the overall research question and relevant academic knowledge (Meyer, 2008, p. 82). Fade and Swift suggest that “a code (sometimes referred to as an index or a node) is simply a label that the researcher attaches to piece of data” (2010, p. 107) When the researcher had exhausted the search for alternative explanations of the data these codes coalesced into themes. Subsequent appraising and defining of these themes informed the final analysis of the data (*Chapter 5*). Braun and Clarke assert that the themes identified, coded, and analysed needs to be an accurate reflection of the content of the entire data set (2006, p. 12). This thematic analysis can be a method that “works both to reflect reality and unpick or unravel the surface of reality” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 6).

3.10 Limitations.

What at first appeared as a limitation - the need to conduct the semi structured interviews online rather than face to face - evolved into a catalyst. Participants, including the researcher who, one year previous, had little experience with digital platforms such as zoom, now use these mediums regularly to maintain contact with family and friends during the lockdown period. Consequently, they had a level of familiarity with the technology that reduced anxiety around participating in an online interview.

3.11 Ethics.

In social research there are moral and practical motives to respect the rights and interests of those participating in the research. It is essential that research is carried out to a reputable ethical standard that evades any harm in carrying out or publishing the research (Denscombe, 2014, p. 5). Technological University Dublin promote such standards of ethical research and scholarly practise with a Research Ethics Committee guided by the “European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity” (TU Dublin, 2020).

3.11.1 Informed Consent

Debate continues about what constitutes appropriate online ethical conduct. Areas arousing suspicion include public/private spaces, netiquette and informed consent, protecting privacy and anonymity, confidentiality and data security, and the trustworthiness of data (James and Busher, 2011). Consequently, as detailed above, the researcher sought informed consent for those who participated in the semi-structured online interviews and focus groups. Participants were provided with a participant cover letter that included a consent component (Appendix A), and were given the option to withdraw from the study at any stage in the process. In line with best practise all were guaranteed anonymity. Non-anonymised data such as recorded zoom interviews will be reserved confidentiality as part of the research process on a

password protected computer. Chapter 4 will elaborate on the findings made from this research.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction.

This chapter sets out the results from data analysis that will inform the findings of this study in *Chapter 5: Findings and Recommendations*. *Chapter 2: Literature Review* detailed the underpinning, historical literature available from academic texts and journals. This review informed the choice and perspective of the research methods (*Chapter 3*) that presented the following findings. The chosen methodology, although explained previously, will be alluded to, and at times elaborated on in this chapter to provide in depth context and rationale. Results of the exploratory interviews are presented, followed by the results from the two focus groups. The chapter concludes by identifying emerging themes to be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.2 Semi Structured Interviews.

As discussed in the previous chapter, semi structured interviews allow participants the freedom to highlight issues of importance to them, while still employing a loose schedule. Robson (2002) suggests that with this style of interview, the wording and sequence of questions can be changed and explanations given where appropriate. The flexibility of the schedule is an advantage, as it is possible to “probe responses and investigate motives and feeling” (Bell, 2010, p. 161).

The six semi structured interviews were loosely based around four guiding questions. These questions were influenced by the literature review and the research questions:

4.2.1 Question 1:

In advance of the interview, participants were provided with a set of quotes relating to the topic of food literacy. This set of quotes can be viewed in Appendix B. The purpose of these quotes was to whet the participant’s appetite, so to speak, around their understanding of the term food literacy. Question 1 asked the participants if any of the quotes resonated particularly with them and probed their comprehension of same. The researcher wanted to establish whether a common understanding of this term exists.

4.2.2 Question 2:

The second question concerned the role of home economics in delivering food literacy curricula at post primary level. The purpose of this question was to explore the

placement of this subject in teaching students about food literacy. This component also drew attention to the government's recommendation to make Junior Cycle home economics compulsory. The researcher wished to establish the stakeholder's opinion of this recommendation.

Evolving from this question, participants were invited to nominate other subjects where curricula included aspects of food literacy.

4.2.3 Question 3:

Question three sought to identify the factors, both positive and negative, that influence the delivery of food literacy curricula within Irish post primary education. This question goes to the heart of the major research question in ascertaining barriers and enablers, as perceived through the lived experience of those at the coal face of food literacy education.

4.2.4 Question 4:

The final component of the interview introduced participants to the concept of a culinary skills transition. The researcher outlined this concept, as defined by Caraher and Lang (2001, p. 1). Participants were then asked for their impression of this concept, and whether they themselves had borne witness to such a transition in their teaching experience. The purpose of this question was to probe the validity of home economics in addressing real world dynamics.

4.3 Interview Analysis.

Thematic analysis was used in the investigation and interpretation of the research. Fox asserts that this is a "generic approach to data analysis that enables data sources to be analysed in terms of the principal concepts or themes" (2004, p. 2). These themes are established by the researcher to allow the data to be condensed into concluding discussions.

This analysis occurred in an iterative and evolving way. The first stage of the analysis involved making initial sense of the data by becoming immersed in the interview transcripts and accompanying field notes. The process of transcription, while accelerated through the use of an app, was nonetheless time consuming. Yet, it proved

to be time “not wasted, as it informs the early stages of analysis” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 88). This “first and crucial step” is essential in order to avoid “great risks to validity of the analysis” (Fox, 2004, p. 2), and necessitated repeated readings of each transcript to ensure familiarisation with the data. The researcher read the data in an “active way - searching for meanings, patterns and so on” as advocated by Braun and Clarke, (2006, p. 87). During this initial process notes were taken by the researcher, prior to the formal coding of data and handwritten mind maps were produced.

The next stage involved aligning interview responses with research domains based on the questions provided to respondents prior to interview. The domains were significantly influenced by content within the literature review and the major research question. The five domains of enquiry established were:

- Understanding of the term food literacy within the context of Junior Cycle home economics.
- Position of home economics in delivering food literacy curricula within Irish post primary education.
- Other subjects that incorporate food literacy curricula.
- Factors influencing the delivery of such curricula.
- The role of home economics in addressing a perceived culinary skills transition in modern Ireland.

Each interview participant was colour coded, which made the presentation of the data more visually appealing and easier to navigate, while also affording the participants a level of anonymity. Table 4.1 displays the colour coding of each participant and Table 4.2 presents a sample of this stage, which was completed digitally by cutting and pasting of the original transcripts.

Table 4.1 Colour Coding of Interviewees.

| | |
|-------------|--|
| HEc1 | Home economics teacher with 17 years' experience, working alongside PDST. |
| HEc2 | Home economics teacher recently employed within the tertiary home economics teacher training sector. |
| HEc3 | Home economics teacher with extensive experience, former president of the ATHE. |
| HEc4 | Home economics teacher with high profile social media presence. |
| HEc5 | Home economics teacher working within the tertiary home economics teacher training sector. |
| HEc6 | Home economics teacher recently employed within the tertiary home economics teacher training sector. |

Table 4.2 Colour Coding of Interview Responses by Question:

| Question 1 | Question 2 | Question 3 | Question 3b | Question 4 |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Its skills, knowledge, values, attitudes. Transferrable skills Theory and knowledge and skills – go hand in hand, not in isolation Transferable skills Collective term | Should be a more multifaceted approach. Home Economics definitely has an invaluable role to play on the ground, where real change can happen. | Everyone’s an expert Positive role model like Neven Maguire Down to individual teacher and their level of passion Resources – including willingness of teachers | Knee jerk reaction to societal ill health. More meaningful change needed. English, Science, Business you’re not paying tribute to the power of home ec | Everything is transitioning in education, Dexterity differences, We are adaptable and flexible. |

The second stage of the data analysis involved generating codes from interesting features of the data. This pilot process, a sample of which is displayed in Table 4.3 below (full table available in Appendix F), established a litany of one hundred and twenty-five preliminary codes across the entire data set. Occasionally, a response related to more than one of the codes. Braun and Clarke argue that individual extracts of data can be coded in as many different categories as they fit into (2006, p. 95). For example, participant HEc.3 identified the “willingness of the teacher” as a resource, thus aligning with the code of resources. However, this comment also fell under the code of the role of the individual teacher. Other responses rendering multiple meanings such as this one were accounted for. Furthermore, conflicting responses were not ignored; Braun and Clarke note that no data set is without contradiction (2006, p. 95). Moreover, conflicting comments afford the researcher a broader perspective.

Table 4.3: Sample of Initial Coding of Data.

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Very little effective pedagogy | H.Ec has the monopoly on food literacy | Students who do H.Ec know the value of it | FL just one component of Home Ec | The value of H.Ec depends on the school |
| Analytical skills attitudes and values | Broad concept | Affective domain of learning | Positive relationship with food | Good knowledge |
| Complete understanding of food | Collective term | Theory and knowledge and skills | Transferable skills | People's confidence |

This expansive selection was then refined down to eleven codes, displayed in Appendix G. This refining stage involved returning to the original data frequently in order to identify heavy overlaps or codes that could be merged. Such overlaps are indicated in the expanded Table 4.4 (Appendix G).

4.4: Data Codes.

Finally, a third round of refinement occurred. This stage sought to merge similar codes and resulted in five final codes. *Home Economics and Food Literacy* emerged as the first code, incorporating three previous codes of home economics, defining food literacy and culinary skills transition. *Barriers and Enablers to Food Literacy* arose as the second code, subsuming previous codes of resources, social media and collaboration. Curriculum and assessment, including the proposed introduction of home economics as a compulsory subject, merged under the code of *Pedagogy*, as did students under the code of *Stakeholders*. The final standalone code was the *Role of the Individual Home Economics Teacher*. The data supporting each of these five codes was then used to generate a word cloud relating to each code. This method of data presentation is considered to be visually appealing and informative, enabling a substantive interpretation of the various perceptions and concerns of the interviewees.

4.4.1 Code 1: Home Economics and Food Literacy:



Word Cloud 4.1: Code 1: Home Economics and Food Literacy.

This code is rooted at the interface between home economics and food literacy. It seeks to clarify what food literacy means to practitioners and to illustrate the capacity of home economics to tackle food literacy within the post primary classroom. All six participants agreed with the Truman *et al.* assertion that food literacy is a “broadly applied” (2017) concept, with participant HEc.3 stating it was a “collective term” and participant HEc.4 deeming it be an “umbrella term”.

Participant HEc.2 noted how it was “knowledge and skills – that go hand in hand”, an idea reiterated by participant HEc.1 who believed food literacy to be “skills, knowledge, values and attitudes”. The notion of transferable skills featured strongly in the interviews, as did the notion that effective food literacy should foster a positive relationship with food. Participant HEc.2 highlighted the importance of individual student confidence as a key attribute in nurturing such a positive relationship.

In relation to the position of home economics in delivering food literacy curricula in post primary schools, all 6 participants agreed that this subject was best placed to accept this role. Participant HEc.4 stated that “home economics *is* food literacy” while participant HEc.2 believes that “home economics covers everything that food literacy encompasses”. Deeper probing as to why home economics is best placed exposed a

strong belief among all participants in the distinctive status this subject holds, with two participants (HEc.5 and HEc.6) referring to home economics as “unique” and participant HEc.1 arguing that it has an “invaluable role on the ground, where real change can happen”. Participant HEc.3 continued with this motif of distinction, commenting that “we underestimate the level of skill involved in teaching home economics”. Participant HEc.4 also suggested that while other subjects address food literacy, home economics “has the monopoly” on it. Participant HEc.5 reinforced this, citing home economics as having a “pivotal role” in addressing food literacy.

All six participants agreed in principle with the existence of a culinary skills transition. Participant HEc.4 believes “everything in education is transitioning and by its very nature it’s in a constant state of evolution” and this reality demands teacher adaptability and flexibility, qualities that participant HEc.5 attributed specifically to home economics teachers.

While participants identified specific examples of this culinary skills transition, including reduced dexterity (participant HEc.4) and an inability to distinguish between a teaspoon and a tablespoon (participant HEc.3), the consensus overall was that home economics teachers who remain “exact to our core values” (participant HEc.1), and continue to emphasise cookery lessons (participant HEc.3), are well equipped to transfer the “skills of empowerment both for today and tomorrow” (participant HEc.2).

4.4.2; Code 2: Barriers and Enablers to Food Literacy.



Word Cloud 4.2: Barriers and Enablers to the Delivery of Food Literacy Curricula.

The second code investigated perceived influences, both positive and negative, on the delivery of food literacy curricula within the home economics classroom. In identifying barriers to food literacy, the topic of resources resounded. Participant HEc.1 lamented the lack of government funding and participants HEc.2 and 5 both specifically identified the cost of ingredients in cookery classes as a barrier to optimal food literacy. Beyond fiscal investment, participants repeatedly referenced time as an issue in delivering food literacy curricula. Participants HEc.2 and 3 both spoke of the recent trend towards whole school one-hour classes. Participant HEc.3 considered this move a hindrance to her teaching and acknowledged that it demanded negotiation and compromise on the part of the teacher, highlighting the role of the individual educator.

Within the arena of resources, the benefit of collaboration was underlined by four of the six participants. Participants HEc.2, 3 and 4 all called for greater support in terms of concrete exemplars from state bodies such as the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). Similarly, various social media platforms were repeatedly referenced as a source of sharing and collaboration between teachers. Participant

However, participant HEc.5 suggested that much of what was presented as impactful, both in schools and academic literature, was in fact “rhetoric”. She posited that there was “very little effective pedagogy that addresses real change” advising that “we need to look at the affective domain, learning attitudinal change, values development and the culture that exists”. The affective domain is concerned with how students feel while they are learning as well as how their learning experiences can guide their attitudes and behaviours in the future and is particularly relevant in home economics which, as a subject seeks to cultivate a set of values and manipulative skills in students. The Junior Cycle curriculum specifically identifies affective skills to include creativity, curiosity, imagination, intuition, improvisation, sensitivity and resourcefulness. Participant HEc.5 concluded that a “good curriculum overhaul is needed” at third level and initial teacher training stage, in order to effect change in terms of pedagogical approach.

Regarding State assessment of food literacy within home economics, all participants were positive regarding recent changes. Participant HEc.2 believes that teachers have “embraced” the new Junior Cycle and participant HEc.1 asserted that this new curriculum gives the teacher greater freedom and flexibility in the classroom. Participant HEc.6 reiterated this, saying teachers “are no longer confined by the curriculum”. Participant HEc.3 welcomed the fact that the practical cookery assessment is now worth 50% of the final grade, although participant HEc.1 expressed disappointment that the accompanying classroom-based assessment, CBA 2, carries no weight at State examination level. Participant HEc.4 agreed with this sentiment, suggesting this decision was a “missed opportunity” and that this mode of assessment is “very disconnected from the reality of the modern classroom”.

All participants were largely in favour of the State’s recommendation to introduce Junior Cycle home economics as a compulsory subject, with participant HEc.6 asserting that this endorsement “shows that this subject can play a pivotal role in students’ lives”. Caveats exist however, with participant HEc.1 concerned that this would put too much pressure on home economics, rather than recognising the need for a more multi-faceted response; “we are only one element in society”. Participant HEc.5 also voiced some scepticism as to how effective this would be particularly “if the appropriate approaches (pedagogical) are not in place”.

Concluding the section on factors influencing delivery of food literacy curricula, participant HEc.4 noted how “there are so many barriers, but barriers are there to be broken. They don’t stop you, they just make it more interesting”.

4.4.4. Code 4 Stakeholders (Including Students and the Wider Community).



Word Cloud 4.4: Stakeholders

A common thread amongst respondents was the influence that the wider school community exert on food literacy within the home economics classroom. At policy level, participant HEc.1 suggested home economics representatives should have a seat at the government table when formulating healthy eating initiatives. Participants HEc.3 and 6 both advocated for whole school approaches to food literacy and healthy eating, with participant HEc.6 asserting that schools should have a “supportive environment” in terms of healthy eating policies and availability of foods, and participant HEc.3 suggesting a whole school approach to food literacy could be anchored in home economics. Participants HEc.4 and 5 noted the role of school management, in fostering positive role modelling and leadership; “with a distributed leadership model, they (management) would be responsible for perhaps embedding this in practice, for example, in developing school policies around health and food

consumption” (Participant HEc.5). Two participants recommended the introduction of food literacy curricula at primary school level, in order to enhance its delivery at post primary level.

Participant HEc.6 was of the opinion that parents of students acknowledge the benefit and value of home economics and participant HEc.4 was adamant that students themselves acknowledge the significance of studying home economics, quoting a past student who identified home economics as “the subject that she uses most from secondary school”.

Code 4.4.5 The Role of the Individual Home Economics Teacher in Delivering Effective Food Literacy Curricula.



Word Cloud 4.5: The Role of the Individual Home Economics Teacher in Delivering Effective Food Literacy Curricula.

All six participants nominated the influence of the teacher, in various guises, of their own accord, with participant HEc.2 leading the charge that “I think it’s (effective delivery of food literacy curricula) down to each teacher and their passion, their love”. Participant HEc.5 attached significant importance to the initial teacher training stage

in establishing effective pedagogical approaches, an opinion reflected in participant HEc.6 response that “the teacher role is essential” and participant HEc4’s assertion that “the learning depends on the teacher”. Participant HEc.1 proposed that a lack of confidence or “headspace” on the teacher’s behalf can negatively impact the classroom, and subsequently the teaching of food literacy content. Participant HEc.4 suggested that fear exists amongst some home economics teachers in adapting their practice, although she referenced the recent move to remote learning as an example of teacher flexibility.

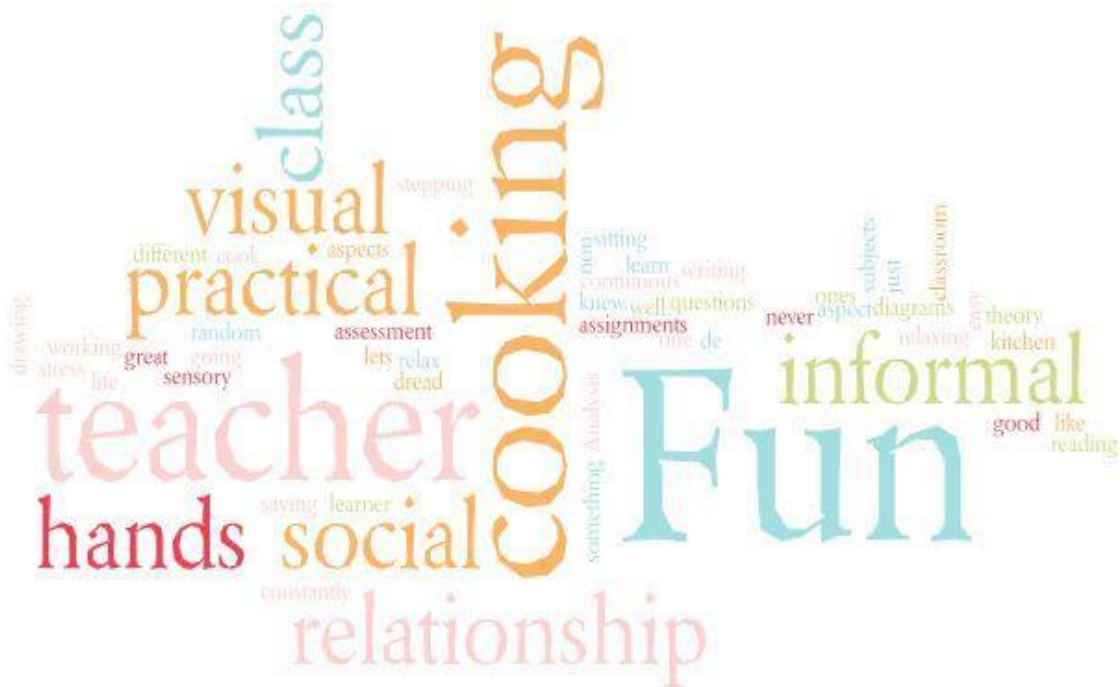
4.5 Focus Groups.

Data was also collected via two focus groups with a cohort of adults, all of whom had studied home economics in school.

The schedule of the focus groups were almost identical, structured around eight questions (Appendix D). For the purposes of analysis, data from the two groups were merged. The questions were informed by the findings of the interviews. However, given the different backgrounds between the cohorts, i.e. teachers versus former students, the language was altered. The code of home economics and food literacy was presented as *Food Education and Culinary Skills*, including recipes, acquired in home economics that participants continued to use beyond school. Barriers and enablers became *Factors Influencing the Opinion of Home Economics*, and also incorporated suggested improvements to the subject. The question dealing with stakeholders was omitted, given the students limited experience of the wider school community. Similarly, the term pedagogy was disposed of, with the topic subsumed by the question concerning *The Role of the Teacher*. Finally, the issue of a culinary skills transition was addressed via the question concerning the *Value of Home Economics in Contemporary Ireland*.

Following transcription of these focus groups, the data set was presented under the question topics (Table 4.5; Appendix H). As detailed above, while the headings vary, they do correspond with the five key codes identified through the data analysis of the interviews. As with these interviews the data is presented in a word cloud format.

4.5.1: Data Analysis of First (Focus Group) Topic: Factors Influencing Opinion of Home Economics as a Subject that Teaches Food Literacy.



Word cloud 4.6: Factors Influencing Opinion of Home Economics as a Subject that Teaches Food Literacy.

Both focus groups expressed overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards home economics as a subject that incorporates food literacy. This correlation satisfied the researcher’s previous concern that the first focus group was perhaps not representative of home economics students: All of the participants in the first focus group pursued some aspect of food-related study at third level, whereas none of the participants in the second focus group did so. This indicated that an appreciation of the subject does not necessitate further study in the food sector. Participants repeatedly referenced the hands on, practical element of the subject, with the topic of cookery featuring regularly. While not addressing pedagogy explicitly, this question nonetheless elicited numerous pedagogical themes, including the value of continuous assessment with attendant feedback, and the benefit of practical classes to visual learners. Participants mentioned that home economics was “one of the few non-theory subjects” and that “it wasn’t just sitting in a classroom constantly reading”. These comments aligned with

One participant, Séan, believed home economics to be of immense value but also thinks “it’s out of touch with where contemporary Ireland is now”. Further probing of this opinion suggested that the subject has evolved in terms of theoretical food literacy, i.e. nutrition, but lags behind in terms of “how people live their lives now”. He proposed that the approach of reading recipes does not align with someone who has a “limited pantry to use to put food on the table that has all my nutrients and vitamins and minerals”.

Julie commented that home economics was “important for our wellbeing and mental health during our leaving cert year”, remarking that going to class “was like stepping into someone’s kitchen” and learning about food. This body of data concurred with the interview findings that students who study home economics see the value of it.

4.5.4: Data Analysis of Fourth (Focus Group) Topic: Potential Improvements to Home Economics as a Subject Addressing Food Literacy.



Word Cloud 4.9: Potential Improvements to Home Economics as a Subject Addressing Food Literacy.

Extending the code of barriers and enablers to food literacy, this section asked participants for areas they could see potential improvements within home economics and food literacy. As the word cloud above indicates, the issue of male participation loomed large, with participants referencing lack of access for boys, an ongoing stigma

around boys opting for home economics and regret on behalf of young male adults at not selecting the subject. The theme of access was heard in Sophie's suggestion that everyone should be offered the subject at some stage in their education, irrespective of their perceived interest in food.

Echoing the earlier theme of basic recipes, Eimhear promoted the idea of greater cultural variation in the dishes taught, suggesting students were capable of more challenging practicals. Ramute recommended greater time should be allocated to cookery at senior cycle. Reflecting the diverse experiences of individuals Ramute also commented that there should be greater time given to contemporary diets such as veganism or pescatarian diets. Giorgia proposed that greater networking with local food businesses would enhance the image of home economics in terms of its real-world application.

4.5.5: Data Analysis of Fifth (Focus Group) Topic: The Role of the Individual Home Economics Teacher in Delivering Food Literacy Curricula.



Word Cloud 4.10: The Role of the Individual Home Economics Teacher in Delivering Food Literacy Curricula.

The final topic explored the participants' view of the role of the individual teacher in delivering food literacy curricula. All participants supported the notion that the role of

the individual teacher was paramount to success within the subject. Martha asserted that “I loved my teacher – so I did well in home ec”. Sophie stated that “our teacher made our experience of home ec so good, so enjoyable”. Patrick, himself a trainee teacher, noted how his teacher would facilitate conversations between the class “and link it all back and it was just so interesting”. Reinforcing the notion of real-world application, Martha spoke of how her teacher shared countless stories of personal experience, commenting that “I’m sure she made us learn even more life skills, that weren’t even in the book”. While both comments speak to a certain pedagogical approach, they also reflect a particular generosity on behalf of the individual. Martha articulated this, saying “you need a certain personality to be a home ec teacher to get your class and be successful at it”.

4.6 Conclusion

An intrinsic step in thematic analysis is the filtering down of themes to their root definitions. This is a conscious step steered by the researcher whereby the topics that are of interest within the scope of their research are chosen (Braun & Clarke, cited in Cooper *et al*, 2012). Therefore, while the researcher, in choosing qualitative research methods, wants to allow the interviewees voices to be heard, this is done in a systematic, organised manner. Following data analysis, the themes and sub themes below were identified:

Theme No. 1:

The Concept of Food Literacy: Fostering a positive relationship with food.

Sub themes:

- The scope of home economics – An opportunity.
- The pedagogy of food literacy.
- The role of the individual home economics teacher.
- The wider school community.

Theme No. 2:

The Scope of Home Economics – An Opportunity for Contemporary Ireland.

Each of these themes will be elaborated on in *Chapter Five; Conclusion Findings and Recommendations*.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Recommendations.

5.1 Introduction.

The final chapter of this thesis will present the findings from the primary research in parallel with the secondary research conducted in *Chapter 2: Literature Review*. Using the themes identified in *Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings*, the primary research findings will be compared and contrasted with those of the secondary research. This process will address the original aim and objectives of this research project, and assess whether these aims were achieved. Findings and recommendations based on the research undertaken will also be offered.

5.2 Research Aim and Objectives.

5.2.1 Research Aim.

To explore the factors that influence the delivery of food literacy curricula within home economics, from the perspective of stakeholders within the Irish post primary education sector.

5.2.2 Research Objectives.

- Define the term food literacy.
- Explore the concept of a culinary skills transition in Ireland.
- Investigate where food literacy is situated within post primary education.
- Identify factors which influence the effective delivery food literacy curricula within home economics, as perceived by stakeholders.
- Enumerate changes such stakeholders would like to see introduced, in order to enhance food literacy within post primary education, with particular reference to home economics.

5.3 Examination of Themes Identified.

5.3.1 The Concept of Food Literacy: Fostering a Positive Relationship with Food.

The *fostering of a positive relationship with food* emerged from the objective seeking to define the concept of food literacy. Manifesting as an overarching theme it serves

to address a number of objectives and also unify a number of sub themes. While an examination of existing academic literature presented an assortment of definitions (Vidgen, 2014; Truman *et al.*, 2017; Slater, 2018), a sense of ambiguity on what actually constitutes food literacy remains.

Vidgen presents food literacy as a “scaffolding” (2014, p. 54) - a motif evident throughout the primary research. Interviewees veered away from defining the concept categorically, opting instead to present it as a “sliding scale or a barometer” (Participant HEc.4), a “collective term” (HEc.3) or an “umbrella term” (HEc.4).

In line with much of the academic literature (Truman *et al.*, 2017; Perry *et al.*, 2017; Slater *et al.*, 2018) the interview participants elected instead to identify the key components of food literacy in seeking to explain it. These components inevitably returned to the mission statement of home economics, with participants HEc.1, 3 and 5 all referencing skills, knowledge, values and attitudes as playing a pivotal role in food literacy.

When asked to recount what they learned in terms of food literacy in home economics, focus group participants related various aspects including nutrition and menu planning. However, the overwhelming response turned towards practical cookery lessons. This supports the findings made by Ronto *et al.* on the need to link theory with practice through practical hands on lessons (2017, p. 329). While the primary research did not conclude a comprehensive definition of food literacy, it did serve to support the secondary findings that food literacy is a “prevalent term, broadly applied” (Truman *et al.*, 2017, p. 365).

Renwick and Gale Smith posit that “probably the most comprehensive definition (of food literacy) at this time is the one created by Cullen *et al.*, 2015” (2020, p. 15);

...the ability of an individual to understand food in a way that they develop a positive relationship with it, including food skills and practices across the lifespan in order to navigate, engage, and participate within a complex food system. It's the ability to make decisions to support the achievement of personal health and a sustainable food system considering environmental, social, economic, cultural and political components

(Cullen *et al.*, 2015, p. 4.)

While the term *positive relationship* was not overly referenced explicitly in academic literature, the researcher believes the essence of this theme is applicable to many of the accepted definitions, as it speaks to the principal goal of food literacy. This theme also correlates with many of primary research findings, with three of the interview participants specifically using the phrase and all six participants alluding to it. Participant HEc.5 stated that this positive relationship;

...does not come about unless you have a good level of knowledge and understanding of food and health as well as the implications of food choices on our health,

suggesting that such a relationship is the result of successful food literacy curricula. Participant HEc.2 spoke of the importance of student confidence, something Participant HEc.1 concurred with:

Giving the voice to the students and letting them grow as a person and that's how they become catalysts for change, because not only are you giving them the knowledge and the skills and the values and the attitudes, the way you do it, gives them the confidence to change. And the confidence to change is what really brings about change.

Anderson and Falkenberg (2016) link this positive relationship to critical literacy, a point reiterated by Participant HEc.6 who highlighted the importance of the affective domain of learning in food literacy;

it goes beyond food preparation, and the cooking of food. But it also can be linked to other aspects such as implications for food choices, and analytical skills, and attitudes and values related to food as well.

This opinion evokes that of Sumner who states that critical food literacy is “learning to read the world through food” (2013, p. 86).

5.3.2 Pedagogy of Food Literacy.

This sub theme emerged as a consistent reference point throughout the primary research. Focus group participants, while not employing the technical term, alluded to pedagogy a number of times. Patrick, (a trainee teacher), noted how his own home

economics teacher would facilitate conversations between the class “and link it all back and it was just so interesting”. Moreover, there was repeated referencing of practical, hands on lessons, and the experiential benefit of these methodologies to kinaesthetic learners. Sinead noted “I think most of the subjects in the Leaving Cert curriculum are theory based and home ec would be one of the few that's not”. This ostensible preference for practical lessons reflects the findings of Brooks and Begley, that a move away from practical cookery towards a more theoretical approach “decreases the likelihood of development of food preparation skills through this avenue” (2014, p. 159).

Participant HEc.1 spoke at length on the importance of a child centred approach to teaching, highlighting children as agents of change; “I like the language of agents of change because that's really where the pedagogical landscape is at the moment”. All interview participants referenced the new Junior Cycle specification, introduced in 2018, with participant HEc.1 suggesting that assessment changes allowed for greater freedom on the teacher's behalf, to deliver the course according to the students' needs.

While a number of interviewees deemed home economics teachers to be “adaptable and flexible” (HEc.5), a fear of change was also noted; “there is teacher fear in adapting practice...some teachers are still teaching the exact same way as when they left college” (HEc.4). This position corresponds with findings made by Ronto *et al*: “Some of the interviewees stated that some home economics teachers have ‘an old-fashioned’ approach in teaching adolescents food literacy” (2016, p. 16). Participant HEc.5 recommended a curriculum overhaul at third level, in order to equip new teachers with the appropriate pedagogical skills. Furthermore, she suggested that practising home economics teachers should be proactive in their own professional development, again reflecting the dynamic aspect of both education and more specifically, food literacy. Participant HEc. 4 reminded the researcher that “everything is transitioning in education, by its nature it is in a constant state of evolution... If you choose to believe that it stays the same you probably shouldn't be in teaching”.

Primary research findings indicated that this ongoing professional development may be assisted through greater collaboration between home economics teachers themselves, and with statutory bodies. While participant HEc.1 stated “I think there's always scope in Irish education for more collaboration in any direction; within your

own department, within your own community or subject or practise”, she simultaneously noted that within social media, home economics teachers were reluctant to share failures as learning points for other educators. This finding reinforced the notion of fear, addressed above.

Participant HEc.1 referred to a collaborative project undertaken between the Home Economics and English departments. The English class were studying a novel based around a food dump, and using this as an opportunity for cross curricular learning, the home economics lesson tackled the learning intention of food waste.

This participant also called for greater provision of resources, specifically pro forma examples of work, from stakeholders in education, such as the PDST. Her opinion is borne out of personal teaching experience, but curiously, also from her role within the NCCA and the JCT, the agencies respectively tasked with writing the subject specification and disseminating it to teachers. This participant asserted that the roles of each of these agencies were “quite linear”, indicating that the collaboration advocated within schools is seen to be lacking between state bodies.

5.3.3. The Role of the Individual Home Economics Teacher.

Beyond pedagogy, the sub theme of the role of the individual home economics teacher in influencing effective delivery of food literacy arose consistently. This corresponds in some regards with the findings of Ronto *et al.* that “to have credibility teachers should be positive role models for adolescents with regards to healthy dietary behaviours” (2016, p. 15). The focus group participants all agreed on the pivotal role of the individual teacher, although no such specifics as dietary behaviour was alluded to. Rather, participants referred to the relationship fostered between the students and teacher with Julie capturing the essence of this with her statement “it was like stepping into someone’s kitchen”.

All interviewees were in agreement regarding the influential role the individual teacher occupies. Participant HEc.2 assertion that effective food literacy rests with “each teacher and their passion, their love” distils the general sentiment. That these individuals agreed to participate in the study may designate a greater level of awareness on this matter. However, if recognition of this role is applied generally, it may represent a key factor in effective delivery of food literacy curricula. Identifying the attributes of successful home economics teachers (as regards food literacy) is

beyond the scope of this study, but Renwick and Smith posit that “unique possibilities for leadership and research in FL education are available for the FCS/HE profession to foster the evolution of food literacy” (2020, p. 20).

5.3.4 The Wider School Community.

In identifying the factors which influence the effective delivery of food literacy curricula within home economics, the influence of the wider school community repeatedly emerged. Begley and Vidgen note that “stakeholders and context often determine the intent of food literacy” (2016, p. 17), a finding reinforced in various ways during the primary research. Participant HEc.3 spoke about the recent move to one hour lessons in many Irish schools. This school wide adjustment, she argued, has serious impacts on home economics classes and necessitated negotiation on behalf of the teacher. While HEc.5 proposed that students who study home economics “know the value of it”, HEc.2 suggested that a “poor perception of the subject” exists beyond the home economics classroom. Contemporary research by McCloat and Caraher compounds this view (2020, p. 449). Participants HEc.4, 5 and 6 highlighted the role of school management in supporting both the individual teacher/department and the subject in delivering effective food literacy curricula, pinpointing for example, timetabling and financial resources. The exemplary cross curricular practise detailed above demands thought and deliberation, and the time that this requires is not always provided for by school management, thus underlining their influence.

Participant HEc.5 stressed the importance of a supportive school environment evidenced through, for example, healthy eating policies. This finding corresponds with secondary research (Slater *et al.* 2013, p. 622). Envisaging the leadership role of home economics (Slater, 2017; Renwick and Smith, 2020) working in tandem with school authorities, participant HEc.3 proposed a whole school approach to food literacy “anchored in home economics”. Desjardins *et al.* assert that food literacy is made possible through external support with healthy food access and living conditions, broad learning opportunities, and positive sociocultural environments (2013, p. 6).

5.3.5 The Scope of Home Economics – An Opportunity for Contemporary Ireland.

This sub theme emerged as a reflection of both the existing ability of home economics and the potential reach of the subject in delivering effective food literacy curricula, and ultimately fostering a positive student relationship with food. Questions arose from the primary research regarding the effectiveness and perceived value of home economics in delivering food literacy curricula. While Slater posits that “home economics professionals have the training, skill, foresight, and leadership to be at the front of a food literacy movement” (2017, p. 19), participant HEc.5 questioned the value of home economics; “so for me it's rhetoric, to be honest, a lot of what you find in the textbooks and what we do in schools is for me, rhetoric”. However this position did not correspond with the findings from the focus group participants, all of whom expressed confidence in the subject in various ways; “I think it's one of the only subjects in school that really prepares you for life in general” (Sarah), “I think that it can apply to everyone's life. Like it's not if you're interested in cooking, I think that learning the basics of cooking is important for everyone even if you don't love cooking” (Eimhear) and, “I just think it's a very like relatable subject” (Patrick). Similarly, while most interview participants noted areas for improvement, the general consensus was that home economics was a “unique subject”, “valued by both parents and students” (Participant HEc.6).

This theme addresses the objective seeking to situate food literacy in post primary schools. While all six interview participants acknowledged a plethora of other subjects whose curricula encompasses food literacy, the resounding response identified home economics as the most suitable candidate in delivering food literacy curricula; “home economics *is* food literacy” (participant HEc.4) and “home economics covers everything that food literacy encompasses” (Participant HEc.2). This resonates with the research of Renwick and Gale Smith who note that food literacy is supported by home economics because it (home economics) “rises above the transmission of information about nutrients and the focus on biometric markers to encourage critical thinking and positive relationships with food and food as social practice” (2020, p. 16).

The researcher sensed a dynamic element to these findings: food literacy is an evolving concept. Sumner articulates that food literacy is “a concept under construction” (2013,

p. 82). Therefore, all associated definitions and approaches must also continuously adapt and change. McCloat and Caraher reported how home economics teachers welcomed the recent modernisation of the curriculum; “it is hugely positive, there was a stage where we were really ready for a change ... it is now up to date and modern” (2020, p. 450). Primary research findings from this study correlated with this, with interview participants displaying generally positive attitudes towards the new specification: “Teachers are embracing the new Junior Cycle” (HEc.2). Likewise, some focus group participants acknowledged recent societal changes reflected in the home economics classroom, with Giorgia commenting how “they're doing a lot more vegetarian options, vegan options, you know, so it is kind of evolving with the times”.

Notwithstanding these improvements, participants in both interviews and focus groups identified areas where home economics could capitalise further on its delivery of food literacy curricula. Many of these recommendations fall under the sub headings of pedagogy, role of individual teacher and wider community. Others related directly to the subject. Reflecting the diverse nature of school experience, and reinforcing the influence of the individual teacher, Ramute’s suggestion contradicted Giorgia’s aforementioned opinion, commenting that “I just thought of adding more dishes such as vegetarian or pescatarian vegan dishes, there wasn't a lot of those types of options for us”.

Interviewees all conceded that a culinary skills transition does indeed exist. The tone of responses to this question was somewhat blasé - it was apparent to the researcher that this skills transition is a conventional challenge to food literacy. Respondents volunteered numerous evidence of this, including diminishing dexterity (HEc.4) and a return to basic culinary know how (HEc.3), with one participant pointing out how these transitions were not always negative (HEc.5). In response to this challenge there was a resounding recognition by all participants of the value of practical cookery classes that impart transferable skills to students. Indeed, it is these transferrable skills that respondents returned to again and again, a point reiterated in the focus groups when Sinead asserted that the fundamentals of cookery never change.

The “intellectual freedom” (HEc.5) afforded to the teacher under the new Junior Cycle specification acts as a further solution to ongoing culinary skills transitions. While this perceived freedom may enhance the transmission of “skills of empowerment” to home

economics students, it was observed that Junior Cycle State assessment does not capitalise on such skills. HEc.4 regretted the fact that the classroom based assessment (CBA), a food literacy brief that complements the practical cookery exam, was not weighted, stating this was a “missed opportunity”. HEc.1 concurred with this opinion, calling for the assignment to be accounted for.

5.4 Findings and Recommendations.

5.4.1 Defining Food Literacy: The *How* Rather Than the *Why*.

Formulating a definition of food literacy was a stated objective of this research project. The primary and the secondary research found that articulating such a definition is both difficult and potentially unnecessary. Difficult, as this concept appears to be in an ongoing state of evolution and therefore challenging to pin down. What constitutes food literacy to one cohort, may be redundant to another. Potentially unnecessary, as what warrants attention, certainly on the part of educators, is not so much the *what* of food literacy but the *how*. Specifically, how will educators nurture in their students a positive relationship with food. This relationship should not be restricted to a binary narrative of nutritious versus non nutritious, but rather embrace all aspects of food, from original source through to serving. Such a tactic reflects modern Irish life and presents food literacy as a positive, holistic concept, reminding us that we eat food, not nutrients.

5.4.2 Pedagogy, Collaboration and Profession Development.

This study found a number of avenues to address the *how* in relation to food literacy. Firstly, effective teacher pedagogy. This research accentuated the importance of effective teacher training at third level, in order to ensure effective pedagogical approaches to food literacy. Participant HEc.5, currently employed in the teacher training sector of education, recommended an overhaul of curriculum at this level. Any such amendments should seek to reflect contemporary society and the contemporary food environment, rather than merely adding to the layers of existing curricula. For example, an opportunity exists to foster collaboration with local food companies to enhance students understanding of the provenance of food.

Curriculum change at initial training stage would not impact on the circa 1600 home economics teachers presently delivering food literacy curricula in Ireland. The value of collaboration, therefore, between these teachers is to be recommended in all directions; within and across departments, between schools and via social media platforms. The subject representation body, the A.T.H.E. could act as a critical agent in encouraging greater cooperation through, for example, recruitment drives. An increased membership base would be better equipped to create an enhanced culture of sharing, both successful pedagogy and examples of failure.

Similarly, room exists for improved collaboration through State agencies such as the JCT and the PDST, specifically through increased provision of pro forma exemplars to teachers. Such a recommendation could inspire enhanced pedagogy, providing context and imagery to course material, and may also seek to alleviate the finding of fear, often observed in long service teachers, hesitant to embrace new approaches.

The current practise of classroom based assessments, while child centred, do not adequately recognise the effort of the student. To this end, it is recommended that CBA2, Food Literacy Brief, be reassessed in terms of its weighting in the State examination schedule.

This study found a clear bias towards practical cookery classes in terms of effective pedagogical approaches to food literacy. Both teachers and students emphasised the importance of this methodology, with former students aligning skills acquired in practical lessons almost exclusively with their understanding of food literacy. It is recommended that imminent reviews of the Leaving Certificate home economics syllabus should bear this in mind when revising the existing course. In particular, increased weighting of practical skills at this level is advisable. This recommendation will satisfy a broader range of aptitudes and, over the combined five years of post-primary education, equip all students with essential life skills as they enter adulthood.

5.4.3 Leadership in Home Economics.

The importance of ongoing professional development of home economics teachers, with particular reference to the role of leadership within home economics, presented as a key finding of this study. This leadership role can manifest itself within the individual classroom, with home economics teachers consciously acknowledging their influence on their students' level of food literacy. The collaboration detailed above

may encourage further conversations amongst home economics teachers on this privileged position, and identify leadership opportunities.

Beyond the classroom, it is recommended that school management also recognise this influence and encourage school wide food literacy policy. Moreover, it is recommended that such policies are anchored in home economics, given the level of expertise within this department. This suggestion also speaks to the broad reach of food literacy, permeating numerous subjects and affecting students' lives beyond cookery class. It recognises that a multi-faceted approach to food literacy is a prudent tactic. Healthy Eating Policies, Healthy Living Weeks and Sustainable Food Waste Policies are examples of such strategies.

5.4.4 The Wider School Community.

Further recommendations pertinent to findings around the wider school community emerged: The current trend towards one hour classes is not to be recommended in enhancing food literacy levels among home economics students. In addition, the scheduling of home economics against traditionally perceived male subjects, such as woodwork, is not advised. Conversely, greater access to food literacy via home economics is recommended, in line with the Governments endorsement. If the Department of Education and Skills are to sincerely endorse home economics, they must learn from the research, both internationally and in Ireland

In order for this to materialise management but first recognise the importance of home economics in nurturing the lifelong skillset acquired through food literacy. Reiterating the previous recommendation, the home economics teacher/department plays a pivotal role in highlighting this importance.

On a macro level, significant investment in infrastructure is essential, specifically in terms of access to adequate kitchen classrooms. The researcher suggests that further investigation into food literacy as a core component of the primary curriculum be investigated.

5.4.5 The Individual Teacher.

Home economics, as with food literacy, is an evolving subject, anchored by its mission statement. This study found that the new Junior Cycle specification reflects this in terms of curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment. The flexible and adaptive

skills of the home economics teacher resonated throughout the primary research. Yet still a shadow of uncertainty on the value of home economics prevails. The final recommendation calls for home economics teachers to actively counteract this disservice, through involvement with the ATHE, engagement with discussions on social media platforms, promotion of the subject in the wider school community and a commitment to continuous lifelong learning, either formally or informally. This leadership role ought to inspire our students in their quest to become agents of change, and ultimately, leaders themselves.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Participant Cover letter incorporating consent form

Subject: Interviews for MA Thesis

A chara,

I am a Home Economics teacher currently undertaking an MA in Gastronomy and Food Studies at Technological University Dublin. To fulfil my course requirements, I must complete a post graduate thesis. The topic which I have chosen is:

“Enhancing Food Literacy within the Irish Post Primary Setting: Perceptions of Those at the Coalface”

It is my aim to present a comprehensive research paper exploring impediments to food literacy, as perceived by school principals, home economics teachers and students, and those involved in curriculum design within the Irish post primary schools sector. Objectives of my research include collating definitions of food literacy, investigating the existence of a culinary skills transition in present day Ireland and enumerating barriers to food literacy, within the Irish post primary sector. It is my hope this research will inform educational authorities prior to the introduction of mandatory Home Economics for Junior Cycle, as committed to by the Government in 2018.

In order to complete this thesis, I plan to conduct a series of interviews with practising teachers of Home Economics, as well as other key stake holders. I would greatly appreciate if you would consider participating in such an interview, which would focus on barriers and enhancements to food literacy and a supposed culinary skills transition, as experienced through your day to day teaching.

The interview should take no more than thirty minutes and would be completed virtually via zoom. Should you agree to an interview, all information gathered will be

confidential, and if you so wish, your identity would also remain confidential. After the interview you will be provided with a copy of the transcript for approval. Should you have any questions regarding my research please do not hesitate to contact me by email.

Is mise le meas,

Aisling Geraghty.

0876200930

Aisling.hargaden@gmail.com

Appendix B: Pre Interview Food Literacy Quotes

Introduction:

- There is a ‘paradox of unprecedented access to nutrition information and food alongside escalating levels of overweight and obesity, related to unhealthy diets’.

Vidgen, 2014.

- ‘As a society we have never been more food centred while at the same time so far removed from the food we eat, figuratively and literally’.

Slater, 2017.

- ‘Food is never just “food” but is always symbolic of other capabilities and capacities depending on the lens used’.

Coveney, 2014.

Defining Food Literacy:

- Food literacy is ‘inconsistently defined and measured’.

Vidgen, 2016.

- It is a ‘prevalent term, broadly applied’... ‘evidence-based conceptions of food literacy are needed in light of the term's popularity in health promotion and educational interventions designed to increase food skills and knowledge that contribute to overall health’

Truman *et al.*, 2017.

Definitions:

- Food literacy is the ability of an individual to understand food in a way that they develop a positive relationship with it, including food skills and practices across the lifespan in order to navigate, engage, and participate within a

complex food system. It's the ability to make decisions to support the achievement of personal health and a sustainable food system considering environmental, social, economic, cultural, and political components

Cullen *et al.*, 2015.

- Food Literacy has developed as a framework to 'connect food-related knowledge, cooking skills, and capacity to foster and develop food and nutritional knowledge to assist in changing dietary behaviour'.

Bailey *et al.*, 2019.

- Food related life skills are transferable skills and can impact on the progression of other skills such as coordination and psycho-motor, organisation and management, and analytical skills in adolescents.

Prendergast & Dewhurst, 2012.

- Food literacy involves intrinsic (food skills, food and nutrition knowledge, self-efficacy, and confidence) and extrinsic (ecologic) factors to make food decisions.

Perry *et al.* 2017.

Food Literacy within the school setting:

- The foodscape is 'highly contextual' and 'what we eat constantly changes in response to the world around us'.

Vidgen, 2014.

- 'While the science of nutrition is context free, its application is embedded in context'.

Bailey *et al.*, 2019.

- 'Stakeholders and context often determine the intent of food literacy'.

Begley & Vidgen, 2016.

- Food Literacy ‘should reflect the different lives people live’.

Vidgen, 2014.

- Ensaff *et al.* conducting qualitative research in the United Kingdom also identified children as agents of change in terms of dietary behaviour within families.

Ensaff, 2015.

Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

Interview Transcript; Participant 1

A: Researcher

P: Participant

A: And of course then, any transcripts or anything, I'll pass them onto you. So yeah – look I have basically four loose kind of questions for you and I'm really just interested in your opinion and your experiences so, em, the first one is – I sent you out a few quotes, I don't know whether you got chance to have a look at them. Em – did any, have you any comment –

P: I have them here now yeah.

A: Yeah. Have you any comment on any of them? Is there any of them that jumped out at you or resonated with you or anything in particular or - or maybe not?

P: There is one thing, but you'll, one thing, but you'll be aware of it yourself Aisling, is that I suppose in the end is to kind of look at food literacy is part of what we do in Home Economics and it's a massive part of who we are and what we do – am I gone?

A: No you're there.

P: Grand. I thought I'd cut myself off. It's a massive part of what we do Aisling, but, em it's not all that we are.

A: Yeah.

P: So I think that's important, that we're probably more holistic than that.

A: Yep.

P: But obviously the nature of your study is focused on a specific area, as it should be, but it would be important to look at that, that we are more holistic than just, that we're not that one brigade as such.

A: Yep.

P: Em, in the health and wellbeing aspect of the one brigade but also in just the cooking, stuff like that, so em, that was one thing that stood out to me.

A: Ok.

P: And, two random things for yourself are, that sometimes I'm involved with people for research, just supporting them or whatever. Im sure you've seen Kathryn McSweeney's PhD-

A: Yeah, yeah, very good, yeah.

P: So a few little nuggets early on in that PhD and I was just looking last night and Amanda McCloat has a few bits that will be relevant for you too.

A: Brilliant, yep.

P: Em,

A: Yep – you're on the ball!

P: Amanda McCloat – she has some nice bits about kind of food literacy and Home Economics and it's kind of role and there's a few nice little quotes in it that would be good and it won't take you – they're quick reads Aisling.

A: Brilliant, yeah.

P: Where did I put that now – oh yeah – in terms of the quotes I thought they were really interesting, I thought they were really nice, em, the food literacy is explicitly defined in our Junior Cycle Spec

A: Yep.

P: Just because our Senior Cycle spec is older but I'm sure with Senior Cycle reform you're going to see that coming in.

A: Yep.

P: And, I liked the kind of broader definitions of food literacy where they were looking at that kind of holistic development of self, so that it wasn't seen as something narrow, so because it's so big I agree it can be hard to man.. to sort of measure, em but you can measure it, because its attitudinal – if you look at the definition it's skills, it's knowledge, it's values, it's attitudes. So, you can measure all of those things. Em, I suppose values are a little more difficult to em, to measure and then the issue is do the values actually translate into meaningful change?

A: Yep

P: And that's the thing I think most Home Economics teachers will report to you is that em, we can do an awful lot, and we do an awful lot in Home Economics and, em, but then, culturally, socially, policy all of those bigger things that are outside of our remit, em, are obviously also going to impact on the level of change. So like, no one thing will tackle obesity and you know the problem of people being overweight in any culture, em, so it's more a multifaceted kind of approach but I do think that we very much have a role to play, em, on the ground, and that's where real change can happen from but it's need a more, em, multifaceted joined up kind of thinking kind of approach and em I think you see that in one of Amanda McCloats things where we're looking at why not look at the issues of ill health more in health promotion as opposed to coming to the party late, and then trying to peddle backwards against the tide, em and I think Home Economics has a good place there. Em I loved the one about children being agents of change in the family, and I like the language of agents of change because that's really where the pedagogical landscape is at the moment with Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle reform Aisling.

A: Mmhm.

P: So, em, children at the centre of their learning is where it's at, so it's not about just teaching the kids and giving them knowledge old school Junior Cert, this style of learning is really important now in Home Economics so that, sort of, em, different pedagogical approach is massive now. So if you walk into a classroom now you're going to see kids doing group work, problem solving, if you look even at the nature of the Junior Cycle alone, it's problem based learning.

A: Mmhm.

P: And, that critical higher order thinking, em, is a big sort of – stylistic is probably not the right word for education, but change more so that I have seen in the last seventeen years. It's not just talk and chalk, it's letting, it's that partnership in education and giving the voice to the students and letting them grow as a person and that's how they become catalysts for change, because not only are you giving them the knowledge and the skills and the values and the attitudes, the way you do it, gives them the confidence to change. And the confidence to change is what really brings about change.

A: Mmhm.

P: So I liked that one.

A: Very good – you’ve hit on about seven of my points here – fair play to ya! Em – no – that very last point – one of the quotes talked about, you know, the context and how the stake holders, em, can very much influence context. And so, you referenced there about assessment and say the new Junior Cycle, and I like the way that you’ve, you know, they are all – it is possible to measure the different arenas there of food literacy. Do you think that the Junior Cycle goes far enough, em and this is just one kind of a probing question because this is an M.A rather than and M.Ed, but what I’m wondering is does, for example the cookery exam, can we have a nationwide cookery exam, em, given that from a DEIS school to a non DEIS school, should there be more flexibility in reflection of the different contexts there, or – are we doing enough?

P: I think the new Junior Cycle reform is answering that more Aisling- I’m heavily involved in reform, I’m involved with NCCA, I’m involved with JCT so I am immersed in Junior Cycle.

A: Brilliant, yeah.

P: I think Junior Cycle reform is addressing that in that the nature of the briefs is much broader.

A: Yeah.

P: You’ve seen that this year.

A: Yeah. Yeah

P: And so the broader nature, so I’m in a DEIS school in Limerick city, I’ve taught in a middle class school in Dublin, em, I’ve taught in a private school, em I’ve taken a year out for secondment – so I’ve seen a lot of kids from a lot of different schools, and, a lot of students, I shouldn’t say kids – but, em, I think even just, I think just one thing to say to you is - and the question is a good one around the - is the cookery exam broad enough to include all learners is probably what you’re asking, is it?

A: Yeah. And not just learners as em, you in terms of their educational attainment, but learners as in recognising where they’re coming from. So one big question that I have is that when we go in and we’re teaching kids about, em, let’s say for arguments sake,

fruit and vegetables, em, but at the back of our minds we know that a particular cohort in front of us don't eat fresh fruit and vegetables. So are we – you know – as a teacher of Home Economics I don't want to be feeding you my perspectives, but I know that as teachers we adapt within our classroom to teach our students-

P: Yeah you have to adapt culturally to where the students are at

A: But then they go into an exam which is a state exam, is there enough flexibility and I think you've kind of answered it there in regards to the new Junior Cycle, that the Junior Cycle there is definitely that flexibility, em and adaptability from one school to another. Yeah, so that's really, that's what I'm trying to tease out. So it is –

P: Yeah. So with Junior Cycle reform it's more student centred. So if you put the student at the centre all of the time – and I know we always said that and it's not just about giving talk to that but if you actually put them at the centre, so, some of my really, really, really disadvantages students, like one in particular, em, she didn't like the brief she pulled, so we changed the brief and she wanted to do the second brief about kind of, em, the life cycle, because her great Granny is really influential in her life and she wanted to learn more about her nutrition because that lady had, you know, a multitude of ailments and whatever, and also all of the issues that go with kind of, em nutrition and those in disadvantaged areas and cultural issues and whatever. So, em, she flourished – she got “above expectations”.

A: Brilliant.

P: She wouldn't write in most of my classes. She has an SNA for behaviour and no one has an SNA for behaviour. But that child flourished and loads of my children, I think just to look, the issue is to look at the exams, the CBA is a separate component Aisling and I think the CBA should be accounted for to improve food literacy, and I also think you would have to look at the written paper as well, although we're only at the sample level.

A: Yeah.

P: Em, but the sample paper has strong elements of em, the skills, values, attitudes and knowledge, all looking at stuff you need for food literacy, so if you explore the spec sample paper or the sample assessment items from the NCCA, there is thought and consideration gone into students having transferrable skills and not just giving talk to

that, but they actually should be able to - if you look at the sample questions or the NCCA sample assessment items, a lot of the teachers are criticising them for being less content heavy and an assignment could do that. But if you actually explore them, there's a lovely em, sort of pattern of the recognition of the transferability of skills and bending your knowledge and moving your knowledge to different scenarios and a lot of them are scenario based. So I think in the three components of assessment em, in Junior Cycle, you're going to see more of that kind of that going forward, more recognition.

A: Great.

P: But then – we're only one element in society Aisling.

A: Yeah. Yeah. That's it that we can – yeah. And you said at the start Marie, about how, again, I liked, you know, that is only just one part of Home Economics, the food literacy, and that we are more holistic. Em, would you have an opinion that food literacy should be given it's own subject?

P: I think if you do that you would have to query why are you doing that and you're just doing it at this point as a knee jerk reaction to societal ill health and, it should have come years ago if that was kind of the case. Em, I think that Home Economics plays an invaluable role, I see people beat the drum about compulsory Home Economics even Aisling. I think that more meaningful change, it shouldn't just rest on one single page that's responsible for the health of the nation – it just can't work! Even if it comes in as its own subject in its own right, there isn't em, there isn't enough governmental support for food education anyway. Em, and you can see that – I mean even look at tokenistic things like the sugar tax Aisling, and there's confinement on it. So it has to, I think what would be more meaningful would be to bring stakeholders like Home Economics representatives to the table and advocates of policy development. I think that could be more meaningful, because we already have a subject on the ground that is able, willing and have effected change to some extent.

A: And when you're saying about representatives, I'm very interested in that. Would you see that there, like where would you see the role of, say the ATHE –would you have an opinion there in terms of em – you know what is the role – yeah! It's funny, you mentioned Kathryn McSweeney – her PhD you know goes into quite a bit of detail

of how other subjects, that their representative body, changed the landscape for subjects and she references Geography, so -could you speak for a moment –

P: And I would say the same. Yeah I think em, I think strong subject organisations have a massive role to play. So, what defines a strong subject organisation is a question.

A: Yeah.

P: Or, not even strong – an effective subject organisation is a better word. So effective subject organisations and, what is that and what does that make, and is - don't quote me if you don't mind-

A: Ok.

M: But there is a big difference in different organisations across the country and like Business seems to be very, highly effective, I would say. So I think that is part of it but I think also just having something as narrow as a subject, em, the teachers on the ground isn't enough, because that's transient and they change, the representatives change, so I think other stake holders, like say JCT, NCCA, Home Economics representatives, the inspectorate – who are in more permanent roles and sometimes even oversight roles in Home Economics. Em, like they're probably not allowed get involved, but the inspectorate surely – they've seen more Home Economic classrooms in Ireland than anybody, so they, they must have- and there are- it would be worth a look for you Aisling at, there are Home Economics reports – I'll find them because I have them on my memory stick and I'll send them onto you.

A: Oh great! Thank you very much.

P: Looking at Home Economics or something in our schools – they're ancient Aisling, like they're at least 10 or 15 years old, they are out of date as such em, but there was a little booklet looking at Home Economics even if you google it and it was published by the inspectorate, so em, I think that laying anything on the shoulders of any one person or any one group runs the risk of collapse where if you have a better, broader foundation you probably have more strength in that.

A: Well it's kind of a repetition of what you were saying that, Home Economics teachers cannot cure this issue, any one particular issue, so it should be a broad spread,

em and you mentioned about, just on that, the idea that it could go to other, you know, its not just Home Economics, can you identify areas within post primary education that can contribute to food literacy, and as a follow on to that, if you can identify, do you think us as Home Economics teachers are welcome, do we welcome other subjects for example, em, do we liaise well with them?

P: I think there's always scope in Irish education for more collaboration in any direction; within your own department, within your own community or subject or practise, em, I think Junior Cycle reform – we're only on year three in Home Economics and teachers have been teaching through a global pandemic, em I think they're still grappling with some of the L.O.'s. So, I think they're probably not ready, just yet, fully in Junior Cycle to identify – I think we might be better at in Junior Cert, because we knew what we were doing. But I think in some of the videos that you would see - so I've done a few things for JCT- and whether it's like reviewing resources or implementing a unit of learning Aisling around sustainability and food sustainability with students, I would have kind of reached out to other subjects and I think definitely around the area of decision making and sustainability and teaching students to think, like, that's an actual L.O. on it's own, decision making, so that would fit in with that transferability of knowledge and skills and more beautiful big, open learning intentions that bring about the confidence in the students to think “oh I saw this before”. Em, so, sure some of you were talking about textiles, I saw this and now I can see this fitting here. So that's it more of the bigger picture in helping the students to see that bigger picture, that kind of aha! Moment. So I do think there is more scope for collaboration but I think that as teachers become more confident in their kind of engagement with Junior Cycle reform there's probably scope for that to come.

Why not, so you're saying where do I see opportunities to link? I see opportunities to link with any subject if the teacher is in the head space to do it. So food literacy, and not just the head space but the teacher is open and willing and confident and able, do you know what I mean. And there's--- to stop you doing it. But like you could link with English for sustainability. Like our English teacher –we were reading a novel about students living on a dump and we were looking at food sustainability. In science you could use food tech, in business, they could look at marketing or development or advertising or in any subject if the teachers are open, I suppose is the word. And Junior

Cycle reform does facilitate that I think some of us are still grappling with Junior Cert and we're still trying to teach so much content Aisling, that we're not allowing ourselves or the students the freedom to just go –

A: go with it

P: you don't have - it depends on how much time you have. Like I'm fortunate in my school we have a little more time. Whereas if you're right on the 200 hours that could be more challenging.

A: Yeah. And that's leading then to, like, the whole question that I have about barriers and I think you've, you know you have touched on a few there, but like you've mentioned about if the teacher is in the headspace and certainly personally, that would be my complete experience, that if you're in that headspace, em, and unfortunately is influenced, in real life, by things beyond school. But if you're in that headspace, it's my experience that all educators are open to work with things, to try out new things and to implement new plans.

P: I think Irish teachers are quite good, yeah, they become much better and they are quite good. Em, I think it's about giving them the confidence and while it's a not a popular thing to do, concrete examples help Aisling.

A: Yeah. For sure.

P: Because when you see a concrete example you're more likely to have a teacher buy in.

A: And is your experience that that's not a popular

P: Like if you look at - em I think that, there is a reluctance from stakeholders in education to give a pro forma example because one size doesn't fit all. So there is a danger that if I put a very rigid example, that that becomes the norm and that's not healthy

A: That's the template.

P: Yeah, so I think that, while it's a slower burner about developing the skills knowledge and attitudes amongst teachers, em, if you look at what gets solid buy in from teachers, what, in teacher training - like I was reading some article on twitter – like that teachers grow the most in the first four years as such, and then after that what

happens is habits are formed and it's very hard to break a habit. So, we need to look at habit building, make more experienced teachers.

A: That's very interesting isn't it?

P: So that was on twitter somewhere this morning it was just an article about kind of, like, how fast teachers grow in their first 3 - 4 years out, why have they appetite at the start and then, those learning becomes habits, so whether it's classroom management or whether its stylistic or pedagogical approach. That then becomes your habit and if that's your habit, habits are hard to break, we all know that, whether its food or exercise or whatever. It's changing teacher habits.

A: Yeah. That's brilliant, that's a new angle that I hadn't considered, that's super. And like to go, just to return to the idea of barriers, em, would you have any comment or opinion on the role of social media – do you see em, a negative or a positive, or both or neither in how social media might influence particularly the cohort of students that we're targeting, that we're teaching?

P: So social media, social media exists. And you or I or anyone cannot get rid of that fact. So what we have to do is to teach students to be discerning, and social media has a far greater influence on their decision making like that– studies have proven that, than even educators, or solid research, which is scary. So, we have, if you go back to the mission and the aims, even the really old fashioned aims of the IFHE about what is the mission and aims of Home Economics, and I'm sure you've already got that in chapter one! If you look at that original aim of Home Economics, its – whatever era you examine Home Economics in, a lovely part of it is that it has scope to adapt to change. There's nothing aging in our mission.

A: Yeah. That's lovely terminology, lovely phraseology.

P: But like there isn't. So it is, it's transferable, so it fits in with that idea of giving some of the skills and they can apply it, so that is why I would be slow to just be – always really tight just about the food literacy, so like in your conclusion, we are bigger than just food literacy, so like the aim of Home Economics, the big fluffy, super hero aim, is that they are catalysts for social transformation, that's what our students are supposed to be, and, em, we as Home Economics teachers are enablers of that. So at

any given era, any given time, how do you enable students to be catalysts for social transformation. So their needs will change.

A: And if you were to put a bullet point on what enables us as educators to enable our students, beyond say, financial investment, what would you see as, you know if Micheal Martin said “we’re going to give you whatever you want now in the Home Economics department, what is it that you want more than anything”?

P: In order to enable –

A: Yeah. To further, to further the Home Economics mission, you know writ large, but also then in this instance with food literacy.

P: Well I think that the policy review, the overall, I think would be the biggest thing that it has to have, em an approach, a bigger than just one, one area, I don’t think it’s fair because then if it’s a failure there’s finger pointing and things like that. And then if its success – “what do you want? A gold star”? Em, so I think the single biggest thing that we can do -we don’t need any money, we don’t need any more time- even though time would be lovely, we need to put the student at the centre and let the student voice come out, because if we develop their voice early on, then voice sounds so trivial to an extent, but, then when they have the skills, the knowledge, the attitude, the values and the confidence they will be able to respond in their way, I mean that in their own individual way, in their context, in their culture, at a time, because we will have equipped them to be that catalyst, if they are able, because different things, different barriers as you know, like culture, socioeconomic issues, all of that. But I think putting the students at the centre, is worth more than money Aisling. Getting that students voice out there – I know we say we do it, but I left my first years off and they blew my mind.

A: Ok. That’s em – there’s a lot to consider there Marie, that’s brilliant, thank you. The very final thing –

P: A lot of people will argue back against that. You know I’ve heard a lot of counter arguments.

A: And I think we could talk here, or I could certainly ask and listen and talk to you for a long time about how much of that is a sense of defensiveness on behalf of us, as

teachers. That's what I wonder, I'm very interested in what you've mentioned there about, you know, after-

P: Old assessment models

A: And habits, and breaking those habits and having the confidence to break the habits and then, as you're talking about, you know, eh, being criticised or getting the gold star and that exists, even within schools where you have, as teachers, you know I don't know if it happens in your school but in our school we're handed our brown envelopes in September, how did you do in comparison to your nationwide counterparts. So yeah I just wonder about, em, I think even if there's a reluctance on people or people are against that freeing of student voice, I'd like to know why they are against it, because they weren't always against it – once upon a time, every teacher was in that first four years.

P: So I'll tell you why, the reason they're more against it now is because in the past it was tokenistic whereas now it's sort of em, teachers have the freedom because of changes in the assessment practices. So if you have assessment capable teachers –and that's a quote from New Zealand, assessment capable teachers, are more looking at the basically the assessment capable teachers are, and Kathryn McSweeney will be brilliant on this, but if they are devising assessments and tasks that are putting the students at the centre and are giving them little problem solving tasks, then they will, and you know the design brief process in Home Ec is massive for that Aisling. So if they are anchored in quality, effective assessment practices that will just come out. So assessment, effective practices will be huge there, you know with assessment capable teachers is a spoke, do you know, for improvement.

A: Brilliant. And there's just one final thing I wanted to mention to you and I didn't put it in the quotes, but em, you've probably come across Martin Caraher, em, and his counterpart is Tim Lang, they're over in London, but Caraher is Sligo originally himself and they talk about a culinary skills transition and the quote, how they define it is “ when whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables and down throats” and I'm very interested in that idea. Now I feel you've answered it Marie, but just in the interest of following the script here –

P: Yeah

A: I'm very interested in the idea that, em , from one, not even from one generation to the next, within a short period of time we can have a change, a culinary skills transition, and – have you an opinion on that? Have you seen that? Any thoughts or insights on it?

P: Em, yeah, you actually have another quote that fits in with that actually – I can't remember which one it was, but it was about that idea of, em,

A: “We've never been more food centred but yet removed from the food we eat” maybe?

P: No, no – I'll have a look, em but so- what are you asking me in a nutshell Aisling?

A: What do you – have you an opinion on that? Have you seen it? Would you agree with it? Em, do you think -as I've said I think you've kind of answered

P: That food is changing is it?

A: Yeah – and the way we eat and the way our students eat, and I suppose really what that's leading to is that - and again I feel you have already addressed this but that as Home Economists do we move with that? Do we, em, do we, you know do we change our, even our methodology within the classroom to address those changing realities for students?

M: So I think some changes are good, so some changes are good and are for the better and like some changes are bad, so like not sitting down having dinner----- in front of the tv, so like we promote the notion of family.

M: So like we promote the notion of family----- I think before covid I always give the students ----- the time to eat. For me I'm often happy for the students to get-----

M: ----instead of reeling out a big evaluation that they neither have the skills nor knowledge nor interest in doing. So, I send them away with a cold chicken stirfry that's going to be rotten in 2 hours time and probably give them food poisoning! So I think that for us as Home Economists and Home Economics teachers, em, that are exact to some of our core values that are still important, so like family, relationships, fits in with food, decision making fits in with food. Sustainability, fits in with food, so I think that if we go back to our aims, once we are true to our aim and our mission, and because

I feel like its ageless, we can respond to the time appropriately and have the flexibility to kind of, navigate the changes as they come.

A: Very good.

P: Does that make sense?

A: Yeah, that's perfect, that's perfect. Em, yeah I – you've really ticked all the boxes of your own accord Marie, because I have a load of questions but you have answered them all, which is just fantastic! I didn't realise you had the background that you have or the, you know that you're involved with JCT and I really struck gold this morning in having this chat, it's brilliant!

P: Yeah so, I don't mind, I don't promote my work with those organisations. Me answering you today is me, Marie, the Home Ec teacher, and em, one of the - so I could be back to you yet when you're finished your MA asking for help with NCCA work. So, what I do Aisling is I work with the teachers developing examples, the students examples, the examples of work, em, and stuff like that. It's in a part time capacity. But I think that the Home Ec circles are so small it's better for a person like me to be faceless and just be another one of the Home Economics community – does that make sense? So while I don't keep it a secret I don't, em I'm only there in a part time capacity which is basically one morning I do a few hours for them, em but I love that it's a teacher on the ground.

A: Yeah, its great! Yeah and I mean – you don't need me to tell you that, em practising teachers respond so much better when they know its one of their own, rather than, you know, the idea of the cigeire, you now when was the last time you were in the classroom? And that. That barrier that's there, so, yeah, that's super, fair play to you, you're a busy woman! Em Look I think -

M: But, when asking people to do stuff – and you know where I was going with that, with the extra stuff, is not by any means “oh look at the extra stuff I do” because I lot of what I do isn't right em or I could do it better but what I noticed is, reaching out to teachers, the last person I reached out to to answer or to be involved in their research is like one of the most valuable Home Ec teachers in my, even personal circle, where you're like “I'm doing a test on meat - do you have a test on meat”? You know what

I mean?----- There isn't a place where we can all share things? Like the JCT is helping but they're not allowed set up anything up, whereas I think----

A: I'm losing you - I just lost you and I'm very interested in what you're saying, I just lost you - sorry - you were saying that, you said that the JCT they can't set up a sharing space for teachers?

P: No. No it's not their role. In any of the subjects that's not their role so they wouldn't be allowed do it,, em so like, their role is really just - so it's back to teachers understanding of what the different roles are so the NCCA, write the spec, they write the assessment guidelines, JCT, their job is to bring the teachers into that, into an understanding of those achievements. And help bring it to life. And then the inspectorate then are checking is that being brought to life. So its kind of looking what each persons role is but they're quite linear, that's where an effective subject organisation could come in to play, where we have more of that sharing of resources. Like the PDST did a couple of great CD's years ago where you had all your stuff -

A: Yeah. Yeah that's right!

P: So that's what you need with Junior Cycle reform

A: And I think as well apart from that helping, em, teachers and anyone who is anyway reluctant, I think as well, that sort of collaboration, it sort of breeds a sense of loyalty nearly - that you know when you got that from the PDST you thought "oh well look, gosh they're not all talk", this is something, as you were saying, this is an exemplar, this is what I can use, so it works both ways, so it would be fantastic - so there you are - there's your next hobby now!

P: But even talking about the things that - I know- talking about the things that don't work as well like. That's why twitter kills me if I-----

A: You're gone again.

P: ----or got it horribly wrong - I made the worst apple ring cake recently, it was a disaster, like I followed an American recipe and it was horrendous. But no one puts that on twitter.

A: Yeah.

P: They just take the my cakes are perfect-----

A: No. You're gone again. I'm losing you. I don't know if it's my side or yours – but I think I'm getting what you're saying that like, social media, we only show the good sides, em and I find, I'm new to twitter, it actually part of this em, course – we had to join twitter and I had a bit of a problem with it because I was totally new to it – but what I found useful is even seeing, you know, peoples, em, their CBA textiles, you know to see, to get ideas. So I'm absolutely in agreement with you, just a sharing of, just to open up the box a bit like and “oh you could do that and that actually looks like it's easier in the long run than what you are doing” which is really a throwback very often, exactly as you said to Junior Cert. So, yeah I totally...

P: It's a habit, yeah.

A: Completely agree with you. Completely and utterly

M: Its just being authentic on social media, being authentic with each other. So even if you're in a JCT day, turn on your cameras and talk, like the day I was at some people had their cameras off – like I'd love someone to tell me something that went horribly wrong -I'd just be like – that's brilliant – like not to fear failure

A: Yeah, yeah, for sure.

P: Look if you need anything else back

A: You're so good I really, as I said to you this was my first interview so I you know I was kind of grappling it – you've given be so much to work with and so many other ideas to go, you know to go particular directions so I'm just really grateful and its great

A: I did a masters a good while ago and there's ebbs and flows with it Aisling, so you know there's periods where you're like “right I'm ready to get my hands dirty again” and then there's another day when you're like” if I have to do one more word I'll get sick” so, do you know, you get energy from other people, so critical friends are good – so you have my number, so just send me a text or give me a call.

A: You're so good. Listen its been an absolute pleasure, thank you so much,

A: Thanks so much, take care, bye bye.

Interview Transcript; Participant 2.

A: Researcher

P: Participant

A: So, first of all, just to say, thank you so much for agreeing to do this. I really appreciate this. You know, it's great. So I'll try not to delay too much Breda. And just to say, I'm really blown away by people's generosity, like, everybody I reached out to, you know, they all agreed, immediately. So, I'm a bit overwhelmed by that. I'm very impressed. So yeah, just to say that, you know, if I take nothing from this Master's, that's what I'm going to take- the kind of generosity that people have, you know, like people on their midterm break and that So anyway, just to say, Thanks so much. And is it okay, if I record this interview? And obviously, any, any transcripts or anything I'll forward them on to that. Okay. Great. So I'm going to record.

P: There's no problem at all. And actually, there's actually been a huge like, you were frozen there for like a good few seconds. You were talking but you were completely frozen, but hopefully won't affect with interviews. I can still hear you. But you were frozen. Actually, your voice did freeze there for a second or two, but then it's played on both. Okay. Anyway,

A: Hopefully, we normally have pretty good Wi Fi. But let's, let's try it anyway and see. Okay, just to say, I have kind of four loose questions for you this afternoon. And I sent you a few quotes to do with my topic, and I wonder did you have a chance to look at them. Did anything jump out at you or resonate with you? Did you have any opinions on any of them that I sent you?

B: Yeah, I actually, I thought was very interesting. I really liked the one there, I think it was, oh, I don't have it open in front of me. But it was about, I was kind of thinking, well, what is food literacy? And I suppose I have a general understanding. Before this, anyway, what is the definition of food literacy? I thought it was very interesting. I think one of the authors you had there said that it's been "inconsistently defined", or there is real, no universal definition of food literacy. So that I thought that was quite interesting, actually. Because maybe for some people they see food literacy as the theory you know, knowing the food knowledge, but maybe they don't think of it in regards to food skills as well. And I think it's just as important that they go hand in hand, really not just one in isolation. So I thought that was quite interesting. And you know, that there is no universal definition of food literacy yet. There was something

else as I tried to recall the document. Now, another thing that was mentioned was, like transferable skills, I think was one of the buzz words and I suppose I agree with that transferable skills. And I think there was mention of it as well as of children learning it in school. So I suppose maybe if I can open up that document that would be useful. Would that help me?

A: And you mentioned there, you know about skills and knowledge. Would you off the top of your head, would you see I mean, they're obviously going to be important, components- is there anything else that you would see in your own practice or your own experience would also go towards the definition of food literacy as essential component?

P: Yeah, I think it was mentioned somewhere else about like, people's confidence and people's awareness. So again, thinking that they're all, I suppose, you know, when you think of its definition, you think of all those kind of key attributes or those key aspects. And I suppose I think they all go hand in hand had but, I suppose, as well as nutrition comes so like, if you have to think of you know, where does self-efficacy come from that comes from the knowledge and it's coming from trial and testing the competence comes from that so I wonder do they, are they naturally developed if you're developing your skills and knowledge but I think they're actually as important as well. And I suppose if you were to link in Home Ec, those words are words we would associate, with our own personal definitions of home economics, and even our understanding of the philosophical understanding of home economics thinks that a huge word in there. So I think, you know, to link back into home ec, and sometimes I'm kind of disappointed that food literacy and home economics aren't necessarily associated with being together. Because I, for me, I think home economics is it's, you know, it covers everything that food literacy encompasses, and I'm always disappointed, maybe, maybe media don't necessarily pick up on the on the influence, and I suppose all that is covered in home economics. And why is that? I'm not entirely sure, maybe there's a poor perception of what Home Economics actually is. And maybe there is a past, you know, maybe the generational thing there about Home Economics is always about cooking and sewing, you know, the stitchers and the stirrers. And maybe that's a kind of, you know, maybe a historical breakdown is still met, you know, that historical generation, the roots, the subject is still following through to present day. You know, maybe if kids are picking subject choices that their parents do, "Oh sure you're only

cooking and sewing” and maybe that's not helping their son or daughter in their decision making. But again, I suppose that's coming with media, if you look at media as well, you know, they always talk about food education. And if you look on Twitter, and JP McMahon. He always mentioned to the importance of food education, but he never makes the link to home economics. And I sometimes wonder is that he doesn't understand what we do in this subject. Or I'm not really sure but for me home economics is our answer to food education. So when you always hear about this compulsory call from home economics, or sorry for food education, I'm like, it's here in the subject called Home Economics, like why can't you make home economics mandatory? And maybe that's going off topic there. I'm just thinking about home ec the role that it plays in food literacy.

A: And do you think that if, if the subject was made compulsory that would improve that status of the subject, it would change maybe the perception, like what you've spoken about there with the media that might change our perspective of, you know, that people have of the subject out there if it was made mandatory?

P: I think that will probably be like a very long term, I don't think that will necessarily change perceptions, until maybe those students who come out of that they're the ones that are tweeting, or whatever, in time to come. So I suppose that's a very trickled effect, rather than an immediate kind of a of an answer. So I definitely think, you know, the multi-pronged approach to it. And I think that definitely would be one way of helping it and I suppose food education is very, everyone seems like they're a food expert these days. And that can lead to challenges in spreading the message. What with one person that's promoting the likes of coconut fat, and, you know, all these, and it's everything in its context, you know, doesn't mean you go eat a whole tub of coconut fat, but that's not what is delivered in the message. The message is, you know, coconut fats that's the thing that makes the headlines. And so it's trying to glamorize food education, and you look at the likes of the happy pair, you know, they're two twin brothers, they're very enthusiastic, you know, you can't not like them. So we're just, home economics we have a brilliant ambassador in Nevin McGuire, but, you know, you have all these different influencers, and I suppose they're the people that adolescents, people- everyone, you know, we're all part of that social media world. And, you know, who are the ones that our students are using? Who has the biggest following? Who is the one that has the most engagement? And unfortunately, they're

actually the people who have very little food knowledge. They don't have the degree in education, or they don't have the degree in food science or are in health or any aspect like that their influences are completely different things. If we did have some sort of a role model in that regard, that would be a very powerful way of spreading the word about home economics. You know, if we did have an influencer, per se.

A: And would you see a role there at all for representative bodies, say like the ATHE would you view them as a strong subject, organization? And could they be stronger? And could there be another role for them there?

P: They are an excellent organization, I think they must be one of the most positive and productive I suppose, organization that supports teachers. You know, even their PR through their Twitter account, and all their social media accounts is brilliant, displaying of all the skills that are studied in home economics, I think they do an absolute, even from a PR perspective, they do an absolute brilliant job. And, and I suppose, you know, from a media perspective, you know, just to counteract the argument, from a media perspective, they see something coming from an association body of home economics, do they kind of go “Oh, does that make a trendy headline”, you know, yeah, the Association of Home Economics Teachers, you know, so I suppose, if you're putting yourself in the journalists shoes, or, you know, from the that side of things, does that make a catchy headline, I suppose, this is always a challenge, you know, through media, you know, media will present what they want to hear what presents a good, glamorous message, what consumers, you know, what their, what their readers want to read. So, absolutely, I think the ATHE have always, you know, whenever any statement comes out, they're excellent for answering back. And if anyone's on, you know, even on social media I have often seen things about, you know, this was in the paper, they reply to that, or even James Kavanagh had some tweet up on Twitter, a few nights ago about home economics being mandatory and all the home economics teachers wrote in on that, so it's a collective approach.

A: And when you say it's a collective approach, within schools, do you see other subjects as playing a role in food literacy? Above and Beyond Home Economics? Would you think that there are other subjects that might be able to contribute to that?

P: The role of SPHE - Like it's more wellbeing I suppose, and from looking at the junior cycle and I suppose, this is where I'm no longer teaching the new Junior cycle

specification. You know, who are the people who are teaching this, you know, sure, how much food knowledge do they know themselves and it's great to see a food making up a component of the wellbeing but who, you know, as I said, who is the expert who's teaching this and the one like, the incorrect food knowledge to be taught? And I've heard stories where the old food pyramid is still being taught! I suppose you know, I can definitely see ties there with senior cycle SPHE or with your wellbeing in schools but its just you know, who's the person who's teaching this?

A: And would you have an opinion that because food literacy is so broad that perhaps it deserves a subject of its own?

P: I don't want to, I don't want to dismiss like, exclude PE there- I think there's actually lovely ties between home economics and PE as well. So I definitely think that maybe more could be explored there as well, and particularly if PE is being piloted as an examinable subject at the moment but, you know, I'd love to think that they have a lovely synergy and a linkage between home economics and physical education, and you know be if male or female, teenage boys or teenage athletes be male or female, they're very health conscious, you know, when I say that, they're getting more and more health conscious, the younger that they're becoming and that might be coming down as well, even from community or club levels and things like clubs, they're getting very much into nutrition as well. And that's filtering into the younger cohorts, and even protein - I suppose foods go through fads anyway, I feel like adolescents are very much clued into this protein fad or phase at moment and, that's not sustainable, or it's not healthy protein at the right amount is, or maybe to demystify, you know, protein and PE and, and looking at ingredient or looking at nutrients in the right balance, you know, food is for fuel food is for you know, all the different aspects, there are going to be lovely ties in with PE, there's one of the main subjects I see the link between really like. I know we can bring English the numeracy and calculations of recipes and maths and all that but in regards to real synergies between subjects and things that can really happen between PE and home economics. Yeah. I just didn't want to dismiss PE there. But the second thing you mentioned was in regards to -

A: Should there be a separate subject altogether for food literacy? Should we separate it out?

P: Oh, yeah, it looks like there could be an argument for that as well. But then, I suppose that's the beauty of home economics, isn't it? Like, Home Economics is food literacy, and then you're bringing all those other skills like budgeting and consumer empowerment. So if you were to make food literacy or food education its own subject, you're kind of taking, you're not, you're not paying tribute to the power of home economics, and you're merely putting them in a fight against each other. You know, if you do food literacy do you do home economics? So I wouldn't like to see it as a battle of which subject or you know, what I think, you know, absolutely, they could be. Yeah, I mean, obviously, I need to think about this further. And I suppose, as a home economist, I would say no, that if you study home economics, and particularly take it all the way to senior cycle you're going to have a really broad knowledge of foods, and even the science of it, as well, as you know, your knowledge deepens. So, no, I don't think that they will be a requirement for a standalone food literacy subject.

A: Okay, great. And I'm almost finished now, that second section, just one area about assessment, in terms of assessing how successful we are at, at empowering students with food literacy skills, and going back to our mission, you know, that they're catalysts for social transformation? Do we assess, do you think, food literacy adequately? Is it robust enough- our assessment, particularly, at junior cycle, and I understand I recognize that you're not teaching it at the moment, but just even going back to your own experience of the cookery exam, for example.

P: You know, I guess both assessment is, I suppose I like the idea of the food practical exam. Yeah, it's a very good question. Like, are we, is the assessment...So I suppose...

A: I suppose just the idea that, is it flexible enough that we have a state exam? You know, is it good enough that we have the same metrics for every child in Ireland, and given that, like, one of the quotes that I gave you, there was the idea that food literacy is very influenced by context, and it is the stakeholders who decide that context. So if we say that the stakeholders are for example, JCT or NCCA, or SEC, is it adequate that we have just one rubric as a state exam for every child, given the different context that children are coming out of?

P: I know and I completely agree with you, just on the back of having a conversation about should there be leaving cert or something? But isn't that the whole thing the new Junior cycle is that it's to do with that teachers have the autonomy to decide what is

right for their students based on the context where their students are from. So if that now is being encapsulated, if that's there in the new Junior cycle. But going back to like, is it right, that no matter if you have a higher student or a lower home economics student, and is it right that they sit the right exam? I suppose from an equity perspective, you think of equity that's what I'm always trying to go with, there's a lot of things wrong with our whole assessment thing here in Ireland, but at the same time, it's fair, you know, like, every student sits the same exam. And you know, and I suppose, you know, is that the argument well, why we have the DEIS schools you know why schools are allocated DEIS, they get extra funding to try to support their students to make sure that there's no inequalities in education. Now, does that really happen? Of course, there's still going to be inequalities, but is that not what DEIS you know, is that not the aim? To try and reduce those inequalities? So that's why I'm trying to think of the bigger question like is it right that every student sits the same exam, and I will probably be of the mentality that, yes, from an equity and equality perspective, yes. And I would hope that the CBA, with that practical exam, would mirror the students and their backgrounds and their contexts and allow them to, you know, if you have the students from abroad or maybe their parents maybe they could bring some of their culture that maybe they have at home into the dish that they made, or, all those kinds of factors that affect that will come into their lives, I think that might be an opportunity that they will be able to bring their own individuality to the cookery component. I'd like to see a more rounded response and I find that the cookery exam in Junior Cert it's just basic food skills, it doesn't actually encompass all those skills in home economics. So I'd like to bring in the budgeting section so that the students have to cost their meal and fulfil, if we have to think, you know, it's all got like money, huge factor. And there's no point in cooking scallops if students are never going, no one's ever going to afford it. So, you know, I think, budgeting their own costs and you know, where food comes from, like, sometimes I really wonder, do people know where food comes from they buy in the shop. And some people think that curry comes from a jar it doesn't come from different flavours, like the cumin or turmeric or any of those things. So yeah, like, you know, I would hope that teachers embrace this new Junior cycle that if things are grown locally to them, that maybe they go and investigate those firms or go and investigate the local I don't know if you're in Dublin and you're near Keeling's, maybe you could go to strawberry farm, maybe go to the blueberries and see how they're grown, how they're picked. And maybe people have a greater

appreciation for food, and understand where food actually comes from. I think that's down to each teacher and their passion, their love, but they're telling me that the time that they want to give - when you look at the likes of Australia it's a little bit similar in that regard, and there's huge flexibility, and this huge amount to open up in the teacher can really you know, that would be a big task for the new Junior Cycle its teacher led more so....rather than be there. But if you don't have a passionate teacher, you want to have huge variability, like you could have two schools in a town, and home economics being taught very, very differently. And one teacher might think they're doing great, but the other teacher might be absolutely blowing it out of the park. And you're going to have different cohorts of students having very different experiences of the subject. And I think sometimes like that might be seen as a challenge to home economics - having a broad learning outcome. And you know, how sometimes people may actually need a little bit of structure to try and guide them and to make it reach their expectations of the curriculum.

A: And that's very interesting to me what you're saying there about structure, would you go as far as saying that, maybe teachers if they were provided with more exemplars or templates, would that help? And particularly as we go into, or we in the middle of junior cycle reform would that help the teachers who may have that passion that you speak about, but they may lack the confidence that we often look for in our own students, but not so much in ourselves?

P: Yeah. Absolutely I think it's always when you hear someone else like sometimes you don't think of an idea yourself. And it's not until you have the conversation with your peers and like it might be a social conversation, but you know you're like, "Oh my God, that's an excellent idea". I didn't think of that. So maybe you know that maybe the role of the PDST or something there. They were excellent I remember with the LCA catering and tourism module. And like they had brilliant ideas and brilliant resources. So maybe we need some sort of a forum that people could like, put in their ideas and thought that it's only through, having conversations and dialogues and hearing how other people did things that we like, there's only so much inspiration we can provide ourselves! So absolutely, yeah.

A: And then if you were to just pinpoint, what you might see, as I noticed, with your own research, I think you use the words barriers and facilitators when I was doing my

bit of scouting, before I come on here with you: I've called them barriers and enablers. So if you were to pinpoint what you would think of being as either barriers or enablers, to food literacy, and within post primary schools, is there anything in particular that jumps out to you?

P: Oh, goodness, like, so you're talking about - Okay, number one, pitching the subjects. So if we're talking about students, pitching home economics versus particularly male dominated subjects, it's very hard for maybe the males to pick home economics. They are number one, I suppose maybe the stereotypes like, you know, there's a stereotype that males do the male dominated subjects. And, you know, it definitely can be pitching of the subjects, you know, subject choice, I think that needs to be that as a huge barrier to food literacy or to home economics, that's definitely one I think as well may be, I think, maybe down to an individual, maybe this down to a school by school basis. But sometimes, you know, when career guidance teachers or whoever is giving input into subject choices, and sometimes they don't actually know what they're selling themselves. So that can be a barrier. Because if you're selling an incorrect picture of the subject, you know, that might turn off students and parents or whatever that discussion around it. And funding should come from schools for the ingredient because I wouldn't like the financial side of purchasing stock to be a barrier to picking home economics. So I would love to see that DEIS funding extended out to supply ingredients to students - or everything in home economics like the textiles side as well but I know you're focusing on food literacy here. What are the barriers? I think the bell curve probably doesn't help Home Economics, it's seen as a subject that is hard to get the H1 in when you compare to other subjects. So there's a stereotype there's a perception that home economics is difficult. And then when you pitch up against other subjects, so say for example, in geography, you only have to take one field trip, and it's kind of seen as one, you know, the if you look at that field trip booklet, it's kind of the same method, there's one assignment completed in the leaving cert journal task, then you have leaving cert home economics students completing 4 journal tasks, when you only have one journal task to task do in geography. So I think that, you know, when students are picking subjects, they think of all these things, and they hear from their from their groups in the year above them and stuff. This subject has a very broad curriculum as well, it's, it's probably one of the last subjects to be finished as well in school, whereas some other subjects might be finished a lot earlier and a lot more time

for revision, where I personally found it a challenge to get it done on time and time to get some revision done and mock papers, and all of that. So other subjects that you might hear that teachers are nearly finished their curriculum in March time, so they have maybe 3 additional months revision that you want to get into the subject of home economics. Yeah. Just looking for kind of main ones, I could go on and on.

A: That's super. Thank you. And there's only one last thing that I wanted to mention to you. It's not a quote that I included in the other document, but it's a quote about a concept called a culinary skills transition. And it was coined by Martin Caraher who has worked a lot with Amanda McCloat up there in Sligo. And so he says a culinary skills transition, and this is the quote is when "whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kinds of skills required to get food onto tables and down throats". And so if you consider that for a moment, you might tell me, you're actually glitching there. Okay. Did you get the quote? Can you hear me?

P: I got the very start. Can you read it again?

A: No problem. So it's when "whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables and down throats"

P: Okay, so...its is a very, very heavy ...

A: I like the quote - I think that probably It goes without saying that we're living the times of culinary skills transitions. But just in terms of home economists in the classroom, and yourselves then in third level, how do we meet that challenge of staying abreast of those changes? I know, I'm throwing that out at you.

P: So yeah. Like, that first bit there, so the culture where it's supposed to make the shifts like, like, is that like, does he mean they're like, like, like, people don't have time to cook with that. What do you mean?

A: Yeah, so you're going like from a generation of, and I heard Ryan Tubridy yesterday interviewing Marita McGeady, she was the author of 'Smart Cooking', the cookery book we had for a long time. And she was talking about the reason why she started that book was because her students were coming from homes, where both parents were working, and there was no cooking going on. And there was takeaways going on and, and they didn't have that skill. So I suppose that's it in a kind of explicit format, the idea that in a couple of generations, we've had a massive shift in family. And so, I don't

think any of us would argue against that. We've all seen that and experienced that. But my question is more, how do we as a community of home economists, how do we stay abreast of it? And how do we tackle that? And I suppose to add on to that, does that come, in your opinion, come from the individual? Or do you think maybe it's coming? Like, say within St Angeles, do you address that issue within schools? Is it the SEC that addresses it, or the NCCA? I'm kind of landing that one on you now!

P: I suppose when I read that a part of me really resonates with it. So here I am, like, passionate about food, I still love cooking. And then sometimes I get so sucked up into work, and before you know, whether it's seven o'clock in the evening, if you don't have the time you go for the quickest thing that you can throw together as quick as possible. So, like, when I when I kind of heard that word, there culture- I think, I would like to think that maybe COVID will maybe bring a little bit of like, relevance back to life again. But then I think we're very short sighted and whilst during COVID I was making the most nicest meals I had a great - it seemed like we were talking about food more than ever, because all any of us were thinking what we will have for dinner, what are we going to have for lunch? And going to the shop and everything you know, it's like a day out and everyone has the time to do it. But I suppose beyond COVID times we lose that....our lives, I suppose I see myself in that boat sometimes I don't think of food as fuel or for nutrients or for nourishment, I think about I need to eat! So like when you think your whole rebalance of culture, you know, I think we need to have a better work life balance to allow the culture and you know, parents have that better work life balance that will filter down to their children and you know, that kind of ripple effect. So I just think it's a very like when I heard that was like, well, you can go from this from absolutely any aspects like there's so much here that you can go from so That's kind of one thing I suppose that I just see myself with that. And that moment is, it's like, yeah, like, you know, you need to have the time to cook you need to eat to appreciate the food. And if you don't you do end up gobbling it down and making the quickest thing as fast as possible. But yeah, how do you like how do you change that culture? Yeah, is it sometimes - is it not in our realm? Maybe, you know, that's it. It's a bigger generational shift. Yeah.

A: Yeah, it's a tricky one isnt it?

P: Yeah. But then, for something like, I'm just like, just giving you that one there, like walking my shoes, but you have to walk in other people's shoes, then as well. And, you know, so I'm trying to think of people like, who would have the time to cook. And that may be you know, but they're not empowered at all. You know, they're, they don't see food, they don't see food as nutrition or energy or fuel, or you know, what that's required. They just see food as food and they don't....not empowered to do so maybe, you know, like, it's almost suppose we teach our children for today and tomorrow. And, you know, that's I suppose, you know, if they're only taught it, can they only be ready for today and for tomorrow, so maybe that would be an element of going against it. But I think it's for me, that's a very big quote. A lot of different aspects and attributes, actually.

A: That's great. That's great. No, that's perfect. That's super. And that's actually Yes. Oh, okay. Can you hear me now? Any any joy? You hear me?

P: You're back, Yeah.

A: Well, look, actually that's it.. That's the four areas and I'm sorry, I've kept you longer than I said I would. And that's brilliant. I could stay here and talk to you for hours. It's great to have somebody so enthused and passionate. Thank you.

P: Not at all. And I suppose I'm sorry that I wish I had more time to do my homework.

A: No, no, you've plenty. I didn't want to overload anybody with too much work. And I really appreciate your input and your insight. That's super.

P: I actually had a few notes on my phone taken down and you said, or I actually changed phones already. And I lost all my notes section. On a Friday night, Helen had said it to me. And I was like, oh, like I have to think about it. Unfortunately, I lost my notes section so I had my homework done!

A: I have reams of notes here now. And you've actually given me a few different ideas as well of new angles to take on it. And that's brilliant. Like I really liked your terminology around synergy, and the idea of the collective approach. So that's great. And that's exactly what I'm looking for. So listen, thank you so much. I really appreciate it's great to see you. Thanks so much. Take care. God bless. Bye bye.

Interview Transcript; Participant 3.

A: Researcher

P: Participant

A: So I'll try not to keep too long this morning. I want to say thanks. First of all, I'm really surprised and kind of overwhelmed as everybody I reached out to has been so generous with their time, and I really appreciate it. And I'm new to this research game, so I don't know if that's the norm. But in any case, this is something I'm definitely going to take away from this, just people have been so helpful. So thanks a million. And I really appreciate it, especially now over your midterm.

And are you okay if I record this zoom call for transcription?

P: That's ok.

A: Great. Super. And so I basically have four loose questions or loose areas that I just am interested in your opinion on. And I sent you a few quotes, I don't know whether you got chance to have a look at them or not.

P: I actually just glanced through them, and I didn't print them off.

A: No, that's no problem at all. I suppose so my thesis topic is all about food literacy, and home economics. Basically, I'm doing this Master's in food studies and gastronomy. Just I saw, I literally saw an article in the Irish Times in thought, I love the sound of that. It wasn't for any school reason at all. And, but what I found was, and I've loved every minute of it, but what I've really found is every week, a lot of the topics are very similar to our own subject. So much so that I kind of came to understand that this is like a level nine home economics course. And so even though I didn't start the programme, with any intention of you know, it, it feeding into school, shall we say, and I just thought, Oh, I have to do something here to promote home ec, because none of the people on my course were aware, they were a bit shocked when I'd say, "Oh, this is we do this in home economics Leaving Cert". And so I wanted to take a topic that would promote home ec. but then I thought, also, I'd like to do something that would might just benefit us in some regards. So that's why one of the buzzwords at the moment in a lot of academia in relation to food studies, is food literacy. So I thought, I'll have a look at food literacy, and see from the perception of practicing teachers on the ground, you know, what is what's helping us and what's hindering us in delivery of food literacy curriculum. So that's kind of the background to it, I didn't mean it to be kind of educational based, but that's how it has sort of evolved. And so if I was to start and I was to say to you, like when you hear food literacy, what would you think of or what comes to mind in terms of what should, in your opinion, food literacy includes or would you have an understanding of it, you know, what, what would its components speech, shall we say?

P:I suppose food literacy is new to home ec teachers too, even though we have been, you know, talking food literacy all the time, you know, I suppose it's the language around foods. The understanding that say for example, if you look at the food pyramid, you know, the language around the food pyramid, you know, understanding that as a basis or basic, you know, piece of food literacy, the language around, you know, food

safety. You know, we presume, I think you know, especially with first years, we presume that they know a lot more than they do, and right the way through we presumed, because food is everything that we we eat every day, as we everybody knows, you know, the language around food at the don't, you know, and so I suppose it's, you know, that's, food literacy is probably, it's just a collective term really isn't it, just for everything that we learn. Yeah. And I suppose we were, we were bombarded with, you know, literacy and numeracy, and a big focus on that in schools a number of years ago, we still are, you know, but we, when we hear the word literacy, we think about words, we think about the English language, you know, so food literacy, it's all the language around food and understanding it from my perspective, that's how I look at the first years, introducing literacy, and the juniors, you know, seniors, I don't use that term, as much yet you know, what I do with the juniors, obviously, the new Junior Cycle or whatever, it's a big part of, you know, a lot, you know, when I'm my conversation with students, you know, food literacy. So, I suppose, as you know, that's my understanding, that's my kind of concept of how I get that across because when I mentioned food literacy to students, they automatically say, Oh, is this not? This is not an English class. You know, they, you know, they presume that it's, you know, why are we talking about literacy, the brighter ones, especially "why would you talk about literacy sure you talk about this in English" you know, oh, well, you kind of have to make that connection with them. And, you know, I suppose, when you go to word banks, and, you know, previous knowledge, and you can bring it in all across, its easy to slot it in and make a link right across the curriculum.

A: Okay, and when you say right across the curriculum, and would you think that that extends beyond Home Economics? Could you see a place for other subjects to play a part in teaching kids about food literacy? Yeah, Yeah,

P: Oh absolutely. Probably last year, with the geography department and the science department, where we looked at a topic of sustainability, basically, we looked at that topic and how it's approached across the three subjects. And, you know, kind of on, unbeknownst to ourselves, we were looking at, obviously, the common words across three areas. And, you know, whilst we taught it, maybe taught it differently, essentially interests, it was similar information that we were getting across and kind of a different way. So you know, literacy came into - words. And it makes it easier for students to learn a particular topic, when you rather than and I say that to my students as well,

when they're, you know, when you're looking for example nutrients, you know at Leaving Cert , we're talking senior cycle now, I can look at the nutrients and similar functions and sources or whatever, I always ask them to look at what's different, you know, and rather than trying to learn off everything, so, you know, it's important that we do that across subjects at Junior Cycle, in particular, to get the groundwork in there, yeah, and looking for something similar So there are in a lot of, in some context, there are words like sustainability, there are words that have crossed over many subjects. Okay. And so literacy, yes, geography, literacy, science literacy. Yeah, absolutely.

A: And I'm interested there in your word, about context - Great- and I'm interested in your use of the word contexts, and one of the quotes said about how food literacy is very contextual, like it differs from one context to another, and that the person who sort of dictates that context, are the stakeholders. So in education, we could be seen as being the stakeholders. And so I'm just wondering, do you think that food literacy from one, let's say, from one school to another, is going to be different? And apart from being from one subject to another? Would you think that from school to school or area to area, you can have a different context? Yeah, from a home ec point of view?

P: Well, you know, what, as a home economics teacher, you know, I don't know whether you're on Facebook platform, we share stuff all the time, our stuff across all- it would be the literacy because we're always touching base with each other, or the literacy, the food literacy, and of what you mean your approach might be different in terms of a creative point of view, how you deal with that, and how you get that message across from a creation activity point of view, but the words you know, a lot which is similar, our language, you know, and same across all schools now, in terms of context, and are you talking about kind of, DEIS schools?

A: Yeah, yeah that could be an example. Yeah.

P: Yeah. And, you know, it may be different. You may have to approach food literacy differently, according to, the ability or culturally understanding, or the academic ability of the students in front of you. Yes, you might have a different approach. Essentially, it's the same. I think - I hope Im not getting the wrong context there.

A: No, no, I think that that's, yeah, that's exactly what I mean. Yeah, yeah, that's exactly. That's exactly what I mean. Yeah, that's bang on. And like, when you're saying about it like that, that's a super example of sustainability across science, Home

Economics, and geography. Do you think that there's, I suppose, is there recognition for the role that home economics plays in food literacy? And if there is recognition, is there a sort of a hierarchy within schools? Do you think that home economics would be recognized for it's the value that plays in food literacy?

P: Totally. Like, you know, you could have food literacy very, very easily. Like we have lots of schools are very creative, I suppose it depends on resources in terms of teachers willing, and teachers, the students, teachers, and the resources that they have available, a food program of some sort. And in fact, you know, food literacy should start your primary school without a doubt. I think first years should be familiar with what food literacy is when they come in first year, but that's a different project, a different kettle of fish should you like, but yes, I think it depends on school. I think very creatively introduce a food literacy program, kind of whole school programme in the school. That's words that word food literacy, then, you know, as I was saying, across subjects could resonate that word literacy, in terms of other subjects, then, like geography, literacy, history literacy. I mean, SPHE is another one, you know, even at CSPE, you know, you can have the word literacy is, you know, suppose a blanket term that can cover all subjects. So if you use the word, you're using the word literacy then in terms of food, and you have a food literacy programme and a blanket programme throughout the school, then that resonates with other subjects as well.

A: And would you go would you go as far as saying that food literacy, that's a really interesting idea that a whole school programme? Would you go as far as saying that food literacy actually deserves a subject of its own?

P: No, I wouldn't call like you're very you're running into dangerous territory there if you decide to have a food literacy programme that it's made somehow. And maybe that's just in all my fears as a home ec teacher that and we haven't lost home economics in schools... it'll, we shouldn't it shouldn't happen, but I'd be afraid that what term food literacy would replace economics? That would be my ... schools might say, again depending on the school, you know, why should we have this? Food literacy and home economics? When, you know, we saw the junior Cycle that lots of programmes where, lots of programmes were reduced to being short courses you know, home ec has now become a common paper. That's a different argument. You know, but, like, I think the home economics should have a very firm working on all its components. Whereas if

you have a food literacy programme, it could very easily, you know, get replaced. So I would I would have, I think, very creatively introduced a food literacy program across the board, to, I suppose, educate the whole school community about food literacy. And yet, it's an element of home economics. And we have our subjects that in other elements that we teach students are studying subjects, so I wouldn't replace it with food literacy I wouldn't do that myself. That would be my dangerous. Yeah. No, they can run in one side by side, you know?

A: Yeah great. And you mentioned there about the common paper with the junior cycle. In terms of assessment, do you think that our assessment is adequate of food literacy? In particular, say with the cookery exams, like would you be happy that we are measuring and adequately or accurately the level of food literacy of those students.

P: Yeah, we've held on to it's up to 50% now, I love. I think that's, you know, a good recognition of the value of food skills, you've got the CBA 2 obviously, which is linked to the cookery exam, which is now worth 50%. I was delighted to see that - I was disappointed to see there wasn't anything for textiles but you're not talking about that today. So, you know, they're of equal importance? But, yes, I think that the value that we're giving the food exam - I like that? And in terms of the tasks like I all, I always loved the old Junior Cert Culinary exam - It was, it was it was just such a success, you know. And so it's, obviously have elements of that still. And mostly, and that we have, you know, 50, a blanket, 50%, for everybody across the board. I think that's a good recognition of the value of food skills. So I'm happy.

A: And so that if you were to pinpoint, like, I've called them in my thesis barriers and enablers but you know, things that facilitate or things that help or hinder? You know, if, if Normal was to say to us today, now, we're going to contribute towards food literacy, what do we want as Home Economics teachers? Or what do we want to get rid of? Is there anything that comes to mind that you think is really helping us or hindering us, and in delivering food literacy curriculum,

P: I suppose for practical point of view, you know, I am just lucky in my school that I am given time to give students this extra help that they need around in the build up to the cookery exam. But it seems to be different in every school, and results are different and the value placed on it is different. And so I think there should be a blanket sort of time, I suppose element, awarded towards preparation of students for the practical

exam. Without having to ask management do you know what I mean?, that should be and most importantly, I know if I think they have it in the north of Ireland, we should have we should have what would I call them, you know, assistants in the in the classroom, like, you know, lab assistant, assistant for preparation of your session for practicals.. . That would help. Like, I know, I have a system going in my school, you know where we have carousel in our school. And, you know, it takes first years a good six weeks to build up the speed, the capacity, and the, you know, the, I suppose, you know, to get them to the stage where they can they come into class prepared, set up and they're out in time for the next class. But I have to, for the first years, I have to ask for the timetable for a free slot afterwards, because we have one hour classes now. And so, and I, you know, no matter how well, I manage the time, no matter what way I pick the recipe, I'm in there for 20 minutes of that class after. Yeah, well, that's not, that's not good enough. And, you know, place more value in and one hour classes, they're coming in there across the board. We were I was terrified of it initially, but, you know, and when the survey was carried out with all our students across the board, in relation to the introduction, of one hour classes, everybody, students were delighted with this. The teachers were delighted, to a certain extent a bit apprehensive, but all the students mentioned about having less time in home economics, and that was rushed and they were stressed, and that was, that was the big thing. So you know, it's one thing happening, food literacy, and having, you know, practical exam are practical, and it's really, really becoming more and more aware of how important it is. And there's more research in the media, about how important foods skills are, foods or, you know, and that's all economics should be compulsory for all, which it should, you know, what you need the resources and the sports and things for that, too.

A: And in terms of, go ahead, sorry.

P: I knew if I I'd have to say I'm fine with one hour classes now. I'm used to it, but I had to do a lot of negotiating. You know, that lots of other teachers didn't have to do, do you know what I mean. So it's a resources issue. And I think, like, I think we all know that education is so underfunded in this country.

A: And you know, you've mentioned there about how we're good at sharing resources between ourselves as teachers. And you're talking to me there about, you know, do you know you've negotiated and you provide those extra preparation hours for your

students? Would you see a role for a representative body be at the ATHE or another organization? That could, you know, could do that negotiating on our behalf? So that we are would you think that that, you know, there could be more done at that level rather than have been left at the micro level to the individual school? And the individual teacher? Could you see that there, you know, that maybe there should be an overarching organization that can do that bartering for us?

P: Um, well, I suppose we're quite contained in our within our subject area with the ATHE. And then across a school wide surface, we have our TUI and ASTI. So I can't I don't know if there's any other organization. But I suppose initially I know, when we introduced the one hour classes there, the ATHE did formulate a letter. And, you know, listing all the, I suppose the pros and cons of, that one hour classes introduces from a home economics point of view the practical point of view, I was President at the time, of the ATHE and I wrote to, I contacted UCC, the science department, I cant think of the lecturers name. He lectures in UCC, but he's a, he was over the science. Again, he was kind of chairperson of the local branch of Science Teachers Association. And again, similar, you know, similar concerns? Now, you know, I haven't heard anything you know, about how one our classes are fairing out for teachers in general, only that, like, you know, most schools have one hour classes now, you know, only through the forum where teachers ask, you know, for advice, on, you know, the introduction of one hour classes and how schools have fared out or whatever, but I've come on the other side of it, now it's here. And I am, you know, I have to accommodate a lot, you know, to, you know, in terms of move things around in terms of the programme as well, I'm not cooking with old classes all the time, you couldn't do them exhausting. And you're that I kind of stagger when I do textiles versus cooking. So I'm not cooking with all my groups all the time, I'm the only home ec teacher and so I had a lot of, you know, moving around to do so. Yeah. I had a lot of adjusting to do, that lots of other teachers wouldn't have had to do

A: So I think what you're saying there is that the one hour classes have proven to be a hindrance, really, in terms of delivery of food literacy, because you've had to, not just not just get used to it, but like change your whole system. And so that's great. That's super stuff to work with. And, and then the final thing that I was going ask you about, is, there's a quote that I actually didn't give it to you yesterday, and, and it's by a guy called Martin Caraher. He's from Sligo originally, but he's over in London, and he does

a lot. He does a lot on food literacy. And he talks about the idea of a culinary skills transition. Now, it's a bit of a mouthful. But the definition is, I'll just read it out to you here, "when home cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables, and down throats". So I know I'm throwing that at you now. I'm going to presume I don't think anybody certainly I don't think any home economics teacher would disagree with the existence of that culinary skills transition that we're seeing all the time, you know, the change in the skill level that our students are coming into us with, but I suppose I just wanted to get your take on it. Like Have you seen like, have you anything that comes to mind as an experience of that or how have you in your career, changed your practice in the classroom based on the changing skills or contexts of kids, you know, from their home environments into the home economics classroom?

P: Well, I suppose again, first years, like first years are you know, they come in some would have been cooking at home and I always have the chat with them. You know about cooking in general because I would cook every week and I would place a big emphasis on the practical every week. You know, I haven't cooked since March, because my classes are full size. And we didn't - but in the normal context. And I would always have my general chat students, when they come in, you know about you know, if they cook at home, you have to be very, very careful as well in terms of their, you know, what they have at home and their background as well. And I let them have the chat and I let them lead that conversation, and I suppose the array of different skills that students come in with, you're dealing with them, first of all, you know, and you know, that some of some of the students, which can be a benefit too because when they cook in groups of three, and you can then sort of, you know, push a student that, you know, has, you know, more experience with students that have less experience, and you can help each other out with that works a treat, you know, and from practical point of view, I find, you know, in terms of food literacy, that I'm going way back to basics, and I used to presume, that they knew what a teaspoon was that they knew what a dinner knife was and they knew what a sieve was, but most students don't, they don't know that language at all, you know, even the better ones wouldn't know, you have to really go back to basics. And you cannot presume, you know, I think we underestimate the level of skill that's involved in teaching home economics. And, you know, it's kind of, you know, it's kind of presumed, like, if any of it some students tell me, you know,

I might have a chat with them about why they mightn't have taken our home economics to junior cycle because we have carousel and there's an option. And, you know, some would some of them would say, well, they can learn that at home, but yet when you kind of test their skill level, they think they know more than they do, and they don't, you know. So, we as home economics, teachers, we can underestimate the level of skill that we are imparting, in terms of them being wide and varied when they come into first year you know, I find I have to go with just really go down to basics, when I'm teaching about food, you know, and before...

A: Do you think that the new Juniors Cycle supports that approach? Or have you altered your approach? Just yourself through observation? And, you know, self reflection? Or do you think that the curriculum coming into us from the NCCA is supporting that kind of adjustment?

P: Well, I just embed what I do already into following the new Junior Cycle, you know?. And I was supposed to be perfectly honest, I prefer to see more of a balance, like we still have to even though we're, we teach very practical subjects, and there's still a lot of content there that we have to cut back, I know at Junior Cycle it was cut back slightly. But there's, you know, this genuine need to know, a certain amount of content. And I think we should be careful that were not all bells and whistles in this classroom, you know, in their grounding for senior cycle, do you know what I mean. So, yes, that's, there's huge room for creativity and, you know, activities wise or whatever, and there's less, it's less content, overloaded, but at the same time, we need to still find that balance where we, you know, we can get through the content. And yet, have plenty of creativity and how we approach that in the classroom.

A: That's great. Well, that's, that answers the questions I have here now that's super There's loads there to work with. Thank you so much. I really like some of the things that you were, you were saying, I really like the idea that, you know, we all underestimate in our skills that we have to deliver it in home economics. I think that that's very true. So thanks a million. That's super. And okay, well, if you're happy enough, we'll leave it at that. I'm going to leave you go and enjoy the rest of your midterm.

P: You too. Okay.

A: Great to talk to you I really appreciate it. Thanks so much again, take care.

P: If you want to contact me again, that's fine. You know, I not sure whether I kind of express what you need to tell me when you get Yeah,

A: I really appreciate you saying that you've given me loads but I might take you up on that if I come across something else. Thank you.

Thanks a million, brilliant, brilliant.

P: Just you know, the more in sight of home economics. The more our subject is seen - I can see it on Twitter the more our subject is seen is really important you know. That's a different debate. I think we're getting better at that.

A: Yeah, I think so. I think so. And I agree with you that Twitter is helping that I think as well. So to kind of raise the platform a little bit is great. Yeah. It's great. Super.

Thanks, a million, take care.

Interview Transcript; Participant 4

A: Researcher

P: Participant

A: Perfect. Thanks so much. So basically, hopefully, I won't keep you too long. I just have four sort of loosely structured questions this morning, so I sent out a few quotes to you yesterday, now you may not have -

P: I had a quick look at them.

A: Okay. And off the top of your head was that...you have me there? Yeah. Did any of them jump out at you? Or, you know, does any of them grab you or resonate with you at all?

P: Two seconds now because there was one of them, I liked the wording of one of them. It's that "food literacy has developed as a framework". I like the idea of food literacy being like a framework.

A: Yes.

P: I'd often say to them that, you know, food literacy is an umbrella term for, you know, a lot of things that they're doing, it's not just this one thing, it's not just this one concept. It's not a topic. It's this. It's a barometer.

A: Okay. And if you were to bullet point what it entails or what it includes what might come to mind?

P: Words for food literacy?

A: Or even what would -when you're saying there that it's not just one topic?

P: It's a sliding scale for someone's complete understanding of food. So when you look at food, I mean, if you start with the lowest kind of element of food, it's the chemical composition of it, it's, the building blocks for food, it's the sources of the food, it's the functions of food, it's our relationship with food, our understanding of food.

A: Very good. And, you know, all of that comes in-

P: It's how we apply it. It's everything.

A: Okay, and all of that, obviously, is covered within Home Economics. Do you think that there are other subject areas within post-primary that deal with food literacy?

P: I teach biology as well and biology would touch on it as well but not as in depth as home economics but I suppose Biology looks at it from a different perspective. We look at the whole human anatomy and for I mean, when we talk about insulin and home economics, we briefly discuss it with diabetes, but in biology, they understand what insulin is and the role of the pancreas. And we look at the anatomical, physiological, role of food then you have the newly inserted PE course I've worked a lot with my colleagues on that. Okay, and functional athletes and recovery and injury prevention and things like that.

A: Okay, good. And in terms of other subjects tackling - sorry, I think that there's might be a delay on the line, I don't mean to be interrupting you. In terms of there being other subjects like biology and PE, would you think that there is a hierarchy in school in terms of the subject's best positioned to address food literacy? I suppose do you see that home economics - Would you have an opinion on on where Home Economics sits in terms of delivery of food and literacy in comparison with other subjects?

P: I think Home Economics has the... home economics is food literacy. But, how I suppose how seriously people take the value of home economics in developing someone's food literacy depends very much so on the school, and the home economics department. So home economics has the monopoly on food literacy and when biology or wellbeing or SPHE have a question on it - they go to the home economics department but, how well food literacy is created and regarded it definitely depends on a wider kind of system, school and whatever else.

A: Okay. And, you know, it has been suggested that food literacy could be a subject in of itself. Would you have an opinion on that?

P: There has long been conversation about breaking home economics up into different subjects. Do I think that would be advantageous? To a certain degree, yes, but, I don't know it could be detrimental in the long run because we are already - if you look at senior cycle, we're losing aspects of the senior cycle course; we don't do textiles, we don't do the housing elective because the preference is to do food and social. So if we as a subject specialism, if we start picking, what paths we want to teach, there's going to be elements of the home economics curriculum lost, because kids will not choose to do the craft of the textiles, or housing because they don't deem it to be relevant.

A: Okay. And if we were to move down to assessment of food literacy, do you think that our assessment procedures, particularly a junior cycle, are they strong enough? Are they accurate?

P: I think the Assessment Procedure of junior cycle as a whole, is missing the point. Okay, I think, you know, the whole idea of the assessment of junior cycle is that we give kids an opportunity to engage in a more varied model of assessment or modes of assessment. And the problem is, is that how we currently assess food literacy has no weight on some of the results, it's just a descriptor. I mean, I just finished CBA two with my third years and I'm lucky because I've a really good third year class. You know, they've worked their socks off, but I have had classes that just go "sure look, it's only a CBA. I get nothing for it". Then the value of it is lost. So I think there's been a huge opportunity missed for junior cycle. I think the assessment for food literacy currently at junior cycle is a missed opportunity. And I don't think - it's very disconnected from the reality of the modern classroom.

A: Okay. Okay. That's very interesting. And, and then, just in terms of the modern classroom, would you see Home Economics, the curriculum as being relevant for beyond that classroom for modern life and food choices and dietary requirements? Do you think that the curriculum has moved with the times?

P: I think it has, I think it has, depending on the teacher.

A: Okay. So a lot of it is down to the teacher.

P: Yeah, well, yeah, it is. Look, look how well the learning occurs in the classroom depends on the teacher, the student's excitement for the subject, it all depends on the teacher. There's not always the opportunity to - I mean, there's certain aspects, or certain aspects, of course, that I wouldn't have particular interest in, I probably, you know, I don't do justice to my students in that area, but as a whole, I think it's driven by the teacher.

A: And just sort of anecdotally, this wouldn't be a kind of definitive question but anecdotally, would you have experience of home economics students using their skills that they've acquired in home ec beyond school, you know, even beyond when they leave school? You know, would you have any experience of that?

P: I have had, I would like to think of a good relationship with my students, I've had conversations with, you know, pupils that I taught six years ago, she went on to study biomedical and chemical sciences. And she said, the subject that she uses most from secondary school is home economics. I have had, you know, medical students who tell me, the first thing they do in college is home economics. And they're so lucky that they did home economics. And, you know, going off to college, I had one young fella he couldn't, he couldn't turn on the washing machine, or, you know, fend for himself and drawing up a meal plan, he said he was able to do that for himself, I think the students who do home economics know the value of it.

A: And so, if I was to move then to what I've termed in my thesis as barriers and enablers to food literacy within home economics and wider scheme of it within post-primary, you know, if you were to think about what are the barriers to delivery of food literacy curriculum, is there anything in particular that jumps out at you?

P: I mean, the obvious one currently is covid, but yeah, the barriers are the same barriers for everything. It's student demographic, it's senior management support. It's middle management support. It's, you know, parents, parent's socio economic group. It's, you know, your school area - are you rural, urban? And there's so many barriers to it but barriers are there to be broken. I don't think you know, barriers are there, but they're, they don't stop you. They just make it more interesting, I think.

A: Very good. And, and then in terms of, conversely, say, enablers, or facilitators, and I suppose beyond financial investment, how would you see schools and more specifically Home Economics teachers enhancing food literacy?

P: I think the best way to enhance anyone's learning absolutely anything is to transfer and contextualize this. So if you want students to have a better, holistic, well rounded, food literacy, you need to get them down to the people, you know, in factories, you need to get them speaking to, you know, professionals, you need to get them applying it to their lives, you need to get them down to the farm to see how the milk is made. You need to contextualise and transfer. So they are they are the facilitators to food literacy.

A: I'm just before I move to the final question, would you have an opinion on the role of a subject representation body, in our case, the ATHE, and their role in making the delivery of food literacy easier, do you see a role there for them?

P: I think all support services are missing, not just the ATHE, but like JCT PDST, I think they're all kind of missing the ball a small bit. They're our teacher support service and I think we get very little support. And if our support services want to play a more vital role in us and implementation and sustaining the delivery of, you know, good food literacy education, they need to provide us with working resources and working examples and you know the email addresses and the connections to people that can help us deliver this in an enthusiastic, long lasting, sustainable fashion.

A: Great, and then the final thing to kind of throw at you here, in my research, I came across a concept called a culinary skills transition. And that phrase was coined by an Irish man, Martin Carraher, who's working in London. And he defines it as I'll just read out the quotation "when whole cultures experienced fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables, and down throats". And now, I'm throwing that at you. I don't think that there's any home economics teacher who would dispute the existence of a culinary skills transition, but I'm just interested in what your opinion is of that, your experiences of changes in patterns and kinds of skills required.

P: I have taught in two very different schools; I've taught in a rural school and I'm now teaching in a huge urban school and look, skills transition. Everything is transitioning education, by its nature is in a constant state of evolution. So whatever subject you teach, it's in a constant state of evolution because nothing stays the same. If you choose to believe that it stays the same you probably shouldn't be in teaching. So you just kind of have to get on board with this and like I mean, the dexterity differences are huge.

Between your different student demographics. Can you read out the quote there one more time for me?

A: Yeah, no problem.. So it's "when whole cultures, experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food on to tables and down throats"

P: It's very interesting, and I think that there are some teachers that are still teaching the exact same way that they did when they first left college. There's a safety net there. Who are they benefiting only themselves? I think you know the kids nowadays, they don't have as high level of experience or exposure to cooking at home like I did, even when I was in school, I left Secondary School in 2009. So the difference in that whatever it is 12 years is huge. So we just need to learn to adapt. And I think there's fear in adopting practice, because as soon as we have to adapt, and we see it there with remote learning, as soon as we're asked to adapt to something, because adapting means it's the unknown. We're starting something new. And if it goes wrong, well are we going to look like eejits? Yet, we have to come back to the sole purpose of teaching every single time: the students. So skills transition? Yes, it changes. Education is constantly evolving. Yes, the whole purpose is to get food down the throats, but it needs to be the right food.

A: And just one thing I just want to want to add that I didn't mention to you, would you have an opinion on the role of social media, within that framework of barrier and/or enabler to food literacy?

P: Actually, I think it's so dangerous. I think it's so dangerous. And I think there needs to be a lot more conversation with our students about the dangers of hidden messages in social media posts, like they call themselves influencers, they're influencing societal change. I'm all for a plant based diet. I am plant based, but this whole idea of making a diet fashionable, is so dangerous. And actually, I'm doing eating disorders with my fifth years next week. And one thing I'm doing with them and you might want to look at us is "faces by grace" - theres a little promotion about how 14 minutes or 12 minutes when your pizza is cooking, you can burn 400 calories. Now I don't know what type of exercise she's going to burn 400 calories, but that idea that you need to exercise in order to eat, it's being a reward, is so dangerous. And our kids are sponges and social media is toxic.

A: I couldn't agree with you more. And look, I think that that brings us brings us to the end of the - I lost you there for a moment. Just that I wanted to wrap it up and just say to that that's that's terrific. I have loads to work with there - you have given me four or five different areas to go into myself. And I really liked the idea that your you know, your statement, Home Economics is food literacy. I think that that's a very spot on comment. So thanks a million. That's everything that you've said it has definitely will go towards that towards my research. So thanks.

Interview Transcript; Participant 5.

A: Researcher

P: Participant

A: Good afternoon, I just want to start by saying thanks so much for giving me your time here, I really do appreciate it. I have four loose questions to ask but I might just start by mentioning the quotes that I sent you - I wonder did you have time to have a look at them, and if so did any jump out at you, or resonate with you at all?

P: I just might take my time to digest them - I'll take my time. Ok. And I'll give you the best answers that I can.

A: Perfect. And like I say a lot of there's a lot of overlap there with your own research. And so I have loosely based it around four questions. And so if we go say, if I said with the first one, I sent out a few quotes to you, but that's fine if you've not had a look at them.

P: Well I have looked at them.

A: And can you recall, did anything jump out at you? Or did anything resonate with you? Was there anything in particular that grabbed you? From those do you recall?

P: I looked at all and they all have something to offer there. Do you want to work through them?

A: No, not necessarily. Just if we were to start with a kind of almost like an icebreaker, that, you know, was there any there that you said I would agree with or disagree with, or, and particularly have an opinion on?

P: There's something good in every quotation. Perhaps they don't fully address the entire area. And I suppose they highlight the fact that the concept of food literacy is quite broad, and perhaps under defined. We all have our own interpretation of what it is, depending on our interests perhaps. Take the first one, "there is a paradox of

unprecedented access to nutritional information and foods, alongside escalating levels of overweight and obesity". Yes, it is a paradox. We have a huge malnutrition problem in the country and globally. We have a lot of consumption in our culture, and people make poor dietary choices for their health and the planet. And yet, we have huge access- to nutritional information and food as well. So, it is a paradox. Go down to the definition of food literacy, yes, it is "inconsistently defined and measured", I agree. We have different "different conceptions of food literacy", most definitely. There is the need to clearly define food literacy, what it is. In order to develop and then implement successful educational interventions, it would help to have clarity around the concept of food literacy. I like the next one, because of the reference to positive relationship with food. I think that having a positive relationship with food is really important, because that will influence food choices and decision making. That does not come about unless you have a good level of knowledge and understanding of food and health as well as the implications of food choices on our health. So, it is about developing that positive relationship. I think that is important. That probably aligns with my own definition of food literacy which you are probably going to ask me what food literacy means. The next one written by Bailey refers to changing dietary behaviour. I think that is important. I think the focus on behavior has to be perhaps illuminated or focused on. I don't think we focus enough on behavioural influences, factors influencing behaviour and decision making. It is deep, and it is influenced by value systems and attitudes, etc. So, with reference to the behaviour iceberg, it is what is underneath the surface that is probably influencing personal choices. You know, a lot of those decisions are unconscious. People are not aware of why they are making such decisions. And a lot of it is habitual. A lot of it comes from family and cultural influences. This links back to my very first point about the consumption culture we have. There is a pattern of excessive consumption in Ireland and globally. A lot of that behaviour is unconscious. As educators, we should tackle what is underneath the waterline. I think that area is not addressed sufficiently. It is rhetoric, to be honest, a lot of what you find in the textbooks and what we do in schools is rhetoric. The journal articles, they talk about impact making, influencing young people to live healthy lives, but I wonder, because it's just information, it doesn't really address the development of attitudes, values, and behavioural change, ultimately what is underneath the waterline. That definition resonates with me for that reason. I feel that the next one is certainly true in the SE and FE sector, which is the Special Education and Further

Education sector. Most definitely, we focus on the development of transferable skills. The next one by Perry references ecological factors. Certainly, there is a great interest in ecological and environmental factors and how they can influence decision making in current times because of climate change issues, etc. But I wonder if people really practice what they preach. We are beginning to take ecological factors into account I think, because of media trends, etc. Food: "the food scape is highly contextual", yes, take food security, that's a major issue If you look back to the 12th of March 2020, that was certainly scary. We had to respond to dramatic changes in the world around us. Food security is a growing issue. People are focusing more on food production and sustainability at home. I think some people are beginning to take an interest in growing their own. Certainly, stakeholders and context determine food literacy levels. Different agendas exist, mainly political and global health ones too, but they may be positive. "Agents of change". To involve children as agents of change is good practice. They should be involved in dietary decision making at home in order to develop good habits.

A: Very good. Because when you're speaking there, I wonder, would you be optimistic or realistic about our ability as Home Economics teachers to impact change? You know, when you're talking about it being deep down and values based? Would you be optimistic that we do have the skill set to impart those transferrable skills?

P: There's another option. Perhaps I could say pessimistic because I really question how impactful we are as teachers. A lot of it is rhetoric, and I am tired of rhetoric. There is very little effective pedagogy that addresses real change.

A: And do you think that it is possible, that we could, in the ideal world change that pedagogy, change that approach and that our own attitudes, and then become more impactful as educators?

P: Absolutely. But I think Initial Teacher Education has a huge responsibility and part to play in addressing this for real, so as to impact real change. I am tired about this talk about making Home Economics compulsory. Actually, I noticed in your blurb you mentioned that it will be – it is only a recommendation. I think they are going to bring that in. But everyone thinks that this is going to be wonderful, that Home Economics will be compulsory, but I still wonder how effective Home Economics education can be if the appropriate approaches are not in place. I think we need to address behavioural

change. I think we need to look at affective domain learning, attitudinal change, values development, and how we address everything that exists below the behavioural waterline.

A: Very good. And one of the people that I interviewed last week actually said to me, “oh, you need to look up was (participants name) she's the expert on all of this”. So people know your name. But that same teacher mentioned that she had read an article, I couldn't find it when I went to look for it, but it was talking about how we only have four years, for teachers from point of graduation, and that after four years, the habits, you know, are concrete, and very difficult to change. So I wonder, then, you know, have we missed the boat, so to speak? How would you see us? How would you see implementing that change? How do we overhaul a system, if you've got 1600, Home Economics teachers, and presumably, the vast, vast, vast majority of them are well beyond four years from graduation?

P: I would say I am optimistic about broader systematic or macro change, or even meso level change, because I think the Teaching Council are doing a lot of work to motivate teachers to improve their own practice. I think the broader school stakeholders and partners have a role to play to improving educational practice. You would hope that good role modelling would exist in practice in schools and that teachers would be proactive about their own professional development. I think I would be hopeful and optimistic that teachers would engage with new developments and research related to their own practice, and endeavour to improve their own practice.

A: And in terms then of barriers to that reasons as to why teachers don't always engage with that professional development, is there - could you pinpoint reasons for that? You know, what are the reasons?

P: Time and role modelling. For example, what they have experienced in the past will certainly have a big influence on how they practice as teachers and professionals. I am talking about professional identity here; as professionals, knowing what has influenced them and shaped them over the years. Certainly, their own school experience will have a huge impact on how they perceive home economics teaching. The role of the home economics teacher, that would be one thing, and then role models in Initial Teacher Education have shaped them. Their exposure to professional learning, all of that will

shape their attitudes and their beliefs as teachers. That will influence how they practice as teachers. It would certainly influence whether they engage or not with professional learning after the four years that you mentioned.

A: And maybe, in terms of role models, would you include in that list, the influence of school management in individual schools?

P: Absolutely because leadership is important. It depends on the type of leader that they have in their school. You would hope that the leader would empower them and motivate them to be involved. With a distributed leadership model, they would be responsible for perhaps embedding this in practice, for example, for developing school policies around health and food consumption.

A: And would you extend that then to a subject representation we'll say in this instance, the ATHE, would you see an important role there for the ATHE body in terms of inspiring or again, leading teachers?

P: Perhaps they have a role, but I wonder how effective that is because of the exposure teachers have to ATHE material or their conferences. The conferences that I have attended have been jam packed with content knowledge. With little focus on pedagogy or values developments. I wonder if it is possible for them to achieve much impact. They can achieve some impact but not a lot considering the timeframe that they have, when it is a half day conference or a one-day conference.

A: And presumably, that pedagogy is inherently linked with our method of assessment. You know, there's good bit in your own thesis about teachers teaching to the exam. And so I wonder, then I'm kind of thinking in my own mind, as you're speaking, while we still have this, I mean, look at all the conversation we've had in recent weeks about the leaving cert, while we still have these types of exams, we have a huge hurdle to overcome. Would you agree with that?

P: Yes, but everything is going to change. COVID has turned everything upside down. We now have teacher assessment and that is valued. We have new junior cycle assessment, which has proven to be effective. I must acknowledge that the coursework assessment always generated higher order learning, and you will see that for my thesis. Coursework tasks generate good positive impact. And they still do. What I notice about

the new Junior Cycle assessment is that they have embedded formative assessment into practice. It is proving effective because students are now beginning to reflect upon their own learning and to work with their peers to address whether they have met the learning intentions. They are using success criteria. They are definitely aware of their own learning which is a good thing. There was nothing ever wrong with the coursework assessment. The new junior cycle programme is effectively embedding formative assessment. We know that the senior cycle curriculum is currently under review. I predict that they will radically change the assessment in senior cycle and quickly too owing to Covid. I envisage new forms of creative assessment that can create planned and positive wash back in the classroom. I am hopeful that we will have more creative assessment at senior cycle in the future, assessment that can generate positive impact.

A: And even though you might be optimistic that that might happen sooner rather than later, particularly in light of the pandemic, would you agree that the - we'll call it the wash back- the effects of that or even the success of that will take time. That it'll take a while to to embed it into practice?

P: Yes. You know if you had asked me that question one year ago, I would not have been optimistic. They are going to have to change it quickly because of the current pandemic climate.

A: Do you see areas for collaboration in schools between home economics and other subjects in fostering, not just within food literacy, but because the topic here today is food literacy, but those values that home economics is supposed to underpin and is supposed to encourage, do you see other subjects that work or marry well with our own subject?

P: Yes, they do. Certainly, SPHE has a role to play, but I think home economics is best placed to develop food literacy effectively. I really believe home economics can impart knowledge and develop attitudes, personal skills, and confidence in learning to take action to improve personal health. It is the most effective subject to do this because not only are they imparting knowledge, and developing skills in practice, but they can integrate different aspects of home economics education. They can relate to consumer issues, talk about the purchasing of foods. Home economics teachers address food

preparation and food science. Food science is applied in the cooking of food. That really and truly is what makes home economics unique in the curriculum. Perhaps we could look at sustainable food production a little bit more and embrace that trend. There is no harm in doing that. I think as a subject, we can do that effectively. SPHE just looks at it from a theoretical point of view, PE looks at physical activity, one aspect of health and wellbeing, so certainly there is scope for collaboration, but I really think home economics should take ownership of the area of food literacy.

A: I like that phrase to take ownership. That's a very empowering phrase, isn't it? To take ownership and maybe, if I could say, then that you're suggesting that one of the ways that we could do that is as a practicing home economics teacher within our own schools to step up and be the role models that we need to be in order to impart this and pass it on to our own students.

P: I am going to cross reference one aspect of my thesis here. You will find it in the findings section. It was under Home Economics being a unique subject. A lot of the interviewees mentioned this as well. They felt that we needed to step up and take ownership of the fact that we do all of that. Now, we could do it better, but we should take ownership of it.

A: Very good. And the final question, I have and again, it's a little bit repetitive in many regards, it's by Tim Lang, and Martin Caraher. Caraher is Sligo originally, and I think he's worked quite a bit with Amanda McCloat up there in Lough Gill. They coined the phrase, "culinary skills transition", and I'll just read out the quote for you, if you will. "It's where whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables and down throats". So, I don't think there's any home economics teacher who would dispute the existence of a culinary skills transition. And I found a nice piece in your thesis from Schon, about the changing needs of contemporary society. And do you think that we are equipped adequately as Home Economics teachers? And furthermore, do we address this changing need? Do we adapt? Or are we tied to a curriculum that is no longer realistic or applicable to some of our students, if not all of our students?

P: I think we are adaptable, and I would say most home economics educators would also say that we are adaptable and flexible. We are not as tied to the curriculum

anymore owing to the design of the new junior cycle. Teachers will say that they are tied to the senior cycle curriculum. However, that will change.

A: And have you personally seen that culinary skills transition in St. Angeles? Even say in terms of your own students that come through? Are the student teachers demanding, not demanding, but expecting changes in terms of the content, the subject content in relation to food literacy?

P: No, they don't expect, they accept. And that is another issue. I would like to see changes. I taught food at St Angelas for a while, so I am familiar with the curriculum. I would recommend change.

A: Specifically at third level?

P: I would change it. It has been adapted over the years. The manual is adapted year by year. I think you know, what often happens with a curriculum is that layers upon layers are added. A good curriculum overhaul is needed.

A: And it's difficult then for the person who's delivering that curriculum to let go of unnecessary material. You know, we bring it all with us and perhaps that's what's happening even a junior cycle now, we're bringing the junior cert into the new junior cycle and we're doubling our workload. Unnecessarily.

P: Perhaps people have ownership of areas they like and they don't want to let that go. So that is about people bringing their own personal values into the teaching process. That is okay because it is part of the implemented curriculum process. Teachers have ownership of the curriculum. And they should have the intellectual freedom to interpret the written documents in whatever way they want to. The issue is when layers keep getting added and added. It may not be reflective of contemporary society and a contemporary food environment.

A: That's the set of questions that I have, that's terrific. If there was anything else that you wanted to add to which I think I could have gone on a tangent on any one of your statements there, but if there was anything you wanted to particularly add to it, I'd welcome it.

P: I have one conclusive point to make. The whole area of food literacy is quite complex. I think in order to address food literacy, sufficiently and effectively in the curriculum, one would need to look firstly at the curriculum, both structure and content, to see where it fits in, both at third level and second level. Secondly, teacher pedagogy could be reviewed. Thirdly, resources for supporting effective programmes and delivery are needed. We spoke about time already, time allocated to programmes, and access to programs, for example, whether home economics is elective or compulsory. It is compulsory in other countries and jurisdictions. It is nice to think that students will have access to food related activities during their education. And it is possible, that a lot of students only have a taster experience of home economics in first year or transition year. Unfortunately, we do not have food related activities in primary education. I would like to see that change. I would definitely like to introduce food education to fifth or sixth class students as they do in Japan and other countries. There should be a push towards implementing this type of education.

A: And when you say resources, apart from time, are you specifically talking about maybe money, that there would be investment in -

P: Yes, so that students have access to the food ingredients they need and that departments are sufficiently stocked.

A: Yes. Good. Super.

P: That is all I wanted to say.

A: Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

P: I would love to read your thesis when it's finished. I would be interested in hearing the views of all of those that you interviewed and seeing what you come up with.

A: Thank you very much. I'd be delighted to.

P: It sounds very interesting. I am looking forward to reading it.

A: Thanks. I really appreciate that, take care. Good to talk. Thanks.

Interview Transcript; Participant 6.

A: Researcher

P: Participant

A: How are you? Good.

P: I'm good. Thanks.

A: Thanks so much for doing this. I really appreciate it.

P: Oh, no problem at all. And I'm sorry, there was some back and forth. It's just been very busy the last couple of weeks as for you, I'm sure.

A: I just want to say thanks. I've said it actually, to everybody I've interviewed. One thing I'll take away from this Master's is I'm a bit overwhelmed by people's generosity. Everybody I asked, agreed, no problem. So I am, just very, very grateful. We're all busy. So I really appreciate so hopefully, I won't keep you too long this afternoon.

So, I roughly have four questions, loosely structured. But the starting point is just I wondered did you get a chance to have a look at those quotes that I sent?

P: Yes I had a glance through the different quotes that you sent on

A: Oh, terrific. And I wonder, was there any quote in particular that jumped out at you or that you had an opinion of maybe that resonated with you?

P: I think I suppose, what stood out from reading down through the quotes to say the reference to the definitions of food literacy can sometimes be inconsistent. And it's quite a broad term. I might just actually say - you don't have a list of quotes there?

A: I tell you, I do but I'm working off my daughter's laptop - I had a disaster with my own laptop so I won't attempt to do it.

P: I can actually try and bring up the quotes here. The quotes that I suppose one quote that stood out to me was, I suppose the reference to the fact that food literacy, it's the

way that it's one of the ways that an individual can develop a positive relationship with food. That was the definition by Cullen et al., 2105. I'd agree with that aspect. The aspect of the Bailey definition, so the ability or the framework to connect the knowledge to cooking skills, and to be able to develop nutritional knowledge to change behaviour. I think that resonated a lot with me as well, along with the Prendergast and Dewhurst explanation, that the food related life skills are transferable skills - I agree with all of those aspects.

A: Yes, very good. And would there be anything from your own experience that you would add to those definitions in terms of what food literacy entails?

P: I know that there was references to the environmental, the social, the economic, aspects of food. And I agree with that. And from the point of view of the school setting, I think that it's important that it's not just about, I suppose food preparation, that it's much broader concept, and it relates to not only the knowledge but, it can link to the affective domain of learning as well. And I'm not sure if that was mentioned in any of the definitions that were presented.

A: No, it wasn't.

P: I think it goes beyond - with food literacy - it goes beyond food preparation, and the cooking of food. But it also can be linked to, to other aspects such as, you know, implications for food choices, and analytical skills, and attitudes and values related to food as well.

A: And then when you're saying, that within the school setting, would you see opportunities with other subjects for food literacy beyond Home Economics?

P: Absolutely, I think there could opportunities in other subject areas. So for example, within Geography, if they were talking about different countries, and where, you know, the origins of foods where foods can be sourced from, I think there's potential links there, within SPHE- it definitely links to kind of food literacy within that subject area. Maths, and the ability to be able to look at kind of the costing of food and ingredients to the ability to calculate the cost of meals is I think, is another important aspect. So there's definitely links across different subject areas

A: Super and say if you were to list those subjects, and if we were to sort of put a hierarchy scheme on it, where would you see Home Economics best placed to in relation to those subjects in delivering food literacy curriculum?

P: I think the subjects of home economics is quite a unique subject. And it is, you know, it's excellently placed, I think it's probably the single subject at second level that can address food literacy, through both the theory and the practical knowledge and skills and the application of it, the fact that it combines both theoretical and practical, makes it quite a unique subject in that sense. And I think it probably, you know, places the subject at the top across the curriculum. You know, it's the sole subject really that can allow for that currently at second level,

A: Would you go as far would you have an opinion on say that, given that it is so broad, might it deserve a subject of its own?

P: It's a good question. And it's, I suppose, when we think about the subject and the broad nature of the specification? Yeah, I think it definitely, it could be a potential valid argument, really. It's probably possibly one of the barriers when I was thinking about the topic to delivering food literacy in an effective way the demands of the subject, and when we think about the other aspects of the subject, but then by doing that, you're separating out or kind of taking away from the subject overall, as a whole. I think, with food literacy, there are links to the other strands in home economics, the other core areas such as Family Resource Management. So I don't think personally, I don't think it is something that would be required to have food literacy as a standalone subject, but, I think it can be carried out quite effectively within the subject of home economics. But there are there are definitely certain barriers to that and the delivery of it.

A: Vey good. And if we were to move then to the arena of assessment. Do you think that the way we presently examine food literacy or assess food literacy, particularly within Junior cycle, is it adequate, and is robust enough?

P: I think it is, yes, I think is is quite robust. I know that how we assess has changed quite recently, in terms of the CBAs, the principles behind that are still quite similar; the students still engage in food literacy skills brief. And they engage in the practical aspect of it. So I think we are assessing in an effective way. But I suppose in terms of the delivery of the content, then and how it's assessed, I suppose, periodically from

teachers that's something that might be different. From a state exams point of view, I think the assessment is, has been quite effective. And I know it's still quite a new form of assessment so it will take a little bit of time to maybe understand the effectiveness of CBAS.

A: Very good. If you were to think about, even anecdotally, this wouldn't be a definitive question, but do you feel that the skills we impart to our students, and in terms of food literacy, they go beyond the classroom? Would you have any anecdotal evidence of that in your own experience?

P: Yeah, absolutely. I think, even from observing students preparing a dish in class, bringing that home to show their family to show their parents, their siblings, to allow their parents and siblings to taste the food, and then getting maybe informative feedback from parents at staff meetings, or open nights, etc, whereby they praise the work that's carried out, they really value the work that's carried out. So I think that's, you know, good evidence that the skills and the knowledge that is being taught within the classroom is being transferred to the home environment.

A: Very good. And you mentioned them a few minutes ago, thank you about the barriers and the enablers, or the facilitators. So if you were to pinpoint what you would see as explicit barriers to the delivery of food curriculum within the home economics classroom, what would you see as topping the list there?

P: I suppose it would be maybe a couple of bars that would come to mind and mainly just from my own experience, communication will be one potential area. So the students ability to actually be able to understand and to interpret the terminology that's used and the concepts that are used. More specifically on that, for example, in the case of maybe students who wouldn't have English as their first language, maybe multicultural students that might have difficulties understanding even the English language then that presents an additional challenge there for that group of students. So that will be one area that might potentially be considered as a barrier to food literacy. From a broader context, from a teaching point of view, possibly maybe the time constraints and the level of content associated with the specification. I mentioned previously to CBA's and I think the fact that that's quite a new concept that teachers are still adjusting to and getting familiar with, you know, deadlines for CBAs. For example, for CBA one, deadlines for CBA two, I think that can sometimes put

additional pressure on teachers, and just the fact that it is quite a new experience at the moment. So it takes a little bit of time to adjust to that, so that could be a second barrier.

A: Very good, and with that first one, the way you were saying communication, not so much with students, where English is their second language, but for students for whom English is their first language, would you see the teacher role there as being important in terms of their pedagogy and their approach to teaching within the classroom?

P: Absolutely, I think the teacher thing, you know, I suppose the teacher role and the approaches that are used become essential at that point, and I suppose how they can overcome that barrier, or they can help the students actually understand and to interpret the information that's presented. And the approach used to supplement that. And again, just linking it back to my own experience, so I suppose the use then of, for example, word banks, or the use of demonstrations, spot demonstrations, breaking down those contexts that sometimes can be more difficult to help the students to understand becomes particularly important at that point.

A: And could we expand that influence out beyond the the teacher in the classroom? Would you have an opinion on the role of, let's say, middle management or management of the school in influencing food literacy within the school more so than just the curriculum?

P: Yeah, I think that essentially, the broader school environment, so from the management, and the whole staff approach to it is also very important. And that can possibly enable a supportive environment, it could potentially also be a barrier, depending on the level of support that is provided for us. Other aspects that I think about there will be the implementation of healthy eating policies. So how they're implemented, if they're monitored, the effectiveness of them, the availability of foods that within schools that will be healthy options, that students are exposed to at breaktime and lunchtime, I think that's another aspect that needs to be considered, from the broader point of view from the whole school environment, whether it is conducive to health.

A: And when you were saying earlier about how Home Economics - you would see it as being very well placed to tackle food literacy within the school. Would you see, do you think that on a macro level, the subject is recognized for that potential?

P: I think it is, yeah, I think, you know, there is a lot of support for the subject. Possibly within skills, maybe it varies, I can't offer specific cases. But I know in my own circumstances, that there was a lot of value placed on the subject, within the schools that I have taught in, there is a huge amount of support from parents in relation to the subject. On a national level, I suppose the recommendation to make home economics a compulsory subject for junior cycle students is a very big step forward. And it shows that this subject can play a very pivotal role in the students lives and help them to you know, develop the knowledge, the skills, the attitudes in relation to food that would allow them to adopt healthy behaviors.

A: And so if I was to flip the barriers then and look at enablers, I know you've mentioned a couple there, but is there anything else that you would see that you know, if you had a wish list for home economics, to enhance our teaching of food literacy, is there anything that jumps out at you?

P: Some of the aspects that jump out would be resources that are available. So I know they can vary depending on each individual school. So the resources will be one big aspect there, the time allocation now I know again, that's constrained by the specification, etc. But the time that's allocated for the subject: I know that there are a lot of schools have moved to one hour classes and that can be quite restrictive in terms of the development of knowledge and skills, certain skills, there has to be advanced - pre Covid -there would have to be advanced prep done at home and in advance of the practical. Or it might, you know, some teachers were working over break times as well and lunchtime. So I think that, you know, potentially, that could essentially be a barrier. But if the time was allowed, it would enable teachers to engage with subjects in a meaningful way.

A: Very good, super. That's great. We're down to the final question now, thank you so much. And, this one, I'm kind of throwing a bit of curveball here at you. It's a quote and I didn't actually add it to the schedule yesterday. It's a quote by Martin Caraher, who is a Sligo man originally. He's done quite a bit of work, I think with Amanda McCloat. And he has termed it a "culinary school skills transition". So I'll just call out that definition; "a culinary skills transition is when whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables, and down throats". Now, I don't think that there's any home economist in the country who

would dispute the existence of a culinary skills transition but I'm just interested in your opinion, or your experience, or your thoughts on that. And like I say, I know, I'm kind of throwing a curveball there.

P: In terms I'm..

A: Sorry, I lost you there for a moment.

P: Okay, so I'm just wondering does your question...do I agree with the reference to the subject - involves a culinary transition?

A: Or have you witnessed a culinary skills transition and say, in your own teaching, or in St. Angeles, have you seen it? And and I suppose on a broader level, do you think that as a subject, we respond to that transition, presuming we agree that that that such a transition exists?

P: Yeah, I do. I do agree that subject allows for culinary transitions, I think, from my own experience, I have witnessed it, I have witnessed those moments where specifically with students, you observe that transition taking place, whereby they actually see the application of the learning taking place. And, you know, primarily, I suppose, from my own experience that will be relevant to second level, I'm relatively new to the third level, lecturing space. So I base that off second level experience. In terms of the transition, the moments where I have witnessed that taking place, as I said, within the practical class where students can physically see the application of the theory and the integration of the theory, and that will be I suppose a key moment important where I see that transition in place.

A: And say then, as home economics teachers, do you think that we have the autonomy within our classroom, to cater to the different skill sets - culinary skill sets - that are coming into our classrooms, given that different classrooms, different cohorts of students would have different abilities, depending on a whole range of factors? Do you see that the curriculum empowers us as teachers to address that? Or - I'm not going put words in your mouth - Or is it a case that it's down to the individual teacher rather than to the curriculum?

P: I think that from the, from the teacher perspective, that we are very quick to do that and we are very quick to adapt and to respond to the situations. I think that we have the skill set to be able to do it. Within the curriculum, I think there's also potential for

it. However, at times maybe we're more confined by the curriculum, and I suppose trying to teach the content and knowledge and the skills in all of the different areas, but definitely I think both aspects both from a teacher point of view, and the curriculum point of view, we do have the potential to allow for that transition to take place and to adapt to the different levels of skill that, you know, we might be faced with on a daily basis. And to try to cater for that and to differentiate our classes for the different levels that we see on a daily basis.

A: That's kind of that kind of brings it to finish unless there's anything in particular that you would like to say?

P: Not really. And to be honest, I hope I was a help.

A: Look, that's great. No, it's super, I've kind of refined the questions now so that the interviews are condensed, which is what I would like for both the participants and for myself in terms of the transcription!. But what you said there is all brilliant, it feeds very well into the research and you had some great key phrases there: I liked the idea about the time constraints, or sometimes the curriculum, and the CBA can create a constraint in itself, even though really, I don't think that that was the intention of it initially. So no, that's all no really good, really good. I also really like your reference to the affective domain. So I'm delighted that you said that.

P: Actually, in relation to the CBA's, because I know that even from talking to a lot of previous teaching colleagues and friends who are home economics teachers, I suppose that is one area at the moment that is causing a lot of worry and stress amongst teachers. I'm not sure if you're involved in the CBA?

A: Yes.

P: I know that it's, you know, what is contributing to a lot of stress. And I suppose there was uncertainty regarding the deadlines for food literacy skills brief. That was one area that kind of stuff stood out in my mind when I you sent on those quotes in relation to food literacy. The time constraints is a big area

A: Time is a big area. We never seem to have enough time no matter what. Yeah, it's always the way. So and no, that's great. I never mentioned to you at the start which was remiss on my behalf. I've recorded this interview, and I wanted to just check that that's okay with you.

P: That's no problem at all.

A: And I'll send you on a copy of the transcript when I get organized.

P: That's perfect

A: Lovely to meet you. And thank you again, I really appreciate your time.

P: Take care. Thanks.

A: Take care. Bye bye.

Appendix D: Focus group questions

1. Did you enjoy studying home economics? What factors influenced whether you enjoyed it or not, for example – curriculum? Teacher methodology?
2. In terms of food literacy, meaning all aspects of food education, what do you think you learned from studying home economics?
3. In terms of specific culinary skills, can you recall what type of skills you were taught? Can you recall specific recipes?
4. Are there any of these recipes and/or skills that you continued to use beyond school?
5. Do you think home economics is different to other subjects and unique? Why?
6. Are you happy that you chose home economics in school? Why?
7. Is home economics of value in contemporary Ireland? Why?
8. Caraher and Lang (2001) coined the term *Culinary Skills Transition*, defining it as “when whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get foods onto tables and down throats”.

Considering this quote, do you think that the skills and knowledge taught in home economics is relevant from one generation to the next?

Appendix E: Focus Group Transcripts

Focus Group Semi Structured Interview Transcript.

Sinead Arts Student (Female)

Liz: Graduate with MA in Gastronomy and Food Studies (Female)

Ramute: Culinary Arts Student. (Female)

Sarah: BA Graduate (Female)

Eimhear: Culinary Arts Student. (Female)

Sean: BA Graduate (Male)

Patrick: Currently training to be a home economics teacher (Male).

AG: I might start and if people join, you'll forgive me if I go back and repeat everything I said. So I've loosely got seven or eight, skeletal questions to ask this evening. But again, if you want to go off on a different route, and tell me something else, that's fine, too. And so in classic teacher icebreaker style, in case any of us are shy, you might give me a thumbs up or thumbs down to studying home economics. Like, when I say to you, your experience of studying home economics, would you give that a thumbs up or thumbs down? Okay (all thumbs up), and I should have said, I'm not going to take offence as a home ec teacher! So super, so everybody has a positive opinion or perspective on it? And what do you think are the factors that influence that position?

Liz: I would have two children that are really interested in doing this (home ec). And it's kind of odd, probably, I mean, it's been years since I've done home economics. Anyway, I had to go back and read up on what it was. I did it up until Leaving Cert, but I do think it needs to move with the times. I'm going back 20 years, or more since I was in it. .

AG: And if people were to identify the factors that have influenced their position on the subject, whether they liked it or not, what might you consider have influenced it? So on the list of questions that I emailed you for example, the content of the course, would that have made you like it? Was it maybe you had a good relationship with your teacher? Was it you got to sit with your best friend? Is there anything that jumps out

at any of you that you would say this definitely influences my opinion? So I'll open that to the floor, if anybody wants to throw an answer at me.

Sinead: For me, anyway, like, I enjoyed Home Economics, because like practical aspects of it. Like I wasn't really one for theory subjects. But I think most of the subjects in the Leaving Cert curriculum are like theory based and home ec would be one of the few that's not, so for me, that was kind of like, you know, a big thing. I'd be able to get in there and work with my hands and just not have to sit there and read constantly, you know?

AG: Thanks.

Ramute: I would be the same as well. It's the fact that we had to work with our hands that wasn't just sitting in a classroom and constantly reading or writing. It was something different.

AG: Thank you. Okay, so the practical comes out good. Anyone else have an opinion on that?

Eimhear I was just going to say that I would I agree with that and also just in relation to the practical side of things, I think, as well, because many of the subjects in school, like with maths and science of things, you can't really see how they're applied to the world. But with the practical side of home ec, it's very relevant to like your daily life, as well as cooking and everything else that you know, you learn in home ec so I thought that was helpful as well.

AG: Very good. And then in terms of food literacy, and again, when I say food literacy, I mean, any sort of education that links with food. So in terms of all aspects of food literacy, what do you think you learned from studying home economics? So there anyone who wants to throw in an answer there?

Séan: I think for me I learned two different separate characteristics, in the case of the Junior Cert and the Leaving Cert, with the Junior Cert it would be the understanding of the basic principles of how things work, for example, if you're baking something, what the raising agent does and the reason why, the basics of everything really around baking and everything to do with food and the home. Then when it comes to the Leaving Cert it gives you more of a clear understanding of the background of the processing behind food, and it gives you a different slant on I suppose, you know, your

relationship with the food. You know, it's a clear understanding of how to prepare it, but also the background behind us.

AG: That's great. That's super thanks a million. Brilliant. Is there anyone else who'd like to throw in a suggestion there? So things you've learned from home ec?

Eimhear: I think just like basically as Sinead was saying, the practical obviously is great. And I loved like, I loved art as well. I think that it needs - someone was saying about being updated. I think that they need to do more different types of food like, from different countries and stuff like that, because I know we all remember, we made like Irish Stew to scrambled eggs with really, really simple things. But we probably would have been able for a bit more, I think.

AG: Thank you. Ramute were you going to comment?

Ramute: Sorry, just one that Eimhear said there, with me when it came to home ec, even with the Leaving Cert or Junior Cert, it was a lot of like, simple, not that it was like simple at the time, like, looking back at it: It was like chicken curry or cakes, like cupcakes. You weren't really learning that much about dishes, like different dishes, like different cultures or anything like it was just the basic stuff that everybody would know. So I wish there was more of variety in what we were doing. And maybe a bit more added on to the course part - because in the Leaving Cert I was only studying like, I think I done cooking for a month or maybe two - there wasn't a lot of it. So I wish we went through way more if you get me.

AG: So I think maybe what you're suggesting is that there could have been more practical at Leaving Cert? Would most people would agree with this? Yeah. Is there anyone else who wants to throw in there anything particular that you feel you learned in home economics that you wouldn't have learned, we'll say at home, for example, in terms of food education.

Eimhear: I think like, I remember quite a lot, of learning about the, like, nutritional value of food. Like when I like think of home ec in Leaving Cert I just remember that like protein, fats, carbohydrates, minerals, and vitamins. That was like, that's the first thing that comes to mind. When I think back to it. You know, you wouldn't really that stuff - at home. I didn't do biology. So, like, home ec was like the only subject where I learned that.

AG: Great. And so in terms of specific culinary skills, as opposed to the broad spectrum of food education, can you recall what type of cookery skills you learned? And would there be any specific recipes that come to mind that you learned specifically in home ec again, as opposed to maybe something that you learned at home or you absorbed at home? So anyone who'd like to throw in an answer?

Liz: I think for me, it was very much focused around baking, rather than actually kind of cooking, it was very kind of baking focused and quite like, I suppose I was lucky that my mom was a good baker and a good cook. So for me, I didn't really learn a huge amount it was, I think somebody has said that already - it was very much basics. So I don't think - and maybe that's because I had an interest in food, it might be different for other people that mightn't be interested in food because I was.

AG: Okay, good, great. Anyone else there any particular recipes that you can think of that you can remember?

Eimhear: The first week, we did like smoothies. And then we made scrambled eggs, and just like really, really simple stuff. And then when we moved on, and we kind of, I remember our teacher once, it was great. Like, she got us to give her recipes. So we got to make our things and shared with the class. So that was good. Our teacher was great, like, that's kind of why I liked home ec; she was very good.

AG: And Sarah, have you anything you're thinking of?

Sarah: Yeah, I was just going say it's really thrown me back now, but I remember making a lemon meringue pie. And that's definitely not something I would have done at home. So yeah, obviously, there's like many different parts to making lemon meringue pies so I think I learned different skills from that and also like pastries, baking skills, and knowing like the importance of temperature and then being like, really precise with weighing and everything how important that was. And then another dish that I remember was chicken and broccoli pasta bake. And I also remember using cinnamon in a spaghetti bolognese to like, bring out the flavour of the meat that our teacher told us so I was surprised at that! So, I think they're the things that stands out to me the most.

AG: And Patrick, is there any recipes that you're thinking of that maybe you could recount from school?

Patrick: I was thinking back as well. I thought of the journal probably for Leaving Cert. I really thought of the journal for food literacy and I suppose they were really what the practicals are really based around with, like we made I remember making lasagna and red velvet cake roll, so it was just different things, I probably wouldn't have made a homemade red velvet cake I definitely wouldn't have made it like that and I remember we had to adapt it to a diabetic. So we had to find a good sugar substitute and I would never have thought of doing that like not being to diabetic myself, I wouldn't have to think so that was just an interesting one I suppose. And then overall, I think just resource management is one that I'd think I got from home ec, kind of overall, because I wouldn't have been the best I suppose with, like at a young age, I just use away with stuff and not really pass any heed of it, but home ec definitely taught me about resource management. As well time as well, I've a whole new view on how you really have to think about the time you have, and I suppose when you think about "oh I have 80 minutes to make this". So you have to bear this in mind.

AG: Ramute did you have a recipe that you thought of?

Ramute: Yeah, I actually thought of cheesecake. I remember making a cheesecake. And we've done this a couple of times during the whole home economics. I've been in it for six years. So I remember making that a couple of times. And then like I said before, chicken curry!

AG: Would any of you have recipes that you would use or more so recipes than skills - but either or, really, that you think you learned in home economics that you would still use today? Beyond school? Is there anything?

Eimhear: I remember for my junior cert practical, I made like baked salmon with lemon, oil and salt and pepper. And then I fried rashers and cabbage, and then boiled potatoes, those like really simple but like, I literally still make it today.

AG: Super. Anyone else?

Liz: Like when I was doing it I think it was "all in the cooking" - it was re-released there recently. You know, I'm going to buy that for the children. Because it's very, I mean, well, obviously, it might be a bit of nostalgia. You know, like being back at school or whatever. And it was really successful. And it was re-released.

AG: Very good. So that would be your kind of go to book now. As in, you could dip in and out of it.

Liz: Yeah, yeah. It's a good place to start like,

AG: Very good. And Séan, were you going to say something?

Séan: When I was in - this probably kind of connects the two questions, but when I was doing my Leaving Cert one of the - I can't remember the exact title of the assignment but it was about preservation. I suppose as a result of that particular project it taught me so much about how, number one with the project, my own specific project didn't work out very well. But it taught me about the importance I suppose of like, you know, obviously, sterilization preservation, but also all of the techniques that I learned in that specific project regards the root of kind of a lot of things that I do today. Whether it's growing a scobie or having components of that - it gave me a really strong basis of preservation like sterilization, across the board view making anything related to fermentation products or you know, anything like that so I think that really stands out in my mind.

AG: That's super great. Is there anyone else who has anything that they would say, a recipe they definitely would use on a regular enough basis, any particular recipes?

Ramute: I would still have the book as well from home economics. So I do flip through when I'm looking for something simple to cook. Yeah. Something like, chilli can carne? Like, I would still make it - or a chicken curry! Yeah, there we go! I would say adapted, I'm doing Culinary Arts now so I adapted the recipe a bit more.

AG: Very good, super. And so my research to date has indicated from a lot of different people that they consider home economics to be a unique subject. And I put that on your list of questions. And I just wonder, would you have an opinion on that? Or do you think maybe that's sort of inflating the importance of it? Or would you have an opinion? Do you think that home economics is a unique subject - through your experience of education? Anyone have any thoughts on that?

Sarah: I guess, because it's so diverse in the way like, I know that this is based on food literacy, and probably more so practical side of things. But the fact that and I know it's more important to Junior Cert - well, I remember it more from Junior Cert, learning about sewing and like textiles. And yeah, so like, it's that aspect. And then you have

the economic side of it, kind of the business side of it, and then you also have – I'll never forget learning about role overload; I thought that that was like, so interesting. And because it's so true for so many women today. So and that's not something that like you would learn about it, people would realize, if like without home ec so yeah, I think the diversity of it with like the practical and then the sewing the textile side of it, and then the business side of it, and learning about the households and the appliances and everything. So I think that that's like one aspect of what makes it unique.

AG: Anybody else have an opinion on that?

Sinead: I think that I would agree with that, like the different, like what you're studying in home ec, it's kind of like, you know, separate, where when you're studying business and all, all the kind of topics tend to be related to each other, in one way or another. Like, if you do accounting, it will be related to theory in some way. But like, the different parts of home ec, you know, like sewing and cooking, like, they're kind of like, in no way related to each other. You know, I think it's different for most subjects in that, you know, like, its components are completely separate as not everything kind of has to link together like in other subjects.

AG: Great. That's great. Super. Anybody else?

Séan: I was just going to add to what I said. I think it's one of the only subjects in school that really prepares you for life in general. Like so many subjects are so detailed, or so abstract, that you can't see how it's relevant, which kind of relates to what I said at the beginning. So I think that that's very helpful.

AG: Okay, great. Super.

Eimhear: I think that it can apply to everyone's life. Like it's not just like, if you're interested in cooking, like, I think that learning the basics of cooking is important for everyone even if you don't love cooking

AG: Super Patrick, do you have an opinion on this?

Patrick: I just think it's a very like relatable subject that everyone kind of bring their own prior knowledge to without even realizing they have so much knowledge on it, you can all kind of give your own different experiences and like discussions. When I think of home ec I think of little discussions we used to have between ourselves and

the teacher would facilitate that for us and link it all back and it was just so interesting to see like everyone else's different point of views and even now everyone's point of view of home ec and what they thought of it. It's just such a relatable subject and so interesting, some stuff that you never even really think of before like even the functions something that you wouldn't really think about at home and then you go into class and you just like "oh, I never even would have thought I never realized that".

AG: Liz - What do you reckon?

Liz: I think I remember when I was doing it that we had we were doing interior design as well as parts of I don't know if it's still on the curriculum. But like cleaning out rooms and you know, like thinking of stuff like that you'd never - I remember I used to babysit in a really posh house and I think the teacher thought like, I was from this mansion! I'd just use their floor plan!

AG: Séan, you didn't share your opinion there. What do you reckon?

Séan: I definitely think it's in terms of if you like, your question, I think it is I think it's so like, I think it's so unique in the context of all other subjects that we study in school, I think reiterating what the others have said I think it is one of those subjects that crucially prepares you for your life after school. And that's in the specific context of food and you know, cookery skills and all those skills, but I mean, in the wider context of say you have a piece of clothing and you want to repair it and ensure that it's, you know, functioning properly, etc, like that, it just prepares you for all of those tasks. That really kind of encompass being a bit of a fully formed adult, you know? So I think just in terms of it just even in the wider context, of learning how to mend clothing, or, you know, it just teaches you all of those fundamental skills that I think are just so important to your life after school. And I think there's so few subjects in school that are directly applicable, that you see the real world context of that right away, you know, it's not abstract - its specific words and I can apply those on a daily basis, whether it's what I'm cooking in the kitchen or whether it's something that I'm sewing it's in a wider context.

AG: Ramute Do you want to say anything about it?

Ramute: I honestly just agree with everybody else. It's honestly like, you learn stuff for life. You wouldn't learn stuff, like what you learn in home ec somewhere else in a

different subject. You know, like, in all fairness, like what you learn in math or something- like half of the stuff you learn in math, you don't use, so I definitely agree with everything that has been said.

AG: Great. Well I'm going to combine the last area guys into two questions. So this first one I'm going to ask you was on the list of questions. It's around the concept of a culinary skills transition, as coined by Caraher and Lang and I'm going to read out the quote for you: "it's that when whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the patterns and kind of skills required to get foods, onto tables and down throats". And so if you consider that for a moment, and you think about the skills and knowledge that we aspire to teach in home economics, do you think that home economics is of value in contemporary Ireland? And I suppose as an angle on that, do you think that the skills you learned can be passed to the next generation without being changed? And a few people have touched on this in their comments, you know about basic skills and maybe very simple recipes. So my question to you is that do you think that home economics is still of value in contemporary Ireland or does it need to change? So I'd open up to the floor if there's anyone who'd like to be as controversial as you want!

Sarah: Thinking about the quote as well I think maybe like coming from a nutritional background one way I think that perhaps the curriculum could change to suit more contemporary Ireland or just you know maybe a healthier world is to relate more of the nutrition side of things that you learn in the curriculum to the recipes that you're doing so yeah I think that that would be one thing that I probably changed or like maybe for like the dessert side of things to know tell people about the dangers of sugar and even coffee and stuff in like tea and coffee consumption and yeah just to maybe broaden the nutritional side of the nutrition part.

AG: Perfect great stuff thank you. Anyone else want to throw in there Séan you had your hand up there?

Séan: I think home economics is extremely, its of immense value but I think the contemporary course, from what I remember studying it in school six or seven years ago, I think it's out of touch of where contemporary Ireland is now. I think home economics as a subject I think overall ok, some information has been improved ie the scientific understanding of what food is and how dietary changes happen. But I think what's out of touch with it is how people live their lives now I think that the narrative

of the home economics syllabus passed a very basic skills is that it's still rooted in kind of nearly that 1960s style of Ireland which was very much about like domestication of skill rather than how does that actually -I still kind of felt like it just sort of slightly rooted in the past and it needs to adapt slightly like for example recipes and the reading of recipes and that's really good, but like your real world context how does that apply to you if I have a limited pantry to use to put food on the table that has all my nutrients and vitamins and minerals. I feel like it could be adapted more towards where we are now rather than people where they perhaps 40 or 50 years ago which was getting clippings from an editorial piece and then putting it into a book and saying "I'm going to prepare this for dinner tonight"

AG: Brilliant, thank you, anyone else like to throw in there?

Sinead: I would think that like some aspects of it do definitely need to be updated while some aspects don't but I think you know like the fundamentals of cooking like taste and texture, like they never change and the important of taste and the importance of texture you know. But it's important to keep communicating back but I think when you're applying that to recipes that's where it needs to be updated you know? And I think as well because cooking is such like an integral part of culture and Ireland is becoming like a really multicultural society - we have loads of people coming in from different countries which is amazing but that's not really being reflected in the home economics curriculum you know so you have to try and incorporate the different cultures that are coming into Ireland because you know it is amazing we should be celebrating that and I think from a chef perspective as well, I haven't been in the industry that long but the time I have been I've seen such an evolution on culinary technology, you have sous vide machines and things that weren't around back when curriculum was devised and those things need to be incorporated

AG: Very good super thanks a million. S3 do you want to throw in your speak there?

Ramute: To be honest I think everybody said what I wanted to say but just to add on to it I don't know if it kind of suits what we're talking about right now but from all my guy friends who were in school when I was, they didn't have an option of home economics which I think boys schools should have it. Just the fact that like I know a lot of my guy friends don't know how to cook simple stuff and I think that should be added so they have at least the option to learn about it. I think it should be just brought

into boy's school and maybe even yet again off topic, but girls like into girls schools, they should be bringing in woodwork because everybody's like it's the generation where everybody wants to learn everything, you know. I think everything's going forward.

AG: Eimhear? Okay.

Eimhear: Someone said a point earlier, about adapting recipes like to diets, to have to look, if you're diabetic, I think that's really good and so that shouldn't change. But I think what Sinead said I was going to say that about, like different food cultures as well. Because even though I'm studying culinary arts I know that we still don't have enough stuff about different food cultures. Like we might have one week about a certain type of food, but I think there should be more about different - maybe have an Italian week and stuff like that in home ec.

Ramute: Also, I just thought of adding more dishes such as vegetarian or pescetarian vegan dishes, there wasn't a lot of those types of options for us. There were mostly like chicken or beef. You know, there was no different options for us like, In the culinary arts, from pastry from what I learned, you can make vegan pastries or vegan desserts. We've never learned our that in home ec. So that should be added in.

AG: Very good. And Liz?

Liz: I do think it's an undervalued subject. It's like when I went to school, and it was, like, I was pitted in a lower class. And you would automatically do home economics where it's like the brighter students would do science. My son is starting secondary school at the minute. And he really wants to home economics. And it's really much a deal breaker but you know, there is something five or six wood or technology classes but no home economics. . And it was said kind of at the opening evening "look, if you're interested in cooking", which home economics is not necessarily all about "you could do it in transition year". So I just think there's a misunderstanding maybe about what home economics is, and yes there's elements that needs to be updated. But then I suppose everybody that's here likes food! So maybe we're very much going towards the practical side of it and maybe missing out really on the other bits.

AG: Great. Patrick? Any opinions here?

Patrick: Yeah, just thinking I suppose about college and I'm a bit biased about the whole thing.

AG: Do you want to disclose maybe to the group there -

Patrick: I am actually training to be a home ec and science teacher!

AG: So you're breaking the mould there! It's fantastic.

Patrick: I mean, I even just find it so interesting listening to what you're saying. But I am a bit biased, like I really do love the course, I love the fact that it's so broad and encompasses so many things but I think the skills are so transferable, like, they'll always be relevant, and I know, they are becoming more and more relevant or more like updated. But I'm sure like every course could be updated, and every curriculum be updated. Everything was really said but that was one thing that popped into my mind I suppose. I'm even thinking of, I suppose through history as well there was a lot of that in home ec, like sociology. I was interested in looking back from maybe 1960s to 1990 and then 99 to 2020 or something.

AG: Okay. Yeah, that's great. I do have one last controversial question that has come out of my research, and it is that the role of the home economics teacher is actually pivotal in the classroom. And that's what my research is heading towards putting, unfortunately, maybe putting pressure back on the individual teacher and to a broader extent the wider school community. Would anyone have a response on this?

Séan: Like all subjects, I think home economics pivots heavily in the minds of students based on the teaching approach and methods employed by the teacher. When I think about my own personal experience with home economics at junior certificate and leaving certificate levels, I think the teachers were engaging overall and suited what I required as a student (however, putting into context, I had a strong interest in the subject and loved cooking/ baking in my spare time). I think the key difference between this subject and other subjects, however, is that cohesive communication in relation to cooking and baking technique can yield more homogenous results amongst a class of students. I do understand that some students have a broader previous understanding of that sub topic, but the other is quite relevant also (e.g problem points in recipes, serving solutions, etc.). When I think back to experiences in secondary school, there were several instances where specific points in recipes weren't

communicated well and as a result, certain groups would yield perfect results while others wouldn't, therefore leading to mixed and maybe negative feedback which could be demoralising at times and develop in certain students the idea that cooking isn't for them, although it should be perceived as a fundamental life skill and offers great opportunities for many, regardless of academic ability.

Liz: In my school there were different home economics teachers and both with v different styles and results! I think that is the norm in every subject.

Focus Group #2

AG: Researcher

All Participants studied home economics to Leaving Cert but did not pursue study/career in the food/health/nutrition arena.

AG: Thank you so much to everybody for today. I really appreciate you giving me your time. And hopefully I will keep you for too long. If it's okay I'm going to record this zoom call just for transcription purposes for the thesis if that's okay. So I loosely have eight questions. But really what I'm interested in now today is your opinion and your experiences of home economics, and specifically food literacy. So anything to do with food in home ec and I am a home ec teacher, but you don't have to have any allegiance to me! So, what I'm looking for today is honesty. So if you have something that's in your head that sounds negative, please don't hesitate I really just want to hear what your opinion as former students of home economics, what your experiences were. So in classic teacher mode, I'm going to start with an icebreaker. If I was to say home economics to you, would you give it a thumbs up or thumbs down? Okay, so we're all thumbs up. Okay, great. Okay. And if you were to try and think about what are the factors that influenced that thumbs up? Like, what was it that you liked about home economics? Was it for example, the subject itself? Maybe was it the teacher? Or was it that you got to be with your best friends? You know, what comes to mind when you think about home economics and that positive perception you have of it? Feel free anyone to jump in?

Martha: Well, I love doing the assignments. And they were definitely my favourite part of us. It was great. Like the write up is a lot. There's so many questions. And especially for our one we had assigned sensory analysis. So we had the chocolate - we tasted chocolate basically. And it was definitely hard to write up a lot on this and to do the same booklet that you would have been doing if you were cooking like for a canteen which was one of our other assignments - the canteen one. But at the same time, that's my favourite part of doing the assignments and getting to cook and getting to relax instead of when you're doing higher Irish. It was nice to be able to come in and cook, and I enjoyed that.

AG: Great, Martha. Yeah, tasting chocolate sounds ok, I could do that myself! I've been doing that myself all weekend! Very good. So if anyone else wants to jump in?

Jessica: Yeah, I would say the same. Well, I was in Marthas class, so we were actually paired up together for a lot of the assignments. We had great fun together. But I would definitely say like it is a social aspect, like home ec it's very social. It's kind of a class where you can kind of relax a bit more than like maths or where you have to sit and

learn absolutely everything, if that makes sense. So that was my favourite part going in and chatting to all the girls and everything.

AG: Great. Thanks, Jessica. Ladies, Julie or Sofia, Georgia.

Julie: We were in the same class, the three of us and Georgia and I were partners and then Sophie was always behind us. So it was really really social and it was so much fun. And we always loved cooking and sometimes our teacher would say like "oh we're making scones today" instead of like having a theory class so that was always so much fun during my Leaving Cert.

AG: Yeah, what a great idea. Very good.

Sophie: We all knew our teachers so well so like you'd never dread going into home ec and we were all really good friends. Yeah, like I really got along with our home ec teacher so it was just so easy going in and we looked forward to everyday like if we had double home ec we'd be really excited to go in.

Giorgia: I was just going to say I think because it was more practical and hands on the relationship that we had with our teacher even felt a lot more personal. And it didn't feel as formal as some of the other classes where it was a lot theory or a lot of you know, desk work taking notes or writing essays It was a mixture of both which worked pretty well the continuous assessment bit and then the you know, you had the theory and stuff as well but at least you had the fun act of kind of learning alongside which I always loved.

Martha: Yeah, and you just going on that as well me and Jessica learned nearly Miss Clark's whole life! We do the social studies; she had a story for absolutely everything. So we knew her life and her kids inside out so we had that great relationships with our home ec teacher as well!

AG: Yeah, I think that might be a characteristic of home ec teachers! And like when we talk about food literacy and by food literacy, I would mean everything in education to do with food, so as distinct say in home economics from social studies or textiles in junior cycle are that sort of thing. But in terms of food literacy, what comes to mind about what you learned in home economics? What has stayed with you?

Georgia: I think I definitely remember learning lots about protein and amino acids. And almost chemistry of it like, the different diagrams and structures and how they kind of interacted and also then like, what happens when, say a food is used, what happens to the sugar, what happens to the fat and those kind of changes, I think you can definitely see that it's so visual, obviously, when you're cooking. And that's something that I always kind of remember if, if I'm baking, if the sugar is kind of browning up, I remember "Oh, that's, you know, the caramelizing". And that's the, you know, that that process happening. And so I think a lot of the stuff is practical, but maybe some of the theory kind of goes in one ear, and out the other, and then I feel after the exam, you do remember it, but you might not necessarily be able to explain why. It's definitely the visual side of it that I remember, as opposed to maybe the theory and the reasons why. If that makes sense.

AG: That's great. Thank you.

Julie: I totally agree with you. I'm such a visual learner myself. So like seeing, like, as you said, like the sugar caramelizing. And going, that's why that happens, or that's what this looks like. I totally agree with that.

Martha: I literally remember the carbohydrates all the H's and I literally think I can draw it still. That's definitely one I remember. And I'm more of a - I'm not a visual learner. I'm more a rote learner. Like, I think it stems from my speech and drama and learning off things all my life. So, I definitely remember different bits and pieces of proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Like fats was definitely the easiest because we only had one oil and solid fats, that was definitely the easiest. I think protein first and carbs and that was the first our introduction to home ec. You know, we had a hard first three weeks in fifth year!

AG: Very good. Anyone else there with food literacy, sort of the knowledge that kind of has stayed with you?

Sophie: It would just be quite similar to Georgia like remembering the stage of the caramelisation. That's what I remember the most.

AG: Very good

Jessica: I was kind of the same as well, like just protein, fat, carbohydrates, waters, vitamins, minerals. That was kind of always in my head. And yeah, that's pretty much going to be a collection of everything everyone has said.

AG: And if you were to take it then, away from knowledge as such, like caramelisation and proteins, and go more towards culinary skills and specific cookery skills. I don't know what each of your backgrounds are, but what really what I'm trying to sort of find out here is what are you learning in home economics as distinct from what you'd learn at home? And could you pinpoint culinary skills and then as a kind of a follow on to that, would there be any recipes that you used in home economics that were new to you that you could see yourself taking further in life. So it's kind of two pronged question there. So cookery skills, specific cookery skills, and then specific recipes that you might think you would use yourself later on in life.

Sophie: My family is really busy always has been like, my mom would never really like cook meals from scratch and stuff like that. So when we started learning about that in home ec, I was actually learning culinary skills that I never learned at home, I never got the opportunity to learn at home. So that's why I found home ec really useful though I don't use it as much as I should now. And then, like we've made like jam, so that's something I really like doing now. I wouldn't use the exact recipe for it because I don't have my home ec book, but that's something that I take with me.

AG: Very good. Thanks, Sophie. Anyone else?

Martha: I always know, remember, you know, when you're cutting an onion, I have to cut it properly, and how to make sure that your eyes don't go watery. Like I've learned that off now. And even curling your fingers and like you don't cut off the roof, because that's what's going to make you - like you peel it off first and don't go near the root because once you cut that, that's what's going to make you cry. That's what makes it - and wash the knife beforehand. And so different bits and bits and pieces, obviously, and putting the saucepan handle in and making sure it's safe. And there's definitely a few recipes that like just the basic buns that we made and so I thought that I remember, me and Jessica did an operation transformation thing for our assignment on obesity, and I make that stir fry loads. And I'd say that's good.

AG: Okay very good. Very good. Great.

Jessica: Probably the same as Martha, you know, just the basics. But I remember we made lasagna from scratch. And I've now made that a few times and the way sauce, you know, having to keep stirring it otherwise it might burn, just about tips and tricks like that, that I've just kind of kept up while cooking at home now.

Giorgia: One thing I know I'm really conscious of is food waste. So I remember when we were doing our junior cert exams, and someone would come in to kind of observe, they'd be really conscious of, you know, the food that was left over in the base. So if you're chopping vegetables, high close to the roots, or how much food waste are you actually throwing away. And I know myself, I always try and save as much as I can, or else cut really, really finely so that I'm not wasting a lot of food. So that's something that I know, that was definitely just from home ec.

Julie: I think one major thing that I kind of took from home ec over the years was time management, just being able to kind of follow a recipe, like, to the tee and have enough time for everything because I think that's really important and a really good life skill. And just like what Martha was saying - general food safety. We did HACCP in fourth year, so that was kind of useful going into Leaving Cert with all the assignments and things and then yeah, like knife safety as well was really important then, we did learn a lot an awful lot of which is like I'd be cooking a lot and baking so I definitely use all the - everything that I find I learned from school now.

AG: And it has been suggested that home economics is a different type of subject to the majority of subjects in secondary school. And it has even been said that home economics is unique. Would you have an opinion on that? Might you think that maybe that's kind of giving it too much importance? Would you see it as being no different to any other subject or? Yeah, any takers on that?

Giorgia: I think there's a lot of like hidden knowledge, almost in home ec, like a lot of the skills are things that maybe you might not be able to pin down to home ec, but it's where you would have maybe first thought about them or had someone explain it to you properly. And even I know, we've learned about textiles and things for junior cert, and it was just something that I'd never really thought of, you know, fabrics and clothes and how they're made and how to keep them on how to wash them all those practical skills. You know, if you don't do home ec, it's a lot of trial and error or a lot of googling and maybe not the most reliable sources. But I think a lot of people, I don't know, we

were in a girl's school, and I'd say most of the people in our year did home ec. I don't know if it's fair to say, but I think majority of people would have done it for junior cert anyway, and then have to go on. But for some people I know they saw it as maybe a subject that was kind of an easy one or you know, one you could kind of do without, whereas I think the skills are probably the most practical in life, you know, they're things that you do every day. And, you know, and the nutritional side of things are so, so important. So, yeah, I definitely think it's beneficial. And yeah, there's, I just think there's a lot of hidden skills that you would pick up enormous,

Martha: And I also think just that, like junior cert home ec is lovely. But I think there is the perception that it's just it's an easy one to get by. It's like music if you're good at music. But once you get to fifth year, you can kind of get a bit of a shock. Like, I did biology and business so to the two of them like when we did the body and like new life that was with biology and business, obviously with the financial they're just a tiny bit the interlinked, but I think there is the perception that it's just do home ec, it's great because you didn't even have to do it for the junior cert but at the same time, it's a long exam, and it's a hard exam. And it's a lot of writing. But I do think that some people find it hard like I adored home ec, and I loved my teacher, so I did well in it because I loved it. But if you don't get on with your teacher you if you don't maybe if you didn't do the other subjects, I think it is hard, like definitely.

AG: Thank you. That's brilliant. Anyone else there?

Julie: I definitely do agree with it to both the girls, I do think that it is very unique, like you learn actual skills that you're going to use, like in everyday life when you leave school. But I also think that it's kind of like Martha said, like, it is similar to biology. And I think that's why I liked both those. I chose those subjects. So I really kind of did well on those because it links quite together. So yeah, I do think it's a very invaluable subject to have, because you've learned just so much in it.

Sophie: And it just felt like a bit of an informal class as well, which was really nice, unlike say, if there was like, even if you'd read something a little bit related to home ec you could go in and you could discuss it even if it wasn't on the curriculum, or maybe or anything about cooking or even lifestyle and stuff. I remember like we used to go in just ask random questions about life as well. It wasn't just on the curriculum.

AG: That's great. Thank you.

Julie: I just agree that it's a really special subject to do and I think like any person would be silly not to do it. What Sophie was saying, you could just kind of go in and really look forward to having almost kind of like a de stress class, it was like just stepping into someone's kitchen and being like oh yeah, let's learn about this or let's do some cooking. So I think that element of it was is just really important and integral for our wellbeing and our mental health especially during such a hard and stressful time during the Leaving Cert so it was really really important I think for us to have that social aspect

Martha: I also think it was ironic that our book was called 'life skills' as well because I'd just go in and see do you have a recipe for? So yeah, I'd have definitely informal part of that as well.

AG: I'm just thinking I would love your home economics teachers to hear you saying what you've said there and to say what Julia said about like stepping into somebody's kitchen - what a moral boosting comment that would be for any teacher, such a fabulous thing to say. So on your teacher's behalf, thank you! I'm taking from your comments that all of you are happy you did Home Economics, you've given us a thumbs up. A good few of you've mentioned that word value - is home ec of value in contemporary Ireland? Sophie you were saying that you come from what sounds like a modern Irish household where, you know, you mentioned how your mom wouldn't have been cooking, and which I think probably is a snapshot of modern Ireland, that certainly, we're not cooking to the same degree as we used to, from scratch. And Jessica said about cooking a lasagna from scratch, and all the evidence indicates that lots of us don't cook from scratch, you might be interested there that Neven McGuire, the Irish celebrity chef - he's also an ambassador for home economics - And he went online last year during the lockdown, and I think he said that the most hit on tutorials was how to make a roux sauce, you know that he was saying that people are going back to the basics. So bearing all of that in mind, do you think that it has a place in contemporary Ireland? Has it moved with the times, and it kind of ties into the last question that I put on your on your email, which is a bit of a heavy quote, about a culinary skills transitions. But do you think that home economics addresses modern Ireland, particularly in terms of food literacy, I suppose that's a lot of long winded questions there for you!

Giorgia: I remember, our teacher would always kind of keep up to date with articles that were published at the time, and especially around the time of November, I remember, she'd always come in with just little, you know, cut outs from newspapers or magazines, or whatever that might come up in the, in the exam paper, because that was around the time they were writing them. So she kind of taught us to always be on the lookout, always be reading, always be in touch with what's being published, what's coming out, you know, statistics or studies that are, you know, being published, were being published at the time. And so I felt at the time that it was maybe the one subject that was almost applicable to life, after the Leaving Cert, it was something that wasn't just tunnel vision, rote learning until June, you know, just get your essay done, just get your assignments done and submitted, this is something that you could kind of keep track of, when you left, you know, it was always going to be an effect, you're always going to be influenced by, you know, I don't know even what's on sale at the supermarket. So looking out for those little things and, and even shows like operation transformation, and how they would use things that were relevant in the media, in the course on the papers, and also recipes that were published all the time where, you know, I know, my sister now is in school, and now it's so different, even when we were in school, they're doing a lot more vegetarian options, vegan options, you know, so it is kind of evolving with the times I feel where some of the other subjects might be a bit slower to do that. Whereas home ec is always evolving and changing because, you know, there are studies being published all the time about, say, sugar or fat or, you know, the goal of unhealthy and what you eat. And, you know, I think it is kind of applicable, it is relevant to life, though. Definitely.

AG: Brilliant. Thank you.

Martha: I would say that our book was definitely an older version and we just kept using this book. The book was still very dated, but I do agree with that, like that our teacher was doing the exact same she was around the time she was like, what's happened and now I wonder what they're going to put on the exam. So, definitely, in regards to she still put in and made sure that we knew what was going on and what could be on the exam.

AG: Well, one last question for you ladies and you've kind of touched on it a few times. So my research to date, I don't know if this is a good thing or not, but my

research today has indicated that the role of the individual Home Economics teacher is crucial in the success of home ec in the classroom. We could argue, I suppose that this applies to every teacher in every subject. But because this project is on Home Economics, I'm just going to open that to the floor: Did you for example feel you were lucky in the classroom you landed in? Maybe there was another teacher in the school that you would have preferred to have been in that room or not? And in that regard, and would you agree or disagree with the statement that the role of the individual Home Economics teacher is paramount, in successfully passing on food literacy skills?

Sophie: Actually we were only discussing this earlier about like the different home ec teachers in the school. I think we definitely got the best one. Because like we used to really look forward to going into it where I remember hearing other girls in our year, who kind of dreaded going to home ec. Their teacher maybe wasn't as nice and it was really strict, really formal, just stick to the bell again. So I definitely feel about, like having the teacher that we had completely made our experience of home ec so good, so enjoyable. And I'm sure it made us learn even more, as I said before, like learn life skills that weren't even in the book. So I definitely feel like what teacher you have in home ec will determine how well you do and how would you enjoy it.

AG: Would anybody agree or disagree with that?

Martha: No, I definitely agree with that. And especially when you're doing the hard part. Well, for me, the hardest part was the food, that's the proteins and so and you do need a certain personality to keep everyone engaged, especially for food literacy, and especially for learning all those diagrams. And so like we're just not falling asleep. Basically, they need a certain personality. You need a bit of fun in the classroom at that time as well. Not just because we had one hour classes, so you can imagine doing proteins for an hour every day! So definitely you need a certain personality to be a home ec teacher to get your class and to be successful at it.

AG: Super, thank you, Martha. Okay, well, one last I said that's twice now already. But this is the last thing. Is there anything that anybody would like to add, anything that like you think that if you were Norma Foley Minister for Education if you could change anything about home economics? Is there anything that you would change or that you could see could improve the subject and your experience?

Martha: I think it's not really about the subject, but I think we should definitely encourage more boys to do home ec and I think we should definitely put more push and take the stigma away from it. It is about sexism at the end of the day. And actually my auntie was in the same class as Nevin in Manorhamilton for home ec and he was the only boy and look at him now! I think we definitely need to take the stigma of just girls doing it e

AG: Thank you, Martha. Anyone else?

Sophie: I think they should make it compulsory for like everyone to try it at one point in school whether it's like you try it for a semester in fourth year or even a first year because the boys would absolutely love it. Like my boyfriend loves cooking so much like he would have never even thought about taking home ec in school - he's really into food and nutrition, all of that. Like that's something that he could have done so well in. He was in a mixed school and he never would have thought of doing home ec.

Jessica: I was just going to agree with the girls like I 100% think that like boys should be getting into it. Because even during the first lockdown, I could see my brother going, "Oh, what are you making there"? Boys nowadays, they're all into like nutrition and protein. So I definitely think that if they started actually paying attention or doing home ec they'd learn a lot more about food nutrition and stuff.

AG: Very good. Brilliant. Julie, have you any parting comments you might want to add?

Julie: What I was going to say was completely different everyone else, but I agree with what everyone else was saying. I was just going to say when we did the leaving cert - I don't know if its the same now but the cooking assignments, they're only worth like, 20%. I just feel like that's such a lousy amount for the work that you put in the whole two years. It should be like at least 40 or half, like, come on?

AG: Absolutely. For the teachers as well! Super, Georgia. Any any final comments?

Giorgia: I was actually chatting to my mom earlier, just about home ec on my memories of it and we were chatting about maybe to learn about a local food business or local food industry, and kind of tie up real life application into the subject. Because, as you said, even for a drive to get boys, to get more people doing it, if you can actually see the benefits of it. And, you know, Ireland, we produce so much food, you know,

dairy, the dairy industry is like one of our biggest exports. And there's so many brewing companies, there's so many industries in Ireland for such a small country that, I think if you were to do something like that in school, it would maybe entice people to do it. And it might not be seen as kind of like a doss object or an easy subject, it's actually one that, you know, could help you get a job later in life. It's not just something, it's you're not just stuck in the kitchen, or you're not just you know, it's not all kitchen based, you can actually be you know, in the real world and a career or a passion after school as well. So I don't know, if it's not something that's done.

AG: It is an option, I would say for some people. I'm going I'm going to timeout now in a moment. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to wrap it up and I'm going to say thank you so much to each of you. I really appreciate it I have loads to work with there. Just need the time now to put it all together. So thanks a million.

Appendix F: Initial Coding of Data

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| Skills of empowerment | Back to basics | Intellectual freedom | Empowerment around food | Quick to adapt and respond |
| At third level - a curriculum overhaul | Still teaching the exact same way | Our core values | Partnering more experienced students | Dexterity differences |
| Notion of the family | Adaptable and flexible. | Not as tied to the curriculum | Transitioning in education, | Emphasis on cookery |
| Different skills | Work life balance | Home Ec links FL with other strands | Detrimental to Home Ec | Firm working on all its components. |
| Whole school programme, anchored in Home Ec | More meaningful change needed | | Greater freedom now for teachers | Placing student at the centre |
| Grappling with new curriculum | Time an issue | Concrete resources | Need to learn to adapt | Headspace or confidence |
| Social media | Scope to utilise twitter more in sharing | Twitter has potential | Social media is dangerous/toxic | Funding |
| Huge support from parents | Supportive environment | Whole staff approach | Primary education | Initial teacher training |

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| Resources; money | Greater teacher support | Learning depends on the teacher | Teacher fear | Classroom assistants |
| Timetabling | Diminishing skills | Twitter | Value | 50% of JC goes to cookery exam |
| Time pressures | Broad learning outcomes | Safety net there. | Sharing of info | Individual teacher |
| | Resources, eg form the PDST | Timetablin g | CBA should be accounted for | |
| ATHE | Scope for greater collaboratio n | Grappling | Remote learning | As teachers become more confident |
| Lack of govt support | Stakeholder s, | Everyone thinks they're an expert | Role model | ATHE |
| Teachers embracing new JC | Resources – including willingness of teachers | Primary school | Collaboration | Whole school approach on FL |
| CBA should be weighted | Assessment disconnecte d | Missed opportunit y | Pedagogy | Good role modelling |
| Teachers proactive | Stakeholder s have a role to pay | Robust assessment | Time constraints – | Adapting to new programme |

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| Teacher role essential | We can respond | Flexibility to navigate changes | Catalysts for social transformation | Transferable skills |
| Teachers well able to adapt | Meaningful change needed | Confidence | Skills and values and confidence | Pedagogical approach |
| An invaluable role | Autonomy | Adapt and respond | Values development | Underestimate the level of skill that's involved in teaching. |
| Unique | Unique | Students really value it | Pivotal role | Affective domain |
| Very little effective pedagogy | H.Ec has the monopoly on fl | Students who do H.Ec know the value of it | FL just one component of Home Ec | The value of H.Ec depends on the school |
| Analytical skills attitudes and values | Broad concept | Affective domain of learning | Positive relationship with food | Good knowledge |
| Complete understanding of food | Barometer | Sliding scale | Transferable skills | People's confidence |
| Skills, knowledge, values, attitudes. | Transferable skills | Positive relationship with food | Transferable skills | Broad |
| “framework” | Umbrella term | Collective term | Theory and knowledge and skills | Broader |

Appendix G: Secondary Refinement of Coding

Table 4.4: Secondary coding of data.

| Defining Food Literacy: | Home Economics as a subject: | Individual Teacher: | Pedagogy: |
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| Broad. /// Theory and knowledge and skills. Collective term. “Framework” Positive relationship with food// People’s confidence. Good knowledge/ Barometer Sliding scale. Complete understanding of food. Skills, knowledge, values, attitudes. | Skills, knowledge, values, attitudes. Transferrable skills/// Analytical skills attitudes and values. H.Ec has the monopoly on FL. Unique/ Pivotal role. Values development. Skills and values and confidence. Broad learning outcomes. Skills of empowerment. Empowerment around food. Core values. Promote notion of the family. | Adapt and respond/. Teacher role essential Teachers well able to adapt An invaluable role. Confidence. Teacher fear. Role model Adapting to new programme. Good role modelling. Resources – including willingness of teachers. Teachers embracing new JC. Teaching the same... safety net there. | Affective domain of learning. Very little effective pedagogy. Affective domain/ Underestimate the level of skill that’s involved in teaching. Pedagogical approach. Pedagogy. As teachers become more confident. Remote learning. Partnering more experienced students. Emphasis on cookery. Placing student at the centre |

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| | <p>Adaptable and flexible.</p> <p>Home Ec links FL with other strands.</p> | <p>Individual teacher.</p> <p>Quick to adapt and respond.</p> <p>Adaptable and flexible.</p> <p>Greater freedom now for teachers.</p> <p>Headspace or confidence.</p> <p>Need to learn to adapt.</p> <p>Learning depends on the teacher.</p> | |
| <p>Assessment & Curriculum:</p> <p>Autonomy.</p> <p>Meaningful change needed.</p> <p>Adapting to new programme.</p> <p>Missed opportunity.</p> <p>Robust assessment.</p> <p>Teachers embracing new JC.</p> <p>CBA should be weighted/</p> | <p>Collaboration:</p> <p>Primary school/</p> <p>Scope for greater collaboration.</p> <p>ATHE/</p> <p>PDST///</p> <p>Sharing of info</p> | <p>Social Media:</p> <p>Everyone thinks they're an expert.</p> <p>Twitter///</p> <p>Facebook</p> <p>Social media is here</p> <p>Social media is toxic</p> <p>Scope to utilise Twitter.</p> <p>Twitter has potential</p> | <p>Resources:</p> <p>Time constraints/</p> <p>Resources – including willingness of teachers.</p> <p>Lack of govt support.</p> <p>ATHE/</p> <p>Timetabling/</p> <p>Resources; money.</p> <p>Concrete resources.</p> <p>Time an issue.</p> <p>Funding.</p> <p>Greater teacher support.</p> |

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| <p>Missed opportunity.</p> <p>Assessment disconnected.</p> <p>50% of JC goes to cookery exam</p> <p>Teachers embracing new JC.</p> <p>Teachers grappling with new curriculum.</p> <p>Intellectual freedom.</p> <p>At third level - a curriculum overhaul.</p> <p>Not as tied to the curriculum.</p> <p>Placing student at the centre.</p> <p>Greater freedom now for teachers.</p> | | | |
| <p>Stakeholders:</p> <p>The value of H.Ec depends on the school.</p> <p>Stakeholders have a role to play.</p> <p>Whole school programme,</p> | <p>Students:</p> <p>Students who do H.Ec know the value of it.</p> <p>Students really value it/</p> <p>Catalysts for social transformation.</p> | <p>Culinary Skills</p> <p>Transition:</p> <p>Flexibility to navigate changes.</p> <p>Diminishing skills.</p> <p>Back to basics.</p> | |

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| <p>anchored in Home Ec. Good role modelling. Whole school approach on FL. Supportive environment. Whole staff approach. Huge support from parents. Greater support.</p> | | <p>Intellectual freedom. Dexterity differences. Transitioning in education. Not as tied to the curriculum. Greater freedom now for teachers.</p> | |
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Appendix H: Focus Group Responses by Question

| Factors influencing opinion of home ec | Culinary skills acquired in home ec still used today | Value of home ec in contemporary Ireland | Possible improvements | Role of the teacher |
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| Assignments | | Without home ec – a lot of trial and error | More boys encouraged | I adored my teacher so I did well in home ec |
| Sensory Analysis | Caramelisation | | | |
| Cooking | Lasagne | A lot of hidden knowledge | Remove the stigma for boys | Our teacher made our experience of home ec so good, so enjoyable. |
| Relaxing Fun | Buns | | | |
| Easy going | Very much the basics | Skills are probably the most practical in life | Offer it in mixed schools for boys | |
| Never dread it | Stirfry | | | |
| Fun | Didn't cook at home – home ec really helped | | | I'm sure she made us learn even more, like learn life skills that weren't even in the book. |
| Social aspect | | | Compulsory at some stage | |
| Relax | Jam | Very unique – learn skills that you're going to use in life | Greater weighting on the assignments at LC | |
| Social | Cutting an onion | | | |
| Fun | HACCP | Invaluable subject | Link with local food business and industry | I definitely feel like what teacher you have in home ec will determine how well you do and how would you enjoy it. |
| Cooking | Knife safety | | | |
| Knew our teacher so well | Roux sauces | | | |
| Practical | Food waste | Important for our wellbeing and mental health during the leaving cert year | Able for more challenging dishes | |
| Hands on | | | | |
| Informal | Time management | | | |
| Continuous assessment | | | | |
| Good relationship with teacher | Baking | The one subject that was applicable after school | More variety in terms of dishes | you do need a certain personality to keep everyone engaged |
| Fun | Raising agents | | More time in cookery | |
| Great relationship with teacher | Processing of food | Its of immense value | relate more of the nutrition side of things that you learn in the | |
| | Food preservation | | | |

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| So visual when you're cooking | Cupcakes Chicken curry | You're always going to be influenced by (home ec topics) | curriculum to the recipes that you're doing | You need a certain personality to be a home ec teacher to get your class and to be successful at it. |
| Visual learner | Irish stew | | try and incorporate the different cultures that are coming into Ireland | |
| Drawing diagrams | Scrambled eggs Smoothies | A lot more vegan and vegetarian knowledge taught now | | |
| Informal class-random questions about life | Cheesecake Lemon meringue pie | Home ec always evolving and changing | | Our teacher was great, like, that's kind of why I liked home ec; she was very good. |
| De stress class | Chicken and broccoli bake Importance of temperature | Book was outdated but the teacher stayed up to date | | |
| Like stepping into some ones kitchen and saying lets cook this or learn about this. | Recipe modification – obesity Cinnamon in spag bol Importance of weighing accurately | Life skills that aren't even in the book | | The teacher would facilitate that for us and link it all back and it was just so interesting. |
| Practical aspects | | Random questions about life | | More cultural diversity in recipes. |
| Working with your hands | Red velvet roll cake | | | |
| One of the few non theory subjects | Lasagne Recipe modification – diabetic | Current affairs around food | | More boys should study it |
| It wasn't just sitting in a classroom and constantly reading or writing. It was something different | Chilli Con Carne Resource management Baked salmon | It's very relevant to like your daily life It is one of those subjects that crucially prepares you | | More vegetarian/vegan/pescatarian recipes |

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| | | <p>for your life after school.</p> <p>There's so few subjects in school that are directly applicable, that you see the real world context of that right away, you know, it's not abstract - its specific words and I can apply those on a daily basis,</p> <p>Very diverse</p> <p>it's one of the only subjects in school that really prepares you for life in general.</p> <p>I think that it can apply to everyone's life.</p> <p>it's not just if you're interested in cooking, I think that learning the basics of cooking is important for everyone even if you don't love cooking</p> | | |
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| | | <p>Very relatable subject</p> <p>I think it's out of touch of where contemporary Ireland is now</p> <p>I think what's out of touch with it is how people live their lives now I think that the narrative of the home economics syllabus passed a very basic skills is that it's still rooted in kind of nearly that 1960s style of Ireland which was very much about like domestication of skill</p> <p>I still kind of felt like it just sort of slightly rooted in the past and it needs to adapt slightly like for example recipes and the reading of recipes and that's really</p> | | |
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| | | <p>good, but like your real world context how does that apply to you if I have a limited pantry to use to put food on the table that has all my nutrients and vitamins and minerals.</p> <p>The fundamentals of cooking like taste and texture, like they never change and the important of taste and the importance of texture</p> | | |
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