Attitudes towards training within the hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Wales for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

2008

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DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree. I further declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated (a reference list is appended). Finally, I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopy and for inter-library loan, and for the title and abstract to be made available to outside organisations.

Stephen P. Moore (Candidate)

Martin D. Honey (Director of Studies)

Professor Eleri Jones (Supervisor)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of writing this thesis has been long and would not have been possible without the guidance, support and encouragement provided by many people.

My Supervisor (and previous Director of Studies) Professor Eleri Jones has been a true inspiration, continually encouraging me through all the stages of this project. I have learned enormously from her, and I have the utmost respect for her “down to earth” academic brilliance. I hope that I can inspire research students in the future as Eleri has inspired me during the last eight years.

My thanks also to Martin Honey (Director of Studies) with whom I have had many interesting and useful conversations, sharing thoughts and ideas along the way.

I should also like to thank the participants who willingly provided their time, and enquired regularly as to how the study was progressing.

Thanks also to Elaine, a good friend over many years, who typeset and proof-read the draft versions prior to the formal submission.

Finally thanks to my family, particularly Mum and Martin (brother) who have always encouraged and supported me. This study is dedicated to my father who passed-away in March 2006, - I’m sure he would have been very proud.
ABSTRACT

Training within the hospitality industry is a widely-debated issue with different stakeholders having differing views depending on their background and representation in the debate. This industry is therefore no different to other industries in the opinions that predominate. What is clear however is that the hospitality industry in the UK is currently suffering from an acute skills shortage. This study is concerned with analysing the attitudes of some of these key stakeholders towards the types of training that are employed in hospitality, and whether these approaches are suitable as training paradigms. The study focuses specifically on attitudes in Southeast Wales amongst employers, educators and training providers using a case-study methodology. The research was undertaken in three phases.

The first two phases of the study were concerned with assessing the attitudes of the employers. In phase 1 local employers were initially questioned using a focus-group approach. The results informed phase 2 which involved a series of individual interviews with employers from a range of hospitality sectors (including hotels, restaurants, fast-food outlets, public houses, motorway service stations, and catering services outlets) across Southeast Wales. A typology of the vocational training models used in the different sectors, with clear identification of the perceived effectiveness and acceptability of these models to the different employer groups, was developed. The research findings from phase 1 and phase 2 were also developed into a pictogram which represents the key features influencing training within SMEs and larger hospitality companies.

A recurring theme during the first two phases was the contrasting employer attitudes towards NVQs as a suitable training model. Phase 3 of the research explored these attitudes further by involving other stakeholders involved in NVQ delivery - the educators and training providers - as well as assessing whether attitudes in Southeast Wales are different to, or representative of, a larger geographical area. A series of individual interviews were therefore conducted with educators and training providers in Southeast Wales, the rest of Wales, and England. The results indicated that attitudes do not differ based on location, but instead several key themes were identified that were common to the participants.

Phase 3 of the research also involved a quantitative approach to explore these themes more fully using a larger sample size. An e-questionnaire was sent to representative further education lecturers, higher education lecturers, and training providers across Wales and England. The results concluded that there are perceived strengths within the NVQ model, but that the weaknesses are significant and many respondents would welcome the introduction of an alternative training model. The study concludes by proposing an alternative model and making recommendations for future developments in hospitality skills training.
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<td>BTEC</td>
<td>Business and Technology Education Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>C&amp;G</td>
<td>City and Guilds of London Institute</td>
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<td>ELWa</td>
<td>Education and Learning Wales</td>
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<td>EV</td>
<td>External Verifier</td>
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<td>FE</td>
<td>Further Education</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
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<td>LSC</td>
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Chapter 1.

Introduction.

1.1 Background to the research.

Issues surrounding training and skills have been widely debated through the years. Discussions are always contentious with different stakeholders having contrasting views depending on their background and representation in the debate. The hospitality industry is therefore no different to other industries in the opinions that predominate. What is clear however is that the hospitality industry in the UK is currently suffering from an acute skills shortage.

Leading articles in the trade press confirm this opinion, with blame being attributed both to employers and the types of skill-based qualifications available. Headlines in the news and letters sections of the Caterer and Hotelkeeper have included “Employers slow to grab initiative over skills gap” (10th January, 2006), “Hospitality faces staffing crisis in housekeeping” (22nd June, 2006), “NVQs are failing the industry, warns People 1st” (4th July, 2006), and “The skills gap needs a new solution” (22nd November, 2007). Traditionalists argue for a return to basic skills in a people focused industry, whereas progressive educationists are keen to experiment with new training initiatives. However the common theme in the articles is that the hospitality industry is failing to tackle the skills crisis.
As a HE lecturer at UWIC (University of Wales Institute, Cardiff) involved in delivering education and training to potential future employees of the hospitality industry, I am in the fortunate position of being able to view both sides of the argument. Frequent visits to hospitality outlets remind me of the pressures of a predominately profit-focussed industry, while curriculum design within a university attempts to achieve the ideal in a far removed environment. External work that I undertake (for Edexcel as the Lead Verifier/Chief Examiner for Hospitality and Catering subjects, the QCA [Qualification & Curriculum Authority] as an external consultant for hospitality education and training, and as an External Examiner in Higher Education) continually provides me with an insight into hospitality skills development across both Southeast Wales and the rest of the UK.

As a result of my day-to-day involvement and close proximity to the research topic, I have chosen to write the thesis in the first person. By doing so I am able to reflect more closely and personally on the key issues surrounding the training debate that affect my working life. I have therefore used the process of writing the study to help me interpret and analyse my work. As Richardson (1994) suggests, - writers interpret, so writing is a way of learning through discovery and analysis.

My research focus has therefore evolved from my work. I am concerned that despite the many curriculum initiatives in colleges during the last twenty years, the skills shortage within the hospitality industry is as acute as ever. As an education and training practitioner I was therefore keen to engage further with the hospitality training and skills debate, with a focus on Southeast Wales. I wanted to examine the different
training models used, and their suitability in the different sectors of the hospitality industry. I wished to understand those factors that influence attitudes to training within hospitality organisations. Finally I hoped to assess attitudes to the NVQ system of competence assessment. My intention was that by understanding the problems, I might begin to offer solutions.

1.2 The hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.
The UK hospitality and tourism industry is a £48 billion industry, employing over 7% of the total UK workforce and creating one in every five new jobs. The hospitality sector accounts for approximately 4% of GDP (gross domestic product) across the UK, employing a total of more than 1.9 million people (People 1st, 2005). In their regional report (“The Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism Sector in Wales”, February 2005), People 1st identified that there are approximately 9,500 hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism businesses in Wales. A report submitted to ELWa (Education and Learning Wales) by Miller in June 2004, (“Cardiff Catering Scoping Study”), revealed that there are over 700 hospitality businesses in Cardiff alone.

Indeed, in Southeast Wales, the growth of the service sector has countered the decline of traditional industries, such as agriculture, mining and manufacturing. However, despite recognition of the GDP contribution, attitudes to training within this growth sector in the UK are disappointing. In March 2006 the “National Skills Strategy” report, published by People 1st, revealed that labour turnover will cost the hospitality industry £6.2 billion by 2012, and that by this date the industry will have recruited and lost 4.1 million people. This report also reveals that one-third of employers are not training their
staff and only 71% offer any induction training. The report identifies that most training is linked to statutory requirements rather than staff development with many employers regarding training as a cost not an investment. It is not surprising therefore that the report also indicates that staff turnover in the hospitality industry (conservatively estimated at 30% per annum) is twice the national average, and costs the sector £886 million per year.

More recently in March 2007 the industry’s weekly trade magazine, the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* (1st March, 2007, p12), revealed that less than half (47%) of micro businesses train their staff compared with 90% of businesses with more than 200 staff. These figures are significant because the hospitality industry in the UK is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In the same edition it was reported that more than half (54%) of hospitality managers do not have a Level 3 (management qualification), and that 40% of chefs do not possess a minimum-level qualification to prepare and cook food.

These findings are juxtaposed by serious skills shortages in key areas, predominantly chefs, waiting staff, bar staff and porters. Therefore, this situation is of particular concern to SMEs who cannot offer employees the same benefits afforded by large hospitality organisations. In Southeast Wales, skills shortages are found amongst skilled crafts and food service, more so than managerial and supervisory grades. The most commonly-cited occupations experiencing shortfalls are: qualified chefs; kitchen staff; bar staff; waiting staff and counter staff (People 1st, 2005).
Difficulties in recruiting staff are exacerbated by the growth of the local economy in Southeast Wales, in particular competition from the retail sector, as it is perceived to offer better working conditions and higher rates of pay. The situation is compounded by changing demographic factors which have resulted in fewer young people entering the labour market than ten years ago (People 1st, 2006). Miller (2004) states that the current difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled staff in Cardiff will only worsen if collective and co-ordinated actions are not taken. Future plans for accommodation, entertainment, restaurant and other tourism developments throughout Southeast Wales will exacerbate the current skills shortage problems. Consequently, if staff are not recruited and trained appropriately to resource these new developments, poor service quality across the Southeast Wales hospitality industry will be inevitable. The status and reputation of Cardiff as a capital city and an emerging tourist destination demands that issues surrounding the training and development of appropriately-skilled staff within its hospitality industry are addressed. However such action requires employers and employees to perceive training as an investment for the future.

1.3 Training and the hospitality industry: The research problem

1.3.1 What is training?

A fundamental question at the start of this research process and a key requirement for any hospitality business, whether an SME or a larger company, is to assess what training is designed to achieve. McIlwee (1986, p112) suggests that:

*Training is the term which usually refers to the provision of specific skills, knowledge and attitudes which are related either to the current job of the person being trained or to the expected new job. It tends to be specific in its application.*
The Collins English Dictionary (2003) defines training as:

\[\text{The process of bringing a person to an agreed standard of proficiency by practice and instruction.}\]

Finally Cole (2002, p330) is very prescriptive in his assessment of the function of training:

\[\text{Training will be understood as any learning activity which is directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purposes of an occupation or task. The focus of training is the job or task.}\]

However East (1993) argues that training is more complex than simply encouraging an individual to improve his/her job skills. Instead he suggests that training must also be concerned with investing in an employee to encourage loyalty and commitment from that individual to the organisation and (ultimately) the hospitality industry. As East (1993, p14) states:

\[\text{Training and education will help employers to retain valuable employees, attract more people to the industry, and encourage those who have left to return.}\]

Roberts (1995) agrees with this argument, and develops the discussion by suggesting that in a hospitality context the main aim of training is to establish effective activities which meet the needs and expectations of the customer, the business and the employee.

In considering this theme there is a significant message, reiterated by several interviewees in this study, that training can only be useful in achieving organisational objectives if the right staff are employed and retained. As Barrows & Powers (1999, p535) state:

\[\text{There is no point in spending time, money and effort on somebody who turns out to be unqualified for, or disinterested in the job.}\]
Unfortunately, as is often the case in Southeast Wales and other areas, there is a shortage of labour which restricts the opportunity for employers to choose the 'right staff'.

1.3.2 Training in SMEs and other hospitality organisations

The perceived shortage of formalised and systematic training within the hospitality industry, particularly in SMEs, has been highlighted by several authors. Indeed this situation has been repeatedly identified as an on-going problem. The following is a significant and useful quotation to consider at the start of this research process:

There are too many stories in the industry about new staff starting jobs and up to 40% of them leaving before the end of the first month.
Van Der Wagen & Davies (1998, p45)

This statement still applies today and explains why some hospitality managers believe that training is an expensive function which can be easily compromised or neglected when bottom-line profitability is threatened. As Linley (2000, p21) comments:

The hotel and catering industry generally does not invest properly in training and development, and operates a 'take, take, take' rather than a 'give-and-take' attitude when it comes to employment.

Roberts (1995) argues that this is a short-term and blinkered view with no strategic consideration. He suggests that training is a positive process, and that many parties accrue benefits when effective training is undertaken. These include the economy, the organisation or business, the hospitality industry itself, the customer, the team or department, and the individual employee.
However, focussing on the situation in the UK, Roberts (1995, p191) accepts that:

*Whilst over 350 colleges provide training for students and employees, the majority of employees remain untrained and without qualifications.*

Unfortunately this is still the current picture across the UK, and explains the high level of unqualified and untrained staff employed in the Southeast Wales hospitality industry, especially in SMEs, despite various initiatives in an attempt to improve the level of training, including: NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications), SVQs in Scotland (Scottish Vocational Qualifications), Modern Apprenticeships and a variety of other short-lived training schemes.

Many hospitality managers in all sectors, including SMEs, do recognise the need for training and formal qualifications in order to achieve a workforce that can operate to the desired standard of product and service delivery. However, funding and the cost of training are key considerations. Smith (1989) argues that often when trading conditions are tough there is a temptation to cut development and make economies.

However, an alternative perspective is put forward by Gottlieb (1998) who suggests that training is certainly not a waste of an organisation's time and money resources. Instead he argues that training is the key factor to improve profitability. He also responds to the argument used by hospitality operators who claim that training is wasted due to the high levels of staff turnover in the hospitality industry. Gottlieb (1998, p5) simply asks: “what if you don’t train and they stay?”
1.3.3 The ‘costs’ of training

Issues concerning the financing of training are clearly going to impact on my research. It is certainly an expensive and time-consuming process. However the following quotation from the government established Industry Training Board (ITB) for hospitality during the 1970’s and 1980’s, the Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board (HCITB), is as true today as when the statement was first issued in 1982:

*Training is not a luxury; it is essential in every business, however large or small. In any service industry it is the staff who largely determine a company’s success or failure. As competition increases and businesses strive to solve problems of growth and change, more and more does success depend upon competent staff; they, in turn, rely on training to provide them with the skills and knowledge required for that competence.*

(HCITB, 1982)

Barrows & Power (1999) agree with the HCITB. They suggest that whilst training is an expensive, time-consuming, resource intense activity, the key counter-issue is the cost of not training. They argue that in the long term an organisation that chooses not to undertake training will discover that the actual cost is more expensive:

*The alternative to training, not training, may be even more expensive. Training does cost a lot; but the cost of not training is poor service and lost customers, and a lost customer may never return. Thus, the lost revenue from poor service far exceeds the cost of training a worker properly.*

Barrows & Power (1999, p535)

Medlik and Ingram (2000) add to this debate by claiming that effective training will not only improve the employees’ knowledge, skills and attitudes to work, but will also help to reduce other costs. They suggest that such cost reductions include reducing breakages, minimising waste of materials and misuse of equipment, reducing accidents,
reducing absenteeism, reducing labour turnover, and (perhaps most importantly) reducing the stress on management.

Certainly the Confederation for British Industry (CBI) regards on-going and pro-active training within an organisation as a major key to business success. They argue that a successfully implemented training programme is ultimately cost efficient and assists the organisation by ensuring that all employees are working to their full potential, focusing on the achievement of the company objectives. The CBI (1997) also claims that training is now multi-varied and is implemented in different ways:

*Long gone are the days when training meant going on a course. Today, training means far more - taking place on and off the job - developing a broad range of employee skills and qualities.*

(CBI, 1997)

It is therefore argued that investment in training helps to provide and maintain an appropriately skilled, qualified and experienced workforce in a fast-moving and dynamic industry such as hospitality. By making such investments hospitality organisations are better able to complete in local, national and international economies. However, as my research indicates, not all hospitality operators are convinced by these pro-training arguments.

Hence, training is a complex, expensive, on-going function which impacts on the effectiveness and smooth running of SMEs as it does on larger organisations. The research problem and the key issues surrounding the training debate have been introduced, and will be more fully explored and developed during the research process.
1.4 The research aim and objectives.

The aim of this study is to review and evaluate attitudes towards training within the hospitality industry with the intention of making recommendations for future skills-based training initiatives. To fulfil this aim, five objectives are determined:

1. To critically review the literature relating to training models and training processes, focussing on the use and application of competence-based NVQs as a training mechanism.

2. To develop a typology of vocational training models used in the hospitality industry, considering their effectiveness and acceptability to user groups.

3. To analyse the range of training paradigms employed, evaluating those internal and external factors which influence attitudes towards training in the hospitality industry.

4. To explore and review the suitability of the NVQ approach to skills development as a model for hospitality education/training.

5. To make recommendations for future developments in hospitality skills training.

This study will not include trainees as stakeholders for two key reasons. Firstly, exploring trainee attitudes to NVQs and modifying NVQs in the light of trainees' responses is flawed as they have no experience of alternative models to contribute to the debate. Secondly, the study of the attitudes of employers and education/training providers is sufficiently large and complex to provide a focus for this PhD thesis. If changes were to be made to the NVQ system, trainee attitudes should be assessed as a critical part of the evaluation process associated with implementation outside this study.
1.5 Overview of the thesis.

The thesis comprises eight chapters and is presented in three phases. The first chapter is *the introduction*; this presents the preliminary framework of the work and sets the scene for the later chapters.

The second chapter is entitled *the research approach*; and it focuses on three issues. Firstly, it demonstrates the research approach which was applied in this thesis. Secondly, it explores the researcher’s philosophical stance underpinning the research. Finally, it investigates the researcher’s methodological stance, including a theoretical description of the chosen methodology and methods, followed by a precise description of the fieldwork conducted during the research.

The third chapter is *the literature review*, which provides the theoretical framework of the study aiming to achieve enhanced understanding of the function of training and how it applies within a hospitality context. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the training debate and an appraisal as to how training is implemented in the hospitality industry. This section considers the perceived benefits of training, the training approaches used in the hospitality industry, the training models employed, and consideration of how training processes are applied and evaluated to improve business efficiency. Later in this chapter, in section two, there is a critical review of the NVQ system of competence-based training which has impacted significantly on the formal skills-based development processes employed in the UK hospitality industry.
Chapter One. Introduction

The fourth chapter is entitled *The NEAT Project: Phase 1 and Phase 2 Research*. This chapter describes the preliminary research process which evolved from NEAT (Network of Excellence for Action in Tourism), an ESF (European Social Fund) project within the Welsh School of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Management at UWIC. The project involved working with a group of SMEs in Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taff, assisting them to develop their businesses. **Phase 1** of the primary research involved working with these small businesses encouraging them to consider the types of training that may be beneficial for their outlets. The research intent was to identify the degree of overlap and/or the individuality of their perceived training needs. From this initial primary research process a formal training needs analysis exercise was completed. **Phase 2** of the research project built-on the findings of phase 1 and involved a series of in-depth interviews with the NEAT SMEs initially, and later with larger hospitality employers within Southeast Wales. The purpose of these interviews was to develop a typology of vocational training models used in the different sectors of the hospitality industry, and to identify how employer attitudes to training contrast in these different sectors. From these interviews a training pictograph was produced which represents the impacts of labour supply, training and labour turnover on the pool of staff available to hospitality businesses.

Chapters five, six and seven explain **phase 3** of the research project which considers the suitability of NVQs as a training approach for skills development in the hospitality industry. Chapter five is entitled *An Assessment of the NVQ approach to skills development*, and chapters six and seven are entitled *NVQs in Hospitality & Catering - A Blessing or a Curse?* In these chapters the NVQ approach for skills delivery and
assessment is measured for its effectiveness as a training model using an e-questionnaire. Chapter five reviews the process by which the e-questionnaire was produced. Interviews were conducted with education and training providers which identified key themes and issues to inform the content and focus of the e-questionnaire. In chapter six the results of the e-questionnaire are presented and examined, and in chapter seven a discussion and analysis of the NVQ model is undertaken. Emerging issues are fully reviewed and considered, and an assessment is made concerning the suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the industry. Finally recommendations for future developments of hospitality skills training are suggested.

Chapter eight concludes the study. It describes the research major findings; contributions to theory, practice and methodology; the research limitations; the opportunities for future research; and finally the researcher’s personal reflections on the research journey.
Attitudes towards training within the Hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

Development model for the study.

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Research Approach.
Chapter 2.

Research Approach.

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Chapter 2.

Research Approach.

2.1 Introduction

The research approach was a challenging chapter to write as it required me to reflect back on the processes used throughout the study whilst applying specific research methods within a structured research design. Certainly for me this was a complex chapter as much of the terminology is difficult, and authors of research methods textbooks disagree as to the precise meanings of some of the words and terms used. I will consider this issue later in this chapter. However, it has been suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985) that the research approach provides the framework for establishing and interpreting the research. Crotty (1998) argues that this process justifies the research procedures and therefore the research findings. He concludes that the more appropriate the research approach, the more convincing the outcome.

This chapter therefore focuses on three key issues that I experienced during the research process. I will examine each issue, consolidating the outcomes and reviewing the success of the research processes undertaken in this study:

1. The theoretical approach comprising the epistemological stance and theoretical perspective which underpin the research (section 2.3),

2. The practical approach including a theoretical description of the research methodology, followed by a detailed description of the specific research methods adopted (section 2.4), and

3. Applications of triangulation, reliability and validity (section 2.5).


2.2. The research approach

The word research comprises two syllables, *re* and *search*. The Collins English Dictionary (2003) describes the former as a prefix meaning again, anew or over again, and the latter as a verb meaning to examine closely and carefully, to test and try, or to probe. Together they form a noun describing "*a careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some fields of knowledge, undertaken to establish facts or principles*". (Grinnell 1993, p4).

Grinnell further adds that research is a structured inquiry that utilises acceptable, scientific methodology to solve problems and creates new knowledge that is generally applicable. Lundberg (1942, p5) draws a parallel between the social research process, which is considered scientific, and the process that we use in our daily lives:

*Scientific methods consist of systematic observation, classification and interpretation of data. Now, obviously, this process is one which nearly all people engage in during the course of their daily lives. The main difference between our day-to-day generalisations and the conclusions usually recognised as a scientific method lies in the degree of formality, rigorousness, verifiability and general validity of the latter.*

Burns (1994, p2) defines research more simply as "*a systematic investigation to find answers to a problem*".

Whichever definition is favoured it can be argued that the success of any type of social research is fundamentally determined by the researcher’s initial selection of the research approach. There are many factors that contribute to a particular research approach being chosen, and these factors can unite to create confusion for the researcher in this initial decision-making process. For example, Crotty (1988) identifies that much of the
terminology used in social research literature is inconsistent. Hamza (2004) develops this theme and questions the precise meaning of the word “epistemology”? He identifies that Denzin & Lincoln (1998, p26) suggest that epistemology is concerned with “the relationship between the inquirer and the known”. Crotty (1988, p26) suggests that it means “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know”. Hamza also considers an alternative suggestion by Williams & May (1996 cited Seale, 1998, p10) who argue that “epistemology is an answer to the question where does our knowledge come from? And how reliable is it?” I believe more simply that epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge and the critical study of its validity. As such epistemology aims to provide a foundation for what we consider to be true knowledge. The theoretical perspective or epistemology in this study is concerned with assessing attitudes to training, and the models used, in the Southeast Wales hospitality industry. Challenging the validity of theoretical training approaches has therefore been a major part of my epistemological process in this study.

A second factor that creates problems for the researcher as he/she embarks upon the research journey are the different terms used to express the same topic in the research process. As Hamza (2004) explains; the use of “research traditions” when referring to “theoretical perspective” (see Finn et al, 2000, p5), “research approaches” for “methodologies” and “research techniques” for “methods” (see Blaxter et al, 1996, p59), and the term “model” for “ epistemology” (see Silverman, 2000, p77). Although these are simple applications of different words to describe the same process, nevertheless for myself as a “new” researcher such alternative terms create confusion
and misunderstanding. To avoid such confusion I will try to explain precisely what is meant by each term when it is first introduced.

It is useful to present the research approach in the form of a hierarchical model with stages that build upon each other. This suggests that research approach has a systematic structure comprising paradigm, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. The approach suggested by Crotty (1998) is a useful model.

![Diagram of research approach hierarchy](adapted from Crotty 1998, p4)

Figure 1: The research approach hierarchy (adapted from Crotty 1998, p4)

It can be argued that this hierarchy can be divided into two distinct clusters:

1. The researcher’s theoretical approach including the paradigm and theoretical perspective (section 2.3), and
2. The research practical approach including the methodology and methods (section 2.4).
Not only are these clusters very different in terms of processes, but also in terms of durability. Crotty (1998, p3) argues that the researcher’s practical approach is “a less fixed process”. For example, an individual researcher is likely to change the methods and methodology applied for a particular research exercise depending on the nature of the research topic. It may be appropriate to use primarily qualitative data for one research exercise, whereas a different research topic would benefit from quantitative analysis.

Conversely, however, the researcher’s theoretical approach is of a less changeable nature and is less likely to be affected by the research topic. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1998) the factors that shape how a researcher sees the world and acts in it are difficult to change. As a result of these differences between theoretical and practical approaches, Hamza (2004) develops Crotty’s model (Figure 2) to illustrate the links and progression of a research topic between the changeable practical approach (methodology and methods) and the less changeable theoretical approach (paradigm and theoretical perspective):
2.3 My theoretical approach.

As a lecturer in a HE institution I am clearly a member of one of the stakeholder groups involved in this study (HE lecturers). The other stakeholder groups include:

- FE lecturers,
- Training providers, and
- Employers.

Although I was employed in an FE college until 1997, and prior to that I had worked in the hospitality industry, my operational day-to-day knowledge of these other stakeholder groups involved in the research process has dated since I joined UWIC in
October 1997. My involvement with FE therefore is now focused around the work I undertake for Edexcel as an External Examiner. This work has enabled me to use my own experience to give some perspective to the data collected in the primary research processes.

2.3.1 Epistemological perspective (Paradigm).

The study adopted a constructionist epistemology which is the term used by Somekh & Lewin (2005, p344) to describe "a theory of knowledge which stresses the active process in building knowledge rather than assuming that knowledge is a set of unchanging propositions which merely need to be understood and memorised". Seale (2004, p227) suggests that constructionism "is the view that society is to be seen as socially constructed on the basis of how its members make sense of it and not as an object-like reality". My own, more simple, definition of constructionism is that it is concerned with assessing our relationship with the truth. I advanced this constructionist approach using a perspective which, according to Johnson & Duberley (2000, p173), assumes that "we are all complicit in the processes through which we socially construct versions of reality".

2.3.2 Theoretical perspective (Interpretivism/Phenomenology).

Interpretivism is a theoretical perspective consistent with constructionism. Crotty identifies three approaches to interpretivism:

- Symbolic interaction. According to Somekh & Lewin (2005, p348) this:

  refers to a set of theories concerning the way that individuals form and maintain their identity in relation to others. It is based on the notion that social interaction is made-up of patterned (and often habitual) behaviours.
or utterances which have easily recognisable symbolic meanings which invite responses of similarly patterned behaviour from others.

- Hermeneutics. Described by Long (2007, p219) as the “process of interpretation, particularly of human behaviour and social institutions (and discussions of the purpose of life).”

- Phenomenology. This is the process employed in this study, the application of which I will shortly explain (2.3.2.2). According to Crotty (1998) this approach is based on people’s own experiences of the world and the constructs that they use to understand their experiences.

2.3.2.1 Interpretivism.

According to Somekh & Lewin (2005, p346) the interpretivist approach refers to a research process:

\[\text{which seeks to uncover meaning and understand the deeper implications revealed in data about people. Interpretivist is a broad category which encompasses a wide range of research approaches including ethnography and case study.}\]

Many researchers, including Seale (2004), argue that purely scientific research methods cannot adequately provide a real understanding of the complex interrelationships in society and between individuals. As Walliman (2005, p204) explains:

\[\text{From what can collectively be called the viewpoint of interpretivism, the principal objections were that positivist social science presented a misleading picture of the individual in society by ignoring the unique personal theoretical stances upon which each person bases his/her actions.}\]

Clearly in a study based on attitudes, such as this thesis, personal influences are important.
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Walliman (2005, p205) continues by arguing “that unlike the natural sciences, a researcher involved in a social science project is not observing phenomena from outside the system, but is inextricably bound into the human situation which he/she is studying.” He concludes that whereas the positivist will highlight the repetitive, predictable and invariant aspects of society, the interpretivist will focus on what is subjective, individual and creative.

It is useful to compare the alternative bases for interpreting social reality which can be applied to research processes. Cohen & Manion (1994, p10-11) produced a table, cited by Walliman (2005, p205), which I have adapted for this study (Figure 3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of comparisons</th>
<th>Objectivist</th>
<th>Interpretivist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical basis:</td>
<td>Realism: the world exists and is knowable as it really is.</td>
<td>Idealism: the world exists but different people construe it in very different ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of social science:</td>
<td>Discovering the universal laws of society and human conduct within it.</td>
<td>Discovering how different people interpret the world in which they live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic units of social reality:</td>
<td>The collectivity: society or organisations.</td>
<td>Individuals acting singly or together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of understanding:</td>
<td>Identifying conditions or relationships which permit the collectivity to exist. Conceiving what these conditions and relationships are.</td>
<td>Interpretation of the subjective meanings which individuals place upon their action. Discovering the subjective rules for such action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory:</td>
<td>A rationale edifice built by scientists to explain human behaviour.</td>
<td>Sets of meanings which people use to make sense of their world and behaviour within it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3:** Comparison between objectivist and interpretivist approaches.

Adapted from Cohen & Manion (1994, p10-11).
Based on the above comparisons, the implication of the interpretivist approach to research is that the observer or "interpreter" cannot be seen as being detached from the research project. As Walliman (2005) suggests the researcher brings his/her own meaning and understanding to the research process, and must recognise and acknowledge the perspective from which he/she undertakes the data collection process.

In this study I have adopted an interpretivist research approach, rejecting the positivist assertion that human behaviour and society can be studied from a detached, objective, and impartial viewpoint by the researcher. I am therefore concerned to learn about attitudes to training in hospitality that are individual and different, rather than attitudes that are collective and the same.

2.3.2.2 Phenomenology.

This has been described by Gill & Johnson (2002, p228) as "a study of how things appear to people – how people experience the world". Tichen & Hobson (2005, p121) concur with this statement and develop the thinking on this process by adding:

*Phenomenology is the study of lived, human phenomena within the everyday social contexts in which the phenomena occur from the perspective of those who experience them. Phenomena comprise any thing that human beings live/experience.*

In order to fully understand the phenomenological paradigm it is useful to assess the characteristics of this methodology against the positivist paradigm. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe (1991, p27) present a useful table which compares the key features of positivist and phenomenological paradigms. I have adapted this table in Figure 4:
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Positivist paradigm</strong></th>
<th><strong>Phenomenological paradigm</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic beliefs:</strong></td>
<td>world is external and objective.</td>
<td>world is socially constructed and subjective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>observer is independent.</td>
<td>observer is part of what is observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>science is value-free.</td>
<td>science is driven by human interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher should:</strong></td>
<td>focus on facts.</td>
<td>focus on meanings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>look for causality and fundamental laws.</td>
<td>try to understand what is happening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reduce phenomena to simplest elements.</td>
<td>look at the totality of each situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>formulate hypotheses and then test them.</td>
<td>develop ideas through induction from data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred methods include:</strong></td>
<td>operationalising concepts so that they can be measured.</td>
<td>using multiple methods to establish different views on phenomena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>taking large samples.</td>
<td>small samples investigated in depth or over time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4:** Comparison between positivist and phenomenological paradigms.

Adapted from Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe (1991, p27)

The table assists me in appreciating the phenomenological perspective from which I have undertaken this study. Certainly my own involvement in the study focus has inevitably resulted in elements of subjectivity. As explained earlier in this chapter, I have worked in three of the stakeholder groups targeted for the primary research data collection. As a result of this and my current involvement as a lecturer and external examiner, I have therefore been part of what the study observed. In analysing the interviews and e-questionnaire responses I have focused on meanings in order to try and understand the emerging issues and what is happening. Certainly I have been guided and have developed ideas that have been induced from the data. Finally my chosen
primary research processes have involved various methods (focus groups, individual interviews, e-questionnaire), using relatively small sample sizes over several years, to establish a range of different views and attitudes towards the phenomena being investigated in this study. A key distinguishing feature of this study therefore is the phenomenological perspective from which the research data and overall recommendations have been deduced.

Having reviewed my theoretical approach to this study, I will now continue by analysing the research practical stance.

2.4 My practical approach.

It is useful at the start of this section, in which I will review the practical approaches used in this study, to consider the work of Silverman (1993). Haven (2002) explains that Silverman identified a methodology as a general approach to studying a research topic in terms of establishing how a phenomenon will be studied using either a qualitative or quantitative approach. Indeed, there are many and continuing debates about the suitability of quantitative versus qualitative research processes. Walle (1997) suggests that although researchers are familiar with these debates, and both methods are generally accepted to be useful and appropriate, quantitative methods have traditionally dominated.

Silverman (2001, p26), cited by Haven (2002), presents the key contrasting features between qualitative and quantitative processes in order to illustrate the imprecise and evaluative considerations associated with the two methods (Figure 5):
Haven (2002) suggests that this table reveals that a quantitative research process offers objectivity and “reality”, whereas qualitative research is essentially subjective and vulnerable to the factors that influence the researcher. However Walle (1997), as cited by Haven, argues that pure quantitative approaches may present limitations in studies that involve people, due to the fact that such research requires the researcher to stop using insight and intuition, - often key indicators in social research.

In a study that is concerned with attitudes, these cannot be fully understood by only implementing a quantitative survey. Peterson (1994) argues that to have any meaning and to provide clarification, responses need to be probed, with the goal being to develop extensive information from a few people. As Haven (2002, p168) suggests “qualitative research facilitates the collection of elaborate data and provides depth of understanding, in addition to providing more flexibility for data collection”.

Therefore in order to consolidate the strengths and weaknesses of both research processes, the primary data collection for this thesis combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. As a result it is appropriate to identify the different phases in
this study and the qualitative or quantitative research methods that have been employed in each phase against the study objectives (Figure 6).

I will therefore now examine the research methodology and the individual research methods employed; explaining how each contributed towards the achievement of the study objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Target groups</th>
<th>Research methodology</th>
<th>Research methods</th>
<th>Objective(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>&quot;NEAT&quot; project SMEs</td>
<td>Case study 1.</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Southeast Wales employers (SMEs &amp; large national brand outlets)</td>
<td>Case study 1.</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Part 1)</td>
<td>Education and training providers</td>
<td>Case study 2.</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Part 2)</td>
<td>Education and training providers</td>
<td>Case study 2.</td>
<td>E-questionnaire</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Research Methodology and Research Methods employed.

2.4.1 Research Methodology

Crotty (1998, p3) defines research methodology as:

the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.

Hamza (2004, p2-10) suggests more simply that:
research methodology can be described as a practical plan from getting from the point “A” to the point “Z”, where “A” is the research aim and “Z” is the sought conclusion (i.e. findings to fulfil the research aim).

My research employed a case study methodology that comprised two contrasting case studies with sequential phases of data collection and analysis. In applying this methodology I used both grounded theory and reflexivity. Before discussing the case study methodology it is therefore necessary to examine these two approaches.

2.4.1.1 Grounded Approach.

It is argued that as a research strategy a grounded approach is specific and different from other research methodologies (Punch, 2005). Devised largely by Glaser & Strauss in the 1960’s, grounded theory is frequently quoted in research methods textbooks as being influential in the development of qualitative research. It is concerned with the process of extracting concepts out of data, or as Glaser & Strauss (1967, p7) suggest “the discovery of theory from data”. A good explanation of the grounded theory approach is offered by Punch (2005, p155):

Grounded theory is a research strategy whose purpose is to generate theory from data. “Grounded” means that the theory will be generated on the basis of data; the theory will therefore be grounded in data. “Theory” means that the objective of collecting and analysing the research data is to generate theory. The essential idea in grounded theory is that the theory will be developed inductively from data.

In the traditional view of research, Hughes (1958) and Becker (1971), data collection is a discrete stage in the research process to be completed before data analysis begins. However the grounded theory approach which I applied in this study is different. As Punch (2005) explains, grounded theory is the process by which the researcher, guided by some initial research questions, collects the first set of data which is usually quite
small. At this stage theoretical concepts have not been considered. This initial data will be analysed. The second set of data will then be collected guided by the emerging issues in the initial analysis. Punch (2005, p158) suggests that “this is the principle of theoretical sampling – the idea that subsequent data collection should be guided by theoretical developments that emerge in the analysis.” Significantly, when using a grounded approach, the alternation between data collection and analysis does not stop at two reiterations. Instead this process continues until “theoretical saturation is achieved” (Punch, 2005, p158), i.e. until new data does not reveal any new theoretical elements, but instead is only confirming what has already been found.

Punch (2005, p158) presents the grounded approach in the following model:

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 7:** Theoretical sampling: data collection/data analysis relationships

There are some critics of this methodology. Bryman & Burgess (1994, p221) argued that although the influences of the grounded approach have been powerful:

> there are few signs in qualitative analytical practice that the iterative interplay of data collection and analysis that lies at the heart of grounded theory has been fully employed, or that there are indications that the theory has been further developed.
However, many research methods authors agree that it is becoming more common to find the grounded approach of data-collection and data-analysis in qualitative research today. Certainly, I found this methodology appropriate to apply within this thesis using several data-collection and data-analysis processes to refine the study findings and the overall recommendations. As the grounded approach process suggests, I only started to access the literature after the initial data collection process had been completed. A grounded approach is therefore different from traditional research, but arguably it resembles how we problem-solve in everyday life, as Long (2007, p158) suggests “trying out, rejecting and refining”. Therefore, as Punch (2005, 158) concludes, “like much else in grounded theory, it models the way humans have always learned.”

2.4.1.2 Reflexivity.

The focus of this thesis emerged from my own experiences as a lecturer in FE, and more recently as an external examiner with Edexcel visiting FE colleges to assess the quality of the courses provided. As such my experiences and responses to FE curriculum issues are entwined in this study. Reflexivity is described by Long (2007, p220) as “an awareness of the impact of the researcher’s own background and experience upon the work conducted (self-reflection and self-referral).” It can be argued that reflexivity therefore combines the process of reflection with self-critical analysis. As Somekh & Lewin (2005, p348) suggest, reflexivity is:

*highly valued as a means whereby social science researchers are able to explore their own subjectivity, be more aware of the impact they necessarily have on the research data they collect, and increase the sensitivity of their analysis and interpretations of data.*
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Reflexivity therefore accurately describes the process which I used to acknowledge my background and involvement in the subject focus of this study, whilst also balancing subjective and objective perspectives. Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) argue that reflexivity benefits any ethnographic research (i.e. the “detailed description and analysis of cultural and social practices based on direct observation of activities” Long (2007, p219)) because it encourages the researcher to explore and recognise his/her behaviour in relation to the research topic.

2.4.1.3 Case study methodology.

In this study I employed a case study methodology to develop and analyse the key themes. This process was based on two contrasting case-studies

1. Employers: who represent the demand side of the training equation, and
2. Education and training providers: who represent the supply side.

The components of my case study methodology process are explained in Figure 8 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study methodology</th>
<th>Participants:</th>
<th>Research methods:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “Demand”</td>
<td>“NEAT” project SMEs and Southeast Wales employers.</td>
<td>Focus group. Individual interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Supply”</td>
<td>Education and training providers from Southeast Wales, rest of Wales, and England.</td>
<td>Individual interviews. E-questionnaire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8: The case-study methodology.
The term "case study" has multiple meanings. It can be used to describe a unit of analysis in a learning/teaching situation (e.g. a case study of a particular organisation), or to describe a research methodology. Obviously the discussion here concerns my use of the case study approach as a research methodology. Yin (2003, p1) suggests that:

> In general case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

The conditions described by Yin were those experienced at the outset and during this research process. The study is based on two case-studies, and as suggested by Garson (2007, p1):

> Because only a few instances are normally studied, the case researcher will typically uncover more variables...............This, however, may be considered a strength of case-study research: it has the capability of uncovering casual paths and mechanisms.

Certainly as the study progressed more variables emerged to add further issues and dimensions to the training debate. I therefore had to carefully manage this process to maintain the study focus and avoid being side-tracked to explore other less relevant but complementary issues.

Yin (2003) identifies six primary sources of evidence for case study research. He suggests that the use of each of these sources requires different skills from the researcher, and that not all the sources are essential in every case study. However the importance of multiple sources of data to progress the reliability of a research project is well established (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The six sources of evidence considered by
Yin (2003, p80) are presented in the table below (Figure 9) which compares the strengths and weaknesses of each source:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation:</td>
<td>• Stable – repeated review</td>
<td>• Retrievability – difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unobtrusive – exist prior to case study</td>
<td>• Biased selectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exact – names etc.</td>
<td>• Reporting bias – reflects author bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Broad coverage – extended time span</td>
<td>• Access – may be blocked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Records:</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Precise and quantitative</td>
<td>• Privacy might inhibit access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews:</td>
<td>• Targeted – focuses on case study topic</td>
<td>• Bias due to poor questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Insightful – provides perceived casual inferences</td>
<td>• Response bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Incomplete recollection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflexivity – interviewee expresses what interviewer wants to hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Observation:</td>
<td>• Reality – covers events in real time</td>
<td>• Time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contextual – covers event context</td>
<td>• Selectivity – might miss facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflexivity – observer’s presence might cause change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cost – observers need time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation:</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Insightful into interpersonal behaviour</td>
<td>• Bias due to investigator’s actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Artefacts:</td>
<td>• Insightful into cultural features</td>
<td>• Selectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Insightful into technical operations</td>
<td>• Availability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 9:** Case-study sources of evidence. (Adapted from Yin, 2003, p80)

In this study I applied document analysis and interviews from the sources identified by Yin (2003). Document analysis refers to items such as the minutes from meetings when training issues were discussed, training standards manuals, NVQ and other training
course specifications, etc. which were made available to me during my meetings with employers, educators and training providers. Yin (2003) suggests that one of the most important uses of documents is to corroborate evidence gathered from other sources. However he criticises the potential for over-reliance on documents as evidence in case studies, suggesting that there could be a danger of this happening if the researcher is inexperienced and mistakes some types of documents for unmitigated truth.

However it was the focus group meetings and the individual interviews which provided the most substantial sources of evidence in my primary data collection process. These will be discussed in detail when I analyse the specific research methods employed (section 2.4.2).

I have three justifications for using a case study methodology in this study:

- Yin (2003) claims that a case study approach is appropriate for comparing patterns. A key feature of this study was to compare the emerging patterns of attitudes towards training amongst different stakeholder groups.
- I was keen to use a methodology that is able to combine several research methods (focus group, individual interviews, e-questionnaire) and also deals with multiple data sources (employers, educators, training providers). Denscombe (1998) suggests that this is exactly what a case study methodology provides.
- Finally, Yin (2003) suggests that the use of case studies allows researchers to explore issues in their real context without relying on any pre-determined theory or hypothesis. According to Finn et al (2000) this means that the case study
approach is an inductive and theory-building process, which reflects my interpretivist theoretical perspective discussed earlier.

However before progressing to consider the specific research methods employed in this study it is appropriate to consider the on-going debate concerning the use of the term “case study” as a research methodology rather than as a research method (Finn et al, 2000; Crotty, 2003). Goode & Hatt (1952, p331) argue that:

*The case study is not a specific technique; it is a way of organising social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied.*

Punch (2005, p144) agrees that a case-study is a not a research method by explaining:

*In keeping with other approaches in qualitative research, the case study aims to understand the case in depth, and in its natural setting, recognising its complexity and its context. It also has a holistic focus, aiming to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case. Therefore the case study is more a strategy than a method.*

It is probably appropriate that the most recent explanation and comprehensive rejection of using the case study as a research method was offered by Yin (2003, p14):

*The case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method – covering the logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approach to data analysis. In this sense, the case study is not either a data collection tactic or merely a design feature alone but a comprehensive research strategy.*

Having accepted the above arguments, it is therefore now necessary to review the different research methods that I used for the primary data collection processes.
2.4.2 Research Methods.

The various components of the primary data collection process in this study were undertaken during a period spanning 2000 to 2005. Obviously the data analysis was completed during and beyond this timeframe. As explained earlier in this chapter I was keen to use both qualitative and quantitative techniques to achieve a multi-method research approach. I will therefore explain and analyse the rationale and experiences involved in each of the different research methods employed.

2.4.2.1 Focus Group - Phase 1.

Phase 1 of the primary research involved working with small businesses in Rhondda Cynon Taff, an area immediately north of Cardiff, who were part of the NEAT (Network of Excellence for Action in Tourism) project. As explained later in chapter 4, this was an ESF (European Social Fund) project within the Welsh School of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Management at UWIC. The purpose of this project was to encourage hospitality and tourism SMEs to develop their business skills by the identifying, and responding to, the training needs within their organisations.

In order to encourage the SMEs to engage with the project, a series of “cluster group” meetings were scheduled. These meetings were used as a support network, encouraging the employers to meet in order to share ideas and develop better business practices. As confidence in the NEAT project developed, the “cluster group” meetings were used to identify the specific training needs of the individual SMEs. Although referred to as “cluster groups” for the duration of the project, the meetings that I chaired appropriate
to this study were structured using a focus group approach. It is useful therefore to consider the theory that supports this research/data collection methodology.

Kumar (2005, p124) argues that the only difference between a focus group interview and an in-depth interview is that "the former is undertaken with a group and the latter with an individual". However, the use of focus groups as a method for eliciting respondents’ perceptions, attitudes and opinions has grown in recent years. Peterson (1994) suggests that the idea behind focus groups is that a small group of people interacts with one another and a group leader to explore a topic in a relatively unstructured way. As such group dynamics are used to generate ideas and pursue a topic in greater detail. Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000, p78) state that there are:

no definitive guidelines on the number in the focus group, although between six and twelve is the norm. The group leader will usually be the researcher who uses an unstructured list to stimulate discussion. The atmosphere needs to be relaxed with all members of the group participating.

One of the main advantages of using a focus group approach is that both the researcher and the participants gain insights and understanding of a particular social situation during the research process. Indeed, the most significant aspect that differentiates focus groups from other interview techniques is that they encourage and utilise group interactions. As Peterson (1994) suggests, using a focus group gives each individual the opportunity to argue, disagree, question and discuss issues with others in the room.

However, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe (1991) acknowledge that there are some problems when using focus groups. They suggest that social pressures can influence the responses offered by participants. It may occur that some people are not willing or
prepared to air their views publicly. They also recognise that group members may need time to settle, and be comfortable with the micro-politics, before they are prepared to offer an opinion.

The rationale for using a focus group as a research process in phase 1 was:

- To benefit from the initial NEAT project meetings, funded by ESF, which acted as the catalyst to bring together SME employers,
- To identify shared training needs and issues of commonality as regards expectations from the NEAT project,
- To generate rich subjective data which was crucial to the preliminary stages of the study, and helped to give the study a clear focus,
- To encourage participants to share experiences and recognise weaknesses experienced by other SMEs and themselves, and
- To assist data collection within a group situation that was less threatening, at this initial stage, than more intense individual interviews.

A total of five SME employers attended the focus group meetings which met on two occasions. Each meeting was hosted at a different SME venue. By using a fixed agenda and semi-structured questions which followed a specific topic guide (copy in the appendices), I was able to identify the training needs of the different employers. The results were developed into a Training Needs Analysis table which is presented in chapter 4.
I acted as the group leader or “moderator” (Krueger 1994, Churchill 1995) of the focus group. Greenbaum (1988) and Morgan & Krueger (1993) argue that the moderator of a focus group should have appropriate experience of handling group dynamics and should be attentive and sensitive to the participants’ needs. As a lecturer who works with groups (comprising colleagues or students) on a regular basis, I am confident that I possess the necessary pre-requisite inter-personal and group-handling skills.

At the start of the first focus group session the participants were given a short introduction and explanation as to the purpose of the meeting. I also explained as part of this “welcome” that I was entirely independent of any of the participating businesses, as recommended by Krueger (1994). The focus group discussions were recorded, with the permission of the group, for later transcription. Each focus group meeting took approximately 1.5 hours, which is typical of such meetings (Churchill, 1995). This time frame was agreed with the employers when the focus group meetings were arranged. Refreshments were provided by the host SME.

The only condition that the employers attached to the process was that they didn’t want their training needs to be publicly identified. They reasoned that such information would be useful to competitor businesses. At the outset I therefore assured the SMEs of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses as recommended by Oppenheim (1992), Silverman (1993), and King (1994). Therefore the five units who comprised the focus group are referred to and identified by number (1 to 5).
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During the first meeting the employers were initially guarded and protective of their businesses. However as the participants shared their experiences, so the meetings became more “open” and the discussions were less stilted. The employers recognised the benefits of the process that they were participating in and volunteered information that increasingly went “off script”. At the end of each focus groups session the participants were encouraged to ask any further questions that they may have about the research process.

The focus group approach for data collection worked well in relation to the objectives of the NEAT project. It enabled me to identify the specific training needs of the Rhondda Cynon Taff SMEs, and as a result I was able to produce a Training Needs Analysis table for these businesses. A further cluster-group meeting was then convened where I reported back the findings of this research process to the SME participants. I then concluded phase 1 of this study by working with colleagues from UWIC to organise the specific training for the SMEs identified by the focus group meetings.

2.4.2.2 Individual Interviews – Phase 2 and Phase 3 (Part 1).

Like the therapist, the research interviewer listens more than he [sic] talks, and listens with a lively and sympathetic interest.

(Whyte, 1984, p98)

A therapist I am not, but I was keen to progress some of the emerging issues and additional findings from the focus group meetings using a more intense, intimate and individual approach for phase 2. The same individual interview approach was also used for phase 3 (part 1). It is argued (Long, 2007) that nowadays we have plenty of experience of observing the individual interview process thanks to the mass media.
However, as Long concedes (p76), "neither the political interviewer nor the chat show host provide good models for the researcher."

Banister *et al* (1994) suggest that a key benefit of the interview process is that it allows the exploration of complex issues which may be more difficult if a pure quantitative research approach is employed. Interviews are therefore typically used to gather detailed, "rich", qualitative data from a small number of respondents instead of the quantitative data usually gathered from a larger number in a questionnaire survey. Mason (1996) explains the term “qualitative interviewing” as an in-depth, semi-structured interview process. Interviews of this nature have specified questions but, as Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000, p73) suggest, they “allow more probing to seek clarification and elaboration .....and have more latitude than the structured interview”.

I considered the different interview styles (structured, semi-structured, and unstructured), but chose a semi-structured approach because I wanted to probe the responses and ask further questions based on the responses. As Oppenheim (1992, p81) suggests the semi-structured interview approach allows “the respondents to say what they think and to do so with greater richness and spontaneity”. The advantages and disadvantages of the three types of interviewing styles are identified in Figure 10 below:
### Figure 10: Types of interviews (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000 p75)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of interview</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structured:</td>
<td>Interviewees answer the same questions, increasing the comparability of the responses</td>
<td>Very little flexibility and the standardised wording may inhibit responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee bias reduced</td>
<td>Pre-determined questions may not be relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data easily analysed using statistical techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured:</td>
<td>Combines the flexibility of the unstructured interview with comparability of key questions</td>
<td>Bias may increase as interviewer selects questions to probe and may inhibit comparability of responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured:</td>
<td>Interviewer responds in a flexible way to the interviewee</td>
<td>Comparability is much reduced and data analysis is more difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewer’s role is minimal allowing interviewee to express ideas in his/her own words</td>
<td>Data quality depends on listening and communicating skills of the interviewer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.4.2.2.1 Phase 2.

Sixteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted during the late summer and autumn of 2000. (A copy of the interview questions is in the appendices.) The interviewees represented several of the SMEs involved in the NEAT project, but also included larger hospitality outlets (including national brands) based in Southeast Wales. The purpose of the interviews was to develop a typology of vocational training models used in the different sectors of the industry, and to identify how employer attitudes to training vary in these different sectors. The information received from these interviews enabled me to conclude objectives 2 & 3 of this study.
I arranged to meet the appropriate people responsible for training within their own environments. In the larger outlets this was usually the Personnel or the Training Manager, but in the SMEs this person was often the General Manager or the owner him/herself. The interview process usually lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. As with the focus group exercise, I recorded the interviews which were later transcribed.

In deciding to record the interviews I considered the work of Easterby-Smith et al (1991), Ghauri et al (1995) and Healey & Rawlinson (1994). They suggest the following advantages and disadvantages of tape recording interviews in qualitative data collection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allows interviewer to concentrate on questioning and listening</td>
<td>May adversely affect the relationship between interviewee and interviewer (possibility of “focusing” on the recorder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows questions formulated at an interview to be accurately recorded for use in later interviews where appropriate</td>
<td>May inhibit some interviewee responses and reduce reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can re-listen to the interview</td>
<td>Possibility of a technical problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate and unbiased record provided</td>
<td>Disruption to discussion when changing tapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows direct quotes to be used</td>
<td>Time required to transcribe the tape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11: Advantages and disadvantages of tape recording interviews
Adapted from Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (1997, p228)

On balance I decided that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages and, following the advice of Healey & Rawlinson (1994), I chose to inform and explain to the interviewees prior to starting the interviews why I would prefer to record the interviews rather than simply asking their permission.
In order to ensure the success of the semi-structured interviews employed in this study, it was important to establish a feeling of trust and support with the interviewees. In such a data collection process it is important that the interviewer should, according to Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000 p75) be “understanding, non-judgemental, sympathetic, able to empathise, knowledgeable of the situation, and able to appreciate the interviewees point of view”. I therefore decided to trial my questions and my interviewing style with one of the hospitality outlets that I had developed a good working relationship with as part of the NEAT project. As explained in chapter 4, this trialling exercise caused me to refine some of the questions to ensure that there was no ambiguity or repetition of key themes.

The justifications for selecting to use semi-structured interviews within phase 2 were:

- they were identified as being the most convenient method of data collection that employers would engage with,
- questions can be explained. It is less likely that a question will be misunderstood as the interviewer can either repeat the question or re-phrase it to suit the needs of the respondent,
- they are more appropriate for complex situations where in-depth information and explanations of answers are required, and
- information can be supplemented. The interviewer can supplement information obtained from verbal responses with those gained from the observation of non-verbal reactions.
Overall the semi-structured interview process worked effectively to conclude and achieve the study objectives contained within phase 2. Indeed I was so satisfied with the interview outcomes that I decided to utilise this data collection process again in phase 3 (part 1) to contribute towards the achievement of objective 4.

2.4.2.2.2 Phase 3 (Part 1).

The study later progressed in phase 3 to focus on the attitudes of the education and training providers towards NVQs as a suitable training model for hospitality and catering skills development. The first part of phase 3 involved semi-structured interviews with thirteen education and training providers. (A copy of the interview questions is included in the appendices.) These interviews served to inform the design of the quantitative data collection process for phase 3 (part 2), the e-questionnaire, by identifying the key issues and concerns of the respondents in relation to NVQs.

Another feature of the phase 3 (part 1) research process was to assess whether attitudes towards training in Southeast Wales are typical of, and represent attitudes across England and the rest of Wales. As a result six interviews were arranged with education and training providers in Southeast Wales, and seven were scheduled with equivalent respondents in England and the rest of Wales.

This semi-structured interview process took four months to complete during the summer of 2004. As with the employer interviews described earlier for phase 2, this second set of face-to-face interviews provided detailed qualitative data. It is important to note that due to the sensitivity of this subject some of the interviewees requested that I did not
record their interviews. Others were prepared to discuss their attitudes to NVQs but only if I conducted the interview outside their work environment. Obviously I agreed to both sets of requests.

Banister et al (1994, p173) discuss the importance of ethical considerations in the implementation and application of a research exercise:

*Ethical considerations must be part of the fundamental design of any research project.*

Confidentiality is concerned with protecting the individual from potential harm when research results are published. As such researchers assure respondents that their opinions and responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. This means that the personal details of the respondents are kept secret and are not released by the researcher. In addition results will be published so that individual responses cannot be identified. In order to comply with requests for confidentiality, I have presented the results for phase 3 (part 1) using numbers to identify each respondent (i.e. INT1, INT2, etc.) and providing brief interviewee profiles.

Where the interviews were not recorded I had to rely on the accuracy of the notes that I wrote while listening to the responses. Although this created an additional difficulty for myself (having to listen and write at the same time), nevertheless I am confident that this ethical compromise benefited the overall results. Indeed, a successful feature of this interview process was that the assurance of confidentiality encouraged respondents to provide detailed and honest responses, talking openly without the fear of identification.
My justifications for using a semi-structured interview process in phase 3 (part 1) repeat the justifications explained earlier for phase 2. I was aware that the response rate to my request for individual interviews with employers and training providers was likely to result in a more positive outcome if I conducted the interviews at a date/time/location suggested by the respondents. Although this was a time-consuming process, as respondents were spread across England and Wales, nevertheless I found the quality of the data provided (discussed in chapter 5) greatly assisted the focus and compilation of the questions included in the e-questionnaire.

As I have already indicated the focus group and individual interviews were all recorded and transcribed. The use of a computer package, such as NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data: Indexing, Searching and Theorizing) or the updated N6 version, to analyse the qualitative data was considered. Indeed, according to Punch (2005, p283):

> In the last decade N6 has grown to be the predominant qualitative computer package in university research. The approach that underlies N6............. is that the researcher is encouraged to break the data open to reveal ideas that underlie what is being said or reported. These ideas are labelled (as in open coding)...........as the relationships between codes emerge the researcher can begin to build a hierarchy of codes and categories.

However, although I accept that such a software package can help in the indexing and retrieval functions of qualitative data management, and can assist the identification of relationships in the data, nevertheless I rejected the idea. Instead I agree with Mason (1994, p108) that computers cannot decide:

> .....which categories or types of data are relevant to the process being investigated, or what is a meaningful comparison, or of generating
appropriate research questions and propositions with which to interrogate the data.

As such I did not want to become detached from the analysis of the qualitative data which I had obtained using a very personal approach based on building trust and developing relationships with the respondents. I had also decided at this stage in the research project that I was going to use a software package to process and assist the analysis of the quantitative data in phase 3 (part 2).

2.4.2.3 E-questionnaire – Phase 3 (Part 2).

According to Sapsford & Jupp (2006) electronic survey research is becoming more popular as a method of quantitative data collection. Certainly many companies and organisations are now taking the opportunities provided by technology to conduct customer satisfaction surveys or market research surveys using electronic questionnaires. As someone who “reacts to” rather than willingly “runs with” technology, I was encouraged by my supervisor to experiment with and utilise a software program for the final stage of primary data collection in this study.

The programme that I used is SNAP, a specialist software package specifically designed for surveys and research data collection. The name SNAP stands for Survey aNAlysis Package, and the software was first developed to analyse the results of a survey, - hence the derivation of the name. When I used the software in 2005, SNAP could handle all the steps in the survey process from questionnaire design and data entry to graphical presentation of the results. However I was disappointed with the clarity of the graphics produced by SNAP, and therefore eventually I decided to export the results from SNAP
onto SPSS (a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) which enabled the production of higher quality graphics (see chapter 6).

As explained earlier, the responses from the individual interviews with the education and training providers for phase 3 (part 1) helped to inform the design and structure of the questions used in the e-questionnaire. The key themes and issues had been identified in the individual interviews, and I now wished to test these attitudes against a larger sample size. The layout of the e-questionnaire (a copy is included in the appendices) was therefore deliberately presented in a user-friendly format so that participants could respond quickly and would not feel intimidated by the quantity of data requested. I was also aware that college lecturers and training providers are busy people and would therefore be unwilling to engage with a document that looked complicated and would take more than ten minutes to complete.

In designing the e-questionnaire I used primarily attitude focused quantitative response-based questions ("quick-fire questions") whilst also including a minimum number of qualitative response questions which allowed the respondents to develop and further explain their answers if they thought appropriate. Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000, p95) suggest that "many attitude questions require answers on some sort of rating scale". I chose a Likert-style rating scale using the same five response categories throughout the e-questionnaire; strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree. As Kervin (1992) indicates it is better to keep the same order of response categories throughout a questionnaire in order to avoid confusing the respondents.
The e-questionnaire was written and tested on several colleagues in UWIC before it was finally published and emailed to the potential respondents. An important feature of the e-questionnaire design was that it followed and progressed the key themes that emerged during the individual interviews. No additional issues were added, instead I was concerned to learn whether the attitudes represented in the 13 individual interviews would be confirmed using a larger sample size. The e-questionnaire was e-mailed to 140 education/training providers across Wales and England during the spring/early summer of 2005. I was keen to use this period for launching the e-questionnaire as it fell in the period that immediately preceded the summer break. I was aware that if I left the launch until later in the summer many respondents would be on holiday and the exercise would lose impact. The deadline for completion was 30th September, 2005. This gave me the chance at the start of the new academic year to chase-up potential respondents who had not replied. During the period from launch to deadline 73 completed e-questionnaires were received. This represents a response rate of 52.14%.

Schaerfer & Dillman (1998) suggest that there is evidence that response rates are better, and answers to open-ended questions longer, on email surveys than postal versions. I was therefore very satisfied with the response rate that I achieved. This may in part be attributed to the fact that I offered an incentive (a prize draw for two USB flash drives) which were sent to two “lucky” respondents who provided their e-mail addresses when returning the e-questionnaire. Another reason for the pleasing response rate may be that I used some personal contacts who I know because of my work with Edexcel. This is known as opportunity sampling. Clearly there are implications with such a sampling process which Neal (2005, p2) identifies:
Although it has its flaws, opportunity sampling can be a very useful techniques when you are trying to target a very specific group in a short period of time. Just be aware that this opportunistic approach is far from a random method, since people with strong opinions are usually more willing to co-operate.

I was cautious however not to target as respondents people who I have worked closely with in recent job roles (i.e. previous FE college colleagues). My concern was that the nature of working relationships with ex-colleagues may influence the objectivity and impartiality which were key criteria in this data collection process.

Long (2007) suggests that there are several criteria to consider when evaluating survey data. These include:

- Focus of the survey,
- Sample design, - how was the decision about participants reached,
- Sample size,
- Response rate,
- Questionnaire design,
- Question wording, and
- Interpretation, - are the conclusions justified on the basis of the data.

I am confident that I have satisfied each of these criteria with the e-questionnaire that I designed and implemented. Indeed several respondents commented on the user-friendly layout of the e-questionnaire, and the ease with which they could move through the questions. Certainly I learned a great deal from using and applying an electronic data collection process. The key advantages to using e-questionnaires are that they are cheap, can be targeted precisely at the required respondents, and offer complete anonymity.
(only respondents who included their e-mail address could be identified). Interestingly Sapsford & Jupp (2006, p131) also suggest that:

There is anecdotal evidence that those who use computers frequently may be more sympathetic to email than to material received through the post and more likely to reply to it.

Other advantages suggested by Sapsford & Jupp (2006), that I agree with based on my own experiences, are that a questionnaire completed on a computer is not subject to the same constraints of space as paper questionnaires, and that it is possible to route respondents through the questionnaire more clearly than on a traditional paper version.

The only disadvantage identified by Sapsford & Jupp (2006, p132) with using e-questionnaires is that:

....some people may find computer presentations more remote and impersonal than the paper or interviewer-administered questionnaire.

However, I am convinced that electronic data collection will be utilised more frequently as a standard research tool in the future. The benefit gained by using a specialist software program such as SNAP (which will undertake all aspects of questionnaire design, data collection and data analysis, and will also allow the researcher to export data to other packages such as SPSS or Excel) is clearly a significant time-saving and cost-effective development for many research projects. As Sapsford & Jupp (2006, p132) conclude when they re-visit the single disadvantage of using e-questionnaires:

Given proper design it seems likely that younger respondents will find computer-mediated presentation less impersonal if they associate the computer with email and chat room conversations with friends.
2.4.2.3.1 Kruskal-Wallis

To assist the data analysis process I chose to apply the Kruskal-Wallis test to each quantitative question included in the e-questionnaire. As Pallant (2001) explains, the Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric one-way analysis of variance. It is a distribution-free test that allows the comparison of scores on continuous variables for three or more groups. The purpose of the test is to make comparisons between groups, and therefore different people must be in each of the different groups. In my survey the grouping variables compared using the Kruskal-Wallis test were:

- further education (FE) respondents,
- higher education (HE) respondents, and
- training provider (TP) respondents.

The Kruskal-Wallis test determines that if the probability of the result of comparing the variables is less than 0.05 (<0.05), then this indicates that there is a significant difference in the responses received from the grouping variables. This proved to be a very useful indicator for identifying and confirming consensus and non-consensus attitudes amongst the respondent groupings in my survey.

Figure 12 illustrates my rationale for using the Kruskal-Wallis test for the statistical analysis of the e-questionnaire quantitative data instead of other test mechanisms. Figure 12 is developed from the guide to statistical test selection devised collaboratively by Sue Holttum and Bob Blizzard at Canterbury Christ Church University through sponsorship by the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network (see www.whichtest.info/index.htm). The design of the e-questionnaire was targeted at more than two groups. The grouping variables compared were the further education
(FE) respondents, the higher education (HE) respondents, and the training providers (TP). I decided to exclude “others” as I was unable to allocate a precise identity to these respondents.

Each group was sub-divided by a single factor (i.e. each individual question); “one between group factor”. I then wished to make an analysis of the different views and attitudes of the groups in relation to the issue covered in each question; “between group comparison”. Finally I used ordinal data (i.e. ranked responses) to measure the attitudes of the respondents. In considering which test to select the Kruskal-Wallis test most closely satisfied the above factors.

**Figure 12**: Which test should I use to compare between groups? (Adapted from Holtum & Blizard, 2003)
2.5 Triangulation, Reliability and Validity

2.5.1 Triangulation.

Long (2007) explains that in scientific research projects researchers are expected to test the validity, reliability and generality of their findings. However he continues by suggesting that in social science:

.....we cannot expect to know things precisely, but the more times we examine something in different ways the more we increase our chances of understanding what we are studying. (Long, 2007, p15).

This process of examining a research project using a variety of research methods is known as “triangulation”. The term, according to Bryman (2001), derives from surveying, where it refers to the use of a series of triangles to map out an area. As Burns (2000, p419) explains:

Exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated. The researcher needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artefacts of one specific method of collection..........the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher's confidence.

Denzin (1970, p297), who is attributed by Long for originally using the term, defines triangulation as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon”. An interesting appraisal of Denzin’s work is made by Bryman (2001, p1) who suggests that triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach when investigating a research question in order to enhance confidence in the findings. He argues that “much social research is founded on the use of a single research method, and as such may suffer from the limitations associated with that method or from the specific applications of it.”
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The notion of triangulation is usually associated with the measurement methods used in social and behavioural research. Bryman (2001, p2) explains that Denzin (1970) identified four forms of triangulation that can be used in a research project:

1. **Data triangulation**, which entails gathering data through several sampling strategies. This means that data is gathered at different times and in different social situations, as well as on a variety of people.

2. **Investigator triangulation**, which refers to the use of one or more field researchers to gather and interpret data.

3. **Theoretical triangulation**, which refers to the use of more than one theoretical position when interpreting data.

4. **Methodological triangulation**, which refers to the use of more than one method for gathering data.

As indicated above the most common of these is methodological triangulation, which is the process employed in this study. Denzin however drew a distinction between “within-method” and “between-method” triangulation. Bryman (2001, p3) explains that “the former involves the use of varieties of the same method to investigate a research issue.” For example a questionnaire might contain different scales to assess attitudes to the same issue. “Between-method” triangulation involves using contrasting research methods, such as the focus group and individual interviews used in my research process. Bryman explains that “sometimes this meaning of triangulation can be taken to include the combined use of quantitative research and qualitative research to determine how far they arrive at a convergent finding.” He concludes that such triangulation provides a rationale for “multi-method research” as used in this study (i.e. focus group, individual
interviews, e-questionnaire). The different sets of data (quantitative and qualitative) confirmed attitudes towards training from the various stakeholder groups questioned. Using a multi-method research approach also enabled me to check the validity of the findings by cross-checking the results with another method. I therefore agree with Bannister et al (1994) who suggest that triangulation facilitates richer and more valid interpretations of the data collected.

Despite my positive experiences using triangulation, there are critics of this process. Bryman (2001, p4) explains that one criticism “is that triangulation assumes that sets of data obtained using different research methods can be unambiguously compared and regarded as equivalent in terms of their capacity to address a research issue.” However Bryman is dismissive of this negative suggestion. He claims that:

such a view fails to take into account the different social circumstances associated with the administration of different research methods, especially those associated with a between-methods approach (described above). For example, the apparent failure of findings deriving from the administration of a structured interview to converge with focus group data may have more to do with the possibility that the former taps private views as opposed to the more general ones that might be voiced in the more public arena of the focus group.

This review of triangulation as a research approach in this study inevitably impinges on other research methodology themes including reliability and validity. However as Olsen (2004, p4) concludes in her appraisal of triangulation: “Triangulation.......is not aimed merely at validation but at deepening and widening one’s understanding.”
2.5.2 Reliability and Validity.

According to Seale (2004), the traditional criteria for research evaluation, reliability and validity, are borrowed from quantitative approaches. It is useful therefore in reviewing these processes within my thesis to consider the interpretations of Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe (1991) when they evaluate research outcomes from positivist and phenomenological viewpoints (Figure 13):

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Positivist viewpoint</th>
<th>Phenomenological viewpoint</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validity:</td>
<td>Does an instrument measure what it is supposed to measure?</td>
<td>Has the researcher gained full access to the knowledge and meanings of informants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability:</td>
<td>Will the measure yield the same results on different occasions (assuming no real change in what is to be measured)?</td>
<td>Will similar observations be made by different researchers on different occasions?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13: Research outcomes from positivist and phenomenological viewpoints.
Adapted from Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe (1991, p41)

My interpretation and application of reliability has been concerned with the consistency of the results obtained from the research tools used in the data collection processes. In this research project the issue of reliability was addressed by the use of a standardised approach for recording the data collection processes and preparing transcripts (Silverman, 1993). In conducting the individual interviews I used the same scripted open-ended questions, although the nature of a semi-structured interview allows respondents to add spontaneity to their answers. Additionally the reliability of the
research can be ascertained by testing whether the results consistently revealed the same findings within and between the research methods. I knew that my sampling sizes were sufficient when no new data or information were revealed by the different research processes employed. This is known as data saturation or as Kumar (2005, p165) explains the “saturation point”:

..........you go on interviewing or collecting information as long as you keep discovering new information. When you find that you are not obtaining any new data or the new information is negligible, you are assumed to have reached saturation point.

Interestingly Kumar (2005) also suggests that there are several factors that influence the reliability of a research instrument. He claims that in social science research it is impossible to produce a research tool that will achieve absolute accuracy. According to Kumar, not only does a 100% reliable research tool not exist, but it is also impossible to control the factors affecting reliability which include different physical settings, the respondent’s mood, and the nature of the interview interaction. Although I accept Kumar’s comments, I am confident that by using and combining both qualitative and quantitative methods I achieved a higher level of reliability than if I had used a single approach methodology.

Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000, p28) suggest that “in general terms, validity is whether a measuring instrument measures what it is supposed to measure”. However there are two distinguishing features to the process of validity which need to be considered against the research techniques employed in this study; “internal” and “external” validity.
Chapter Two. Research Approach

Long (2007, p221) suggests that internal validity is the "degree to which we are measuring what we say we are measuring". In this study I was concerned to measure and assess attitudes towards training. In terms of measurement procedures therefore:

"validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration." (Babbie, 1990, p133)

However as Kumar (2005, p153) questions:

- Who decides that an instrument is measuring what it is supposed to measure?
- How can it be established that an instrument is measuring what it is supposed to measure?

The answer to the first question is clearly the researcher, and subsequent experts who read and appraise the completed study. However the answer to the second question is more complex. Kumar (2005, p154) argues that establishing a link between questions (the instrument) and research objectives is easier when the questions relate to tangible issues ("age, income, height or weight"). However when the research tools are measuring intangible issues, such as attitudes in this study, it is more difficult. He suggests that in such instances it is necessary to ask a series of questions "in order to cover different aspects of the concept", possibly also using different research tools.

Based on this hypothesis I am confident that I have achieved internal validity in this study. By using a variety of primary data collection methods over a sustained period, which included both quantitative and qualitative approaches, I was able to effectively explore and analyse the attitudes that I set out to measure.
External validity is described by Long (2007, p221) as "the degree to which specific findings can be seen to be more generally applicable". This is also referred to as the "representativeness" of the research results. There are two factors linking external validity which I need to consider in relation to this study. Bracht & Glass (1968) discuss the concept of "population validity". This is concerned with whether the research can be generalised to other groups of people outside the sample researched. However they also refer to "ecological validity" in quantitative research which considers under what conditions (environments and other dependent variables) can the same results be expected.

Population validity certainly applies to my overall research findings. My intention in undertaking this study was to make a statement about attitudes to training presented by employers, educationalists and training providers that went beyond those who were involved directly in the primary data collection process. According to Finn, Elliott-White & Walton (2000, p28), the results of such research "can be generalised to the population from which the sample was drawn". Ecological validity is a less useful and applicable measure in this study. The generalisation of my research findings to other settings does not apply against the context of the study title.

Several processes were therefore used and applied in this study to achieve the necessary reliability and validity of the overall research findings. Specifically however I am confident that the trialling of the individual interviews and the e-questionnaire prior to going "live" not only helped to ensure reliability by testing the chosen measuring tool,
but also addressed validity issues by confirming that the research tools measured what they were designed to measure.

2.6 Chapter review.

This chapter has provided a discussion and analysis of the key research approaches used in this study. In considering the overall research approach, the theoretical approach and the practical approach, consideration has been given to the established and current discussions that surround these themes. I have reviewed the quantitative and qualitative research processes employed in this study, and the debates that surround the use of these contrasting methodologies. The thesis has adopted a process of triangulation using a multi-method research approach in order to achieve as accurate a picture as possible of attitudes towards training within the hospitality industry in Southeast Wales. The study now continues with a review of the appropriate literature, exploring the issues surrounding training approaches and the development and implementation of NVQs as training model for the hospitality industry.
Chapter 3.

Literature Review.
# Chapter 3.

## Literature Review.

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Chapter Three. Literature Review

Attitudes towards training within the hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

Chapter 3.

Literature Review.

Training: a theoretical perspective.

3.1 Introduction.

This chapter provides the theoretical framework of the study aiming to achieve enhanced understanding of the issues that impact on training within the hospitality industry. The chapter is divided into two sections; each section has a different focus on the training debate.

Section one represents phase 1 and phase 2 of the research process. These initial phases were concerned with assessing attitudes to training among local hospitality employers, identifying their training needs and developing a typology of vocational training models. This section will therefore focus on the discussions surrounding training from an academic perspective, including an appraisal as to how training is implemented in the hospitality industry.

Section two reflects phase 3 of the research which focuses on the use of NVQs as a suitable training model for the hospitality industry. It considers the development of NVQs as a competence-based approach to training and assessment, and the debates surrounding the NVQ process including implementation issues. This section will also review the suitability of competence-based training which has had a significant impact on UK attitudes and approaches to skills-based development.
3.2 Section 1. The training debate – a hospitality focus.

3.2.1 Definitions of training.

Training is the fundamental element in the formation of skills; a holistic concept that includes education, personal development, formal vocational training, and on-the-job training. According to the Collins English Dictionary (2004), training can be defined as:

The process of bringing a person to an agreed standard of proficiency by practice and instruction.

As such training is an essential component of any organisation that wishes to survive and grow by the effective use of competent staff in today’s competitive business environment. As McIlwee (1986, p112) suggests:

Training is the term which usually refers to the provision of specific skills, knowledge and attitudes which are related either to the current job of the person being trained or to the expected new job. It tends to be specific in its application.

Tyson & York (1996, p161) confirm that training is concerned with developing employees in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to perform their work roles, but they also stress that a key reason for training employees is the cost effective achievement of the organisation’s objectives:

Training in a work organisation is essentially a learning process.... The aim of this process is to develop in the organisation the employees’ knowledge, skills and attitudes that have been defined as necessary for the effective performance of their work; and hence for the achievement of the organisational aims and objectives by the most cost effective means available.

Graham & Bennett (1998, p283) further develop this idea of double benefits by stating that training is “an important dual function of utilisation and motivation”. They argue that providing a training environment within all industries will:

improve employees’ ability to perform the tasks required by the company.
Training allows better use to be made of human resources by giving
employees a feeling of mastery over their work and of recognition by management.

This notion of developing the employee is a common theme in most training definitions. Bramley (2003, p4) favours a definition of training and development as “a process which is planned to facilitate learning so that people can become more effective in carrying out aspects of their work”. However McIlwee (1986, p112) argues that development while linked to training is subtly different:

(Development) usually suggests a much broader view of knowledge, skills and attitude acquisition than training. It is less specifically job centred and more concerned with employee potential and career orientation. It thus develops employees for future roles.

McIlwee therefore suggests that development is a wider concept than training. It is concerned with encouraging the individual to progress to reach his/her potential within an employment context. The focus of development therefore is on the range of skills needed for potentially different job roles; whereas training is aimed at a specific skill for an identified job role.

However, for the purpose of this thesis, the definitions of training and development are consolidated and will be considered together as planned attempts to modify the behaviour of employees. The intent is to develop employees’ skills, knowledge and attitudes so that they can effectively perform work related tasks as they progress an organisation’s business objectives.
3.2.2 Benefits of training.

The UK tourism industry body, VisitBritain, estimated that in 2005 some 30 million visitors came to Britain from overseas, an increase of 8% on 2004 (Caterer and Hotelkeeper, 12th May 2006). Yet in the same article Jeremy Brinkman, General Manager (Quality) at VisitBritain, argues that skills shortages and the lack of trained staff are ongoing problems that needs to be tackled. However as East (1993, p14) argues:

*Training and education will help employers to retain valuable employees, attract more people to the industry, and encourage those who have left to return.*

The Hospitality Training Foundation, now re-branded as “People 1st”, published a Training and Development Review (2002). In this they suggested that training and developing staff can deliver the following benefits to a hospitality business:

- Greater profits,
- Improved quality of products and services,
- Lower staff turnover,
- Better calibre recruits, and
- A more motivated workforce.

Tracey & Tews (1995) suggest that training (if properly designed, executed and supported) is an invaluable investment and key benefit to any progressive organisation. Roberts (1995) concurs with this argument by agreeing that investment in training helps to develop and maintain an appropriately skilled, qualified and experienced workforce, thus providing an organisation with a competitive advantage. This notion of training being used by businesses in order to be more competitive is further emphasised by Alan

*We need a highly skilled and flexible workforce if the UK is to meet the challenge of an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing world economy.*

3.2.2.1 Operational benefits

It can be argued that the operational benefits of effective training are to ensure an adequate supply of staff who are both technically and socially competent, and also capable of career progression. As Mullins (1997) argues, it is widely accepted that training can lead to many potential benefits for both individuals and their host organisation. He suggests that training is a key element in the morale, job satisfaction and commitment of staff, which if implemented successfully results in improved delivery of service and customer relationships.

Foot & Hook (2002) suggest that another operational benefit of effective training is to strengthen an organisation’s culture, thus enabling employees to develop a better understanding of the parameters and boundaries of what are acceptable/unacceptable behaviours and working practices within that organisation. The trained employee will also identify more readily with the aims and objectives of the organisation, with (hopefully) a clearer commitment towards the achievements of its goals.

Boella & Goss-Turner (2005) agree with this argument. They suggest that training is not an optional extra, and that the industry needs a constant supply of skilled, motivated performers who can deliver a consistent quality of service and products. They argue that turnover rates of staff and the numbers leaving the industry are as much a threat to the
hospitality industry as the skills shortage itself. Attracting people into the industry is not enough. They conclude that if the industry is not committed to training and developing their skills then staff will not stay, and such negative actions will clearly impact on operational achievement, including profitability.

Nobles (1999, p1) provides a useful summary on the operational benefits of training by stating that:

> Effective training not only makes employees more productive and better able to serve guests; it can also raise self-esteem, increase confidence, and strengthen commitment to the employer. Higher self-esteem and increased confidence makes employees more self-assured, more productive, and less likely to look for another job. Often a small investment in training can return big dividends by improving job performance and reducing turnover.

### 3.2.2.2 Human resource management benefits

The perceived benefits of training from a human resource management perspective are very evident in the literature. Armstrong (1996, p530) claims that effective training can:

> Attract high-quality employees by offering them learning and development opportunities, increasing their levels of competence and enhancing their skills, thus enabling them to obtain more job satisfaction, to gain higher rewards, and to progress within the organisation

and

> Increase the commitment of employees by encouraging them to identify with the mission and objectives of the organisation.

Gustafon (2002, p107) adds a further dimension to these statements by claiming that “all things being equal, managers who train their staff enjoy lower turnover”. Stout (1993, p94) agrees with this suggestion:
Staff who are motivated and happy are likely to stay longer with the company, so (staff) turnover is reduced. Competent and well-trained staff perform better, work more efficiently, and are therefore more likely to achieve organisational goals and increase company profits.

Significantly Stout (1993, p94) develops this HR management benefit by arguing that training is always an investment rather than a cost:

All organisations would like to see a return on their investment in training. Training is an investment in your personnel, and an investment in your staff is an investment in your organisation.

Foot and Hook (2002, p215) further develop this theme by suggesting that in order to achieve these human resource benefits the process of training should start with an effective and well-planned induction programme for all new staff. They argue that such induction training:

(helps) new member of staff settle into their new job as quickly as possible. Induction also helps to create a favourable image of the organisation in the mind of the new employee, and is therefore a valuable public relations exercise.

Graham & Bennett (1998) also recognise many of the benefits of training previously identified. They identify that training allows better use to be made of human resources, encouraging employees to be more productive and quality focused. As a result they further suggest that effective training results in less spoiled or scrap work, and trained employees require less supervision.

Interestingly Putra (1999, p2) argues that it is not how much is spent on training that is the measure of success, but how effective that training is in developing the "human resource"
Although it may be useful to know whether perceptions about training are in line with companies' financial commitments to this activity, it seems that the question has gone to the wrong address. The issue is not 'how much', or 'what employees' think', or 'what methods', but the issue is of what makes training effective.

The overwhelming evidence therefore indicates that training is now a common and key requirement within modern-day employment. As Boella (2000, p114) concludes:

*The need to train, to acquire new knowledge, new skills, and new attitudes has become an everyday aspect of each individuals working life.*

### 3.2.3 Training Strategies – an integrated approach?

Many hospitality organisations that claim to be serious about their training intent use training strategies to focus on their training objectives. In order to appreciate what a training strategy is intended to achieve, it is useful to reflect back on the definitions of both “training” and “strategy”. In addition to the definitions of training already discussed in 3.2, Cole (2002, p330) suggests that training is:

*understood as any learning activity which is directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purposes of an occupation or task. The focus of training is the job or task.*

The word “strategy” is derived from its original military basis: “*the art or science of the planning and conduct of a war; generalship*”, Collins English Dictionary (2003). As such Foot and Hook (2002, p31) argue that when linked to training and development an innovation strategy implies a pro-active process of “*change which will have to be managed*”.

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Page 3.8
Armstrong (1999) develops and consolidates this thinking by suggesting that training strategies are necessary to progress training plans within organisations. He argues that for a training strategy to be successful and implemented effectively, an organisation must take:

\[
\text{a long-term view of what skills, knowledge and levels of competence employees of the company need. Training philosophy emphasises that training and development should be an integral part of the management process.}
\]

(Armstrong 1999, p531)

My experience working with hospitality organisations, especially SMEs, indicates that they are very fickle in their strategic thinking and are often side-tracked by operational day-to-day issues. It is therefore important for any hospitality organisation that is serious about its training intent to consider the above points in relation to the organisational aims and development plans. Making time available for training is clearly a key factor in developing a pro-active training culture.

Cole (2002, p339) argues that an integrated strategic approach to training entails “looking at training needs from a number of different perspectives.” He suggests that these perspectives include:

1. the organisation, ie. corporate requirements,
2. the department, or function,
3. the job, or occupational group, and
4. the individual employee.

This suggestion is significant to this thesis as it supports the view that an integrated strategic approach to training benefits both the individual and the organisation. However, my research suggests that some regard this as an idealistic approach, far
removed from the realities of modern day, competition intense, time-pressured, and profit-focussed hospitality management.

Interestingly, Porter’s five forces framework of strategic competitiveness, discussed by Johnson, Scholes & Whittington (2005) makes no mention of training and development as a means of gaining competitive advantage over business rivals. This suggests that there may be a gap in the design stage of many organisations training plans, and may be the reason why many hospitality organisations’ strategies fail, - because they fail to take into account the training needs of the staff who can help them achieve their strategic aims.

3.2.4 Training approaches used in the hospitality industry.

As a result of the above it can therefore be argued that two very different approaches to training are used by the hospitality industry:

1. Non-systematic approaches,
2. Systematic approaches.

Systematic approaches are evident in hospitality organisations that use strategy as a key component of development; whereas non-systematic approaches are applied where there is no real focus or use of formal strategy in the planning processes of organisations.

Sometimes however it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between non-systematic and systematic approaches in terms of implementation. Certainly in many of the hospitality units that I visited when conducting primary research for this study, elements of both systematic and non-systematic approaches were evident. Only in small
hospitality businesses were wholly non-systematic approaches used. Most units however presented evidence of systematic approaches, but when customer pressure and trading are intense non-systematic approaches are applied. The literature relating to these two approaches is interesting due to the variety of discussions relating to the different models which I will now review.

3.2.4.1 Non-systematic training.

Probably the most common, non-structured, “fire-fighting” approach to training used in the hospitality industry is ‘sitting-by-Nellie’. Cole (2002, p355) explains this process as “shadowing an existing member of staff”. Taking this training model as a positive approach it can be assumed that Nellie is a trained employee who has the necessary skills to train others. However, this is often not the case. In many hospitality outlets Nellie is an established employee who has acquired many bad habits and will then pass these over to the new employee. It has been suggested by Blanchard et al (1999) cited in Busser et al (2003), that in the most extreme cases the new employee is left to learn by their own mistakes. Staff who are trained in this informal manner often learn through making many mistakes. This is damaging for both the image of the business and the new employee. Wright & Geroy (2001) argue that such employees quickly become demotivated and discouraged through their bad experiences, and they take far longer to reach their optimum work rate.

Unfortunately this type of ad hoc approach to training is evident across the UK hospitality industry. In many of the hospitality outlets that I visited the use of “sitting-by-Nellie” was regarded as an appropriate “fire-fighting” approach to training, a “quick-
fix” solution to a staffing skills shortage. As such these attitudes identify the need for more structured, well-planned, formal training approaches which more clearly focus on strategic intent rather than immediate operational issues. Wright & Geroy (2001) support this view by recognising that the hospitality industry needs more structured training programmes that will improve service and profitability. It is therefore necessary to review some of these systematic training approaches.

3.2.4.2 Systematic training models.

According to Stout (1993, p19) “success in training depends on a systematic approach”. Gibbs (2002, p9) agrees and expresses the need for any progressive organisation to adopt a structured, systematic training process that progresses through several stages:

*the learning and development process is defined as involving a set of observational, planning, action and review activities undertaken in a sequence. It involves observation through assessing learning and development needs at work at various levels and in various ways.*

There are several alternative systematic training models which follow similar processes, but with different emphases at different points within the models. However the starting point for any training model must be the identification of training needs and an assessment as to how that model will meet those needs. Harrison (1999, p48) describes this starting point by stating:

*that in order to determine as precisely as possible what are the minimum resources the organisation should invest for the development of its workforce, an accurate assessment should be made known ...of training needs at all levels*
Having identified its training needs an organisation can then progress the implementation of the training model chosen, allocating appropriate resources to support that model.

3.2.4.2.1 Thomason’s “closed loop” model.

Thomason’s (1988) systematic approach links all training decisions and actions using a feedback control loop. He states that the “closed loop” model:

*hIGHLIGHTS THE NEED TO ANALYSE THE SITUATION AND THE PROBLEM BEFORE EMBARKING ON TRAINING.*

(Thomason 1988, p310)

His model indicates that modifications can be made at key stages of the training process, and that feedback informs the modification process by serving “to direct attention to the kinds of action required to mount a training initiative” (Thomason 1998, p308). This reflects most systematic training approaches where feedback from the trainees is actively encouraged to improve and refine the training process. Such a model is used in most sectors of the hospitality industry where a formal approach to training is employed. A discussion of the different types of training evidenced in the different sectors during phase 2 of the primary research is provided in Chapter 4.
Figure 14: Thomason's “closed loop” model.
Source: Thomason (1988, p308)

3.2.4.2.2 Beardwell & Holden’s training cycle model.

It is important to identify that a systematic approach to training must link with and reflect an organisation’s human resource development strategy. Beardwell & Holden (2001, p327) try to explain this necessary connecting interface by explaining that:

This (training cycle model) has strong elements of the systems approach to training (SAT), but the mechanistic overtones of SAT should be moderated by recognising the human needs of employees and the changes (sometimes rapid) that can affect organisations. Therefore a more flexible or “organic” approach is recommended.

Beardwell & Holden’s model is therefore based on the human resource development plan which links with the organisational strategy. A key feature of this model is that the monitoring and evaluation processes are used to link back and continually inform the key stages of the training cycle. Although similar in implementation to Thomason’s
model, the links between organisational strategy and HR development are explicit. The two functions inform each other, and from this process the organisation’s training and development strategy emerges. My research indicates that this is the model used in the contract catering sector where the development of staff is closely aligned to the company’s overall strategy.

![Diagram: Beardwell & Holden's training cycle model](image)

**Figure 15:** Beardwell & Holden’s training cycle model
Source: Beardwell & Holden (2001, p328)

3.2.4.2.3 Stout’s training function model

Stout (1993, p19) argues that there are four definite stages in the process of training, what he calls the “training function”, that need to be addressed:
This is a basic approach to training, but by using a cyclical model Stout illustrates that training is an on-going function within the organisation that never reaches an end point. Each stage informs the next stage, and so the training process is refined and amended on an on-going basis. Stout recommends that when applying this model an organisation should undertake a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. He argues that such an analysis will assist an organisation to more clearly focus-on and achieve their strategic intent. This model probably best represents the type of training undertaken in the large hotel sector where the high turnover of staff means that training is very much an on-going process which is refined as it is implemented.

3.2.4.2.4 Cole’s systematic training cycle model.

Cole (2002) reveals an alternative systematic approach to training. In this model there is a rolling programme of activities, with each activity reliant on completion of the
preceding activity. As with Stout’s model it is cyclical (rolling) rather than linear, implying that training is an on-going function.

![Cole’s systematic training cycle model](image)

**Figure 17:** Cole’s systematic training cycle model  
Source: Cole (2002, p331)

Cole’s approach ensures that training in any organisation follows a logical sequence of activities commencing with defining the training policy and ensuring that there are sufficient resources to sustain it. This is followed by an assessment of the training needs for which appropriate training is then provided. The process concludes with some form of evaluation and feedback. The model indicates that training within an organisation is not a single staged activity; instead it is on-going function which is refined and improved by the evaluation and feedback processes.
3.2.4.2.5 Bramley’s model of training based upon improving effectiveness.

Bramley (2003, p5&6) developed a more detailed training model in which he argues that “what we actually need is a model based upon changing effectiveness”. He suggests that it is necessary initially to decide “what aspects of organisational effectiveness or performance are to be changed” in order to achieve organisational objectives. It is then necessary to decide what behaviours are needed by employees in order to achieve these objectives, “and then analyse what knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) would be required to underpin these behaviours.”

1. What aspects of organisational effectiveness or performance are to be changed?
2. How are the levels of effectiveness or performance to be measured?
3. What behaviours are necessary to achieve these levels?
4a. What KSAs are needed to support these behaviours?
4b. What aspects of supervision, job design or structure need to be changed?
5. Is there a need for learning?
6. Training/learning activities

**Figure 18:** Bramley’s model of training based upon improving effectiveness

Source: Bramley (2003, p6)

This is a very prescriptive model and probably most accurately reflects the types of programmed systematic training used by McDonalds and other fast-food operators where standardised procedures and appropriate employee “behaviours” are the ethos of
the organisation. Despite its very prescriptive nature Bramley (2003, p5) argues that this training model is:

*much more appropriate for the times in which we live. Most organisations now treat training not as an opportunity for people to learn something, but as an investment that produces returns that can be related to the business plans of the organisation.*

3.2.4.3 “Right attitude” approach

It is interesting that in some hospitality outlets the issue of non-systematic or systematic approaches to training is not a concern. Indeed a proportion of hospitality managers probably regard any model-based approach to training with disdain. In an article written by Lashley et al (2002) on the employment practices and skills shortages in Greater Manchester, some important attitudes are revealed relating to how employers regard the importance of training and staff retention.

The key problems identified in the survey were lack of skills and lack of experience. Significantly, in 2002, the level of pay was not seen to be a reason for recruitment and retention difficulties. However the key factor concerning training in this report was revealed by employers who said that they had deliberately undertaken a de-skilling process. In the report it was evident that many managers now look to de-skill, thus reducing their labour expenditure. Lashey et al (2002, p10) revealed that many employers have:

*low skills expectations; they merely sought to recruit basic social skills that were employable.*
This statement indicates that instead of looking towards recruiting staff that can be
developed by suitable training, some employers now seek to recruit people with basic
social skills who are employable. This explains in part the massive employment of
Polish migrants at operative level in the UK hospitality industry in recent years. Lashley
concludes that the overall effect of this de-skilling process provides short-term financial
benefits for employers and helps to explain why some hospitality operators are now
placing less of an emphasis on training. Interestingly in later research published by
Lashley (2005, p187), he suggests that this quick-fix, de-skill solution to recruitment
actually creates other problems for hospitality employers in the longer term:

Recruitment difficulties were in part a consequence of de-skilling, which had
the effect of lowering barriers to entry for new recruits and thereby reducing
potential pay rates, but which meant that employees could find work in
competitor firms or sectors where pay is marginally better.

3.2.5 The training process

Despite the “right attitudes not skills” findings from Lashley’s research, many
hospitality organisations do choose to engage with a formal training process; albeit not
what they perceive to be a model based approach. As previously identified most of the
systematic training models reviewed start with the formal identification of training
needs and how these will be addressed.

Earlier in this chapter training was described as an attempt to modify behaviour by
concentrating on knowledge, skills and attitudes. When I produced a training needs
analysis for the participants in the NEAT project (discussed in Chapter 4) it was
important to ascertain the appropriate requirements of each participant’s job in terms the
above factors. This identification of training needs is therefore the first key step in setting-up a training programme. This statement is supported by Weightman (1990, p114) who argues that a training needs analysis process “ensures training and development are given because they are needed”. She argues that a training needs analysis provides an organisation with “an evaluation of what the present and future work involves and what the present and future staff can do”. Indeed, according to Cole (2000, p350), as I will now consider, training needs identification must satisfy both “the needs of the organisation......and of the employee.”

3.2.5.1 Organisational training needs

It is argued that training is only beneficial to an organisation if several criteria are met. Wood (1989) describes these criteria as:

- the organisation must have a strategic business plan,
- managers must be ready, willing and able to meet training needs as they appear,
- as far as practicable learning and work must be integrated,
- the impetus for training must come from the Chief Executive and other members of the senior management team, and
- investment in training must be regarded by the senior management team as important as investment in research, new product development, or capital equipment.

This identification of these factors and how they influence organisational training policy can clearly be applied to any hospitality organisation. The crucial factor emphasised by Wood is the involvement and commitment of senior managers to the training process.
While this is certainly a key factor, the reality of the hospitality industry is that organisational training needs are often neglected, or given a lower priority, at a local level by unit management where operational and immediate profit-focussed issues take a priority.

3.2.5.2 Individual training needs

Individual training needs are those skills identified as being necessary, but not yet held, by an employee to undertake successfully a specific job. These are often identified by applying several processes. Weightman (1993, p115) suggests that:

*Individual training needs often come from formal reports on performance such as performance appraisal, assessment centres or staff reports."

However often in the hospitality industry, and particularly in SMEs, managers identify their staff training needs more informally through the observation of “on-the-job” work performance. In larger hospitality organisations, or in SMEs where the training function is more formalised, the use of a performance appraisal system as identified above is a useful tool for identifying individual training needs. Weightman argues that where an effective performance appraisal system operates, this can also help to improve working relationships between managers and operative staff.

3.2.5.3 Conducting training needs identification.

Stout (1993) emphasises that training is not a one-off experience, undertaken and then forgotten. He is also concerned that training should not be regarded as an exclusive and elitist function. Instead he argues that all employees have different evolving training
needs throughout their careers. Stout (1993, p13) therefore suggests that organisations should regularly undertake training needs identification to include:

- *Company and product induction for new recruits*,
- *Acquisition of basic job skills*,
- *Development of new knowledge, skills and attitudes*.

By completing this training needs identification, Stout suggests that organisations will be able to recognise that a skills gap exists between the current (actual) job performance and the desired job performance. This is the process that I used during the NEAT project to identify the current skills available within an SME compared against the required skills that the organisation wished to attain.

![Figure 19: Stout's training gap model.](image)

Source: Stout (1993, p172)
By identifying the "training gap", Stout's model enables organisations to develop suitable training strategies. This process also causes an organisation to focus initially on its most important training needs using a structured approach over a period of time to close the gap. This was certainly the situation with several of the SMEs involved in the NEAT project where the training needs analysis process identified a wide range of, sometimes conflicting, organisational and individual training needs. As a result each outlet in the NEAT project had to focus initially on the most urgent skills deficiencies, using appropriate training mechanisms to close the skills gap.

3.2.5.4 Agreeing the training objectives

Having identified the organisation's training needs, the next stage in the training process is to discuss and agree the training aims and objectives. In order to reach this consensus the organisation needs to review what skills it wants its employees to be able to perform by the end of the training programme that they could not perform before, thus filling the "training gap".

According to Thorne & Mackey (2001) these training objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and relevant, and Time bound). Using SMART training objectives the selection, design and delivery of the programme can be undertaken. This SMART approach to training design was a key feature of the training undertaken with the SMEs involved in the NEAT project. We were concerned that all the businesses in the project had realistic training targets which were achievable and measurable over the period of the project's life. We did not want a business to fail
because the training targets were unrealistic or because we were unable to measure the achievements.

3.2.5.5 Methods of training delivery.

In order to focus on the different methods of training delivery, it is necessary firstly to consider how people learn. Hackett (1997, p6) illustrates learning as a cyclical process which focuses on “doing” and “reflecting”:

![Hackett's learning cycle](image)

**Figure 20:** Hackett's learning cycle.
Source: Hackett (1997, p6)

Hackett (1997, p5) argues that “different people learn in different ways”. She suggests that people enter and leave the learning cycle at different points, but that the key criterion for successful learning is that they must complete the cycle.

*Unless they work around the cycle to combine deed and thought (action and reflection), abstract and concrete (theory and test) their learning will not be complete.*

The message in Hackett’s argument when applied to training delivery is clear:
If training is to be of any use it has to be about helping people to learn rather than trying to teach. Not all organisations recognise this as clearly as they might, but for anyone aspiring to work in the training function it must be rule number one.

Another key argument applied to training delivery is that the learner/trainee must be actively involved in the learning process. Cushway (1999, p123) suggests that the most effective active-learning/on-the-job training techniques are “demonstration, coaching, do-it-yourself training, job rotation and planned experience, and technology based training (TBT)”. He is convinced that the “hands-on” active approaches to learning are more effective than more passive styles. This is the basis on which the NVQ approach to skills development has been progressed in the UK. I will consider the NVQ system, described as a competence-based approach to learning, later in this chapter. Busser et al (2003) support this “hands-on” style of learning, arguing that the most effective methods of training are those which encourage active participation by the trainee.

Training can therefore take place either on-the-job or off-the-job. On-the-job training is “given in the normal work situation using the actual tools, equipment, documents and materials that he or she will use when fully trained”. Off-the-job “takes place away from the normal work situation, usually employing specially simplified tools and equipment”

(Graham & Bennett, 1998, p286)

There are benefits and drawbacks for using each method; therefore it is essential that an organisation adopts the method that is most appropriate to their training needs. On-the-job training is regarded by Boella (2000, p118) as the best way to conduct induction
training “so that experience with customers can be obtained”. It can therefore be argued that on-the-job training is essential within the hospitality industry where employees need to be able to interact with customers from the day they start employment. As such learning how to perform a specific task whilst working on-the-job gives first hand experience, rather than learning the theory of how to perform the task but not putting it into practice.

Boella states that on-the-job training in the hospitality industry is seen as “very effective for the teaching of manual and social skills” (2000, p118). This training method involves another member of staff, generally at supervisory level, where the trainee works with the supervisor to gain “hand-on” experience about the job.

Off-the-job training is usually undertaken away from the workplace. According to Cole (2002, p354) this type of training is concerned with “developing an understanding of general principles, (and) providing background knowledge” which is not necessarily related to a specific work role. Armstrong (1999, p542) argues that;

*The main disadvantage (with off-the-job training) arises when trainees are transferred from the training course to a job to apply their knowledge and skills in practice. On a full-time manual skills course in a training centre, they will have been sheltered from the realities of the rough and tumble in most workshops.*

Clearly this statement easily applies to the hospitality industry where a frequent criticism of college-based learning is that it shelters and protects the learner from the realities of the hospitality industry. This criticism of off-the-job training was meant to be addressed by the introduction of competence-based NVQs delivered in the
workplace. This is an issue that I will return to when reviewing employers’ attitudes to the NVQ system later in the thesis.

3.2.5.6 Evaluation of the training process.

Obviously in a cost-conscious and profit-focused industry, as evidenced in many hospitality outlets, there has to be an immediate and obvious benefit from training investment. Bramley (1999, p4) suggests that evaluation is a process that establishes “the worth of something”. He develops this argument by stating that there are three purposes to evaluation in a training context:

Feedback on the effectiveness of the training activities, control over the provision of training, and intervention into the organisational training processes that affect training.

(Bramley, 1999, p5)

He suggests that if training has been performed effectively an overall improvement will be demonstrated by the employee. This change will be identified in the employee’s development in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude. The process of evaluation therefore links back to the benefits of training described by Boella (2000) and discussed earlier in this chapter.

In order to measure the level of knowledge development several methods can be used including observation, written questions, oral questions and simulations. Knowledge testing can also be used as a performance analysis method during appraisals. Testing an employee’s skills is obviously performed on a practical basis. Skills testing can be seen in the use of NVQs as a method of evidence collection to prove ability. This
competence approach to skills development is a key focus of my study and will be fully discussed and analysed later.

Finally as evidenced in the literature, training is one of the most effective tools in changing people’s attitudes. Anderson (1993, p13) argues that “a Maslow type of self-actualisation.....self-fulfilment and personal growth through work, could come from training.” As motivational theorists confirm self-actualisation, at the highest level of Maslow’s hierarchy, is the most difficult to achieve. This is because pre-requisite needs have to be satisfied first. Young (1995, p22) writing about his attempts to improve training levels in the Scottish hospitality industry writes:

\[In \text{identifying standards of performance within each operating department and developing staff skills to meet these standards, we have promoted a spirit of self-motivation throughout our organisation}\]

The issue of attitudes and motivation is a complex study and lies beyond the scope of this thesis. However Rainscourt writing in the Caterer and Hotelkeeper (5th October, 2000) explains how training has improved her attitude and motivational intent in her current job role. She explains that she has benefited from a structured training scheme, a career development programme, and that the hospitality organisation that she works for recognises people as “the most valuable resource, and (that) investment in them is a fundamental part of the company ethos”. This article therefore confirms how a structured training programme can motivate staff by promoting positive attitudes that benefit both the employee and the employer.
3.2.6 Review of Section 1.

In this section I have reviewed the literature relating to training theory. This review has included the benefits of training, the training approaches used in the hospitality industry, the training models employed, and consideration of the stages within the training processes to ensure that effective training is achieved within an organisation.

This first section relates to phase 1 and phase 2 of the study. Chapter 3 now continues by focussing on the NVQ approach to training which emerged as a major issue and a key concern of employers during the primary research processes. The second section in this chapter informs phase 3 of the study.
3.3 Section 2. NVQs – applications and discussions in the hospitality industry.

3.3.1 A competence-based approach.

According to Torkildsen (2005, p533) National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and the equivalent Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are:

occupationally specific qualifications, based on competencies, which are assessed in the workplace. The qualifications are determined from national standards developed by employer-led bodies approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). NVQs and SVQs are awarded at five levels.

Boyatzis (1982, p1) developed the idea of competence-based skills acquisition by focussing on the qualities needed by managers in progressive organisations:

Organisations need managers to be able to reach their objectives. They need competent managers to be able to reach these objectives both efficiently and effectively.

He argued that a competent manager needs a range of skills which he describes as a “model of management”. Boyatzis concluded that there was no single factor, but rather a range of factors that differentiated successful from less successful managers. This range of factors included personal qualities, motives, experience, and behavioural characteristics under various headings. He therefore defined competencies as:

characteristics that are casually related to effective and/or superior performance in a job. This means that there is evidence that indicates that possession of the characteristic precedes and leads to effective and/or superior performance in that job.

Boyatzis (1982, p23)

Other theorists have developed this thinking by offering their own definitions of competence. Bartram (1990, p55-56) suggests that competence:

can be defined in terms of four interrelated components: the ability to perform a set of specific tasks – the ability to use task skills in an appropriate way to achieve the overall job function – the ability to respond to breakdowns in
routine, emergencies, etc. – the ability to adapt one's work performance to natural constraints imposed by particular working environments.

Fletcher (1991, p32) argues that competence “entails the ability to perform activities within an occupation”. Furnham (1990) believes that competencies are the fundamental abilities and capabilities needed to do the job well, and Roberts (1997) concludes that competencies are all the work related personal attributes, knowledge, skills and values that a person draws upon to do their work well.

It is appropriate in reviewing these definitions of competence to introduce to the discussion the role of knowledge in a competence-based approach. Hackett (1997, p54) defines competence as:

the ability to do something, or the possession of the knowledge and skills needed to perform a particular task to the required standard.

However Fletcher (1991) argues that it is the application of knowledge and not knowledge itself that is important to competent performance. Torrington & Hall (1997, p415) simply view competence as the ability “to do something useful”. There is therefore clearly disagreement among the theorists as to the role and application of knowledge in competence-based approaches. This remains a fundamental and contentious issue in the NVQ debate; a concern which I will discuss further later in this section.

The concept of a competence-based approach was conceived in the UK as a fundamental part of the process of developing standards for National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQs/SVQs). These specify minimum national standards
for the achievement of set tasks and activities, expressed in ways that can be observed and assessed with a view to certification. An element of competence in NVQ language is a description of something that people in given work areas should be able to do. They are assessed on being “competent” or “not yet competent”. No attempt is made to assess the degree of competence, and the emphasis is more on what people (known in NVQ jargon as “candidates”) should be capable of doing rather than how they should behave in doing it. There are therefore immediately some interesting messages for an industry which is people and customer focused such as hospitality.

3.3.2 Background to the NVQ system.

Before discussing the implementation issues that surround NVQ delivery in the UK, it is necessary to consider the background to the introduction of this qualification. Initially, it is worth observing that concerns about the standards, relevance and effectiveness of vocational qualifications made a major contribution to the impetus for reform which brought about important changes in the 1980s. Harrison (1999) explains that during the 1970s and early 1980s there was no evidence of any meaningful vision guiding national training policy. As well as identifying this lack of vision the Thatcher Conservative government, according to Edwards et al (1995, p95), became aware in the early 1980s that an “improvement in skills is a vital prerequisite for economic success”. It was from this recognition that the Thatcher government embarked on a policy intended to maximise skills within the UK workforce.
The De Ville Report (1986), “Review of Vocational Qualifications in England and Wales”, undertook a review of vocational qualifications and identified several issues that needed addressing including:

- no clear readily understandable pattern of provision as well as considerable overlap, duplication and gaps in that provision,
- many barriers to accessing vocational qualifications and inadequate arrangements for progression and transfer of credit,
- assessment methods biased towards testing of knowledge rather than skill or competence,
- insufficient recognition of learning gained outside formal education and training, and
- limited take-up of vocational qualifications.

The report proposed a unified framework of vocational qualifications which, it was suggested, could “reduce the confusion which many find in the current diversity of provision.” De Ville (1986) argued that there was a need for a clear, coherent and comprehensive system of vocational qualifications which should be directly relevant to the needs of employment and the individual. These national vocational qualifications should be:

* a statement of competence clearly relevant to work and intended to facilitate entry into, or progression in, employment, further education and training..................incorporating the assessment of skills to specified standards, relevant knowledge and understanding, and the ability to use skills and to apply knowledge and understanding to relevant tasks.
The De Ville Report also suggested that a national body should be established to regulate vocational qualifications. As a result the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was established. The remit of NCVQ was to provide "a clearer, more coherent and comprehensive system of vocational qualifications of benefit to all."

In October 1997, NCVQ and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) were merged to form the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the organisation currently responsible for ensuring the quality of NVQ provision.

The Conservative government accepted the recommendations contained in the De Ville Report and subsequently published the 1986 White Paper, "Working Together - Education and Training". The key announcement in this White Paper was that NVQs were to be introduced in England and Wales. The government also recognised that similar actions had to be applied in Scotland as there was a "need to secure mutual recognition of equivalent vocational qualifications" throughout the UK. Scotland has its own different, but complimentary, education and training system. As a result SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications) were introduced north of the border. (As this study is based in Southeast Wales future references will only refer to NVQs, the qualification delivered in England and Wales. Although almost identical, the SVQ system falls outside the remit of this study and no primary research has been undertaken using Scottish respondents.)

As explained later in this study a common criticism from hospitality employers in the 1980’s was that vocational qualifications didn’t equip students with the necessary modern skills for a changing industry. The 1986 White Paper, "Working Together -
"Education and Training" also stated that one of the objectives of improving the quality of vocational education and training was to ensure "responsiveness to labour market needs and encouragement for the supply of appropriate skills". There was concern that traditional vocational courses had contained much content that was irrelevant or out-of-date with modern industry practices. As a result the White Paper focused thinking and curriculum innovation by identifying priorities in the reform of vocational qualifications. A key issue was that the new NVQ competencies had to reflect directly the skills required in the contemporary workplace, thus bridging the perceived academic-vocational divide.

As a result, according to Wolf (1995), educationalists were initially opposed to this competence-based approach to training. They viewed NVQs as the start of a government agenda which would have far reaching changes in education and training, making the system more inclusive and less elitist. As Wolf (1995, p13) reveals:

*Government ministers, in turn, were happy with a system which disdained the "educational establishment" and saw industry representatives as the source of all wisdom on vocational education and training.*

Such observations clearly indicate that the introduction of NVQs was controversial, resulting in confrontation between traditional educationalists and those who regarded educationalists as aloof and out-of-touch with the realities of modern industry. Interestingly those same conflicts and divides are still evident today.
3.3.3 The NVQ process

The launch of NVQs was announced in 1986 by the Conservative government. According to Foote (1999, p12), one of the intentions when introducing these competence-based vocational qualifications was to streamline and simplify the vocational qualifications pathways:

*they were designed to replace the plethora of traditional qualifications and to make progression and career pathways more easily understood.*

NVQs were designed by industry for delivery in industry. A key benefit of this design feature according to Torrington & Hall (1997, p415) is that “*the end result should be that the student is competent to do something useful.*” According to Torrington & Hall this means that NVQs are more relevant to the immediate needs of industry.

Crouch et al (1999, p130) identify the uniqueness and the key distinguishing features of the NVQ approach to training by stating that they:

*prescribe no amount or particular form of training, they rather focus solely on the demonstration of a capacity to perform closely specified tasks.*

Harrison (1999, p421) develops this discussion by explaining that NVQ were developed and written to:

*meet the needs of an occupational sector as a whole, not just those of an individual organisation.*

Furthermore Hoare & Jolly (1999, p19) argue that the NVQ process can help to improve business performance because the candidates (learners/students) are “*benchmarked against the best practices in the relevant sector.*”
This is significant because hospitality employers had complained for many years about the quality of the previous City & Guilds 706 and 707 series qualifications. Regularly in the trade press and at trade events (e.g. Hotelympia), they had argued that the City & Guilds craft qualifications were delivered in colleges by lecturers who taught out-of-date traditional skills which were no longer featured in modern hospitality outlets. However according to Foote (1999) hospitality based NVQs have been mainly delivered by colleges from the time when they were first launched, and this has remained the situation to date.

Within hospitality and catering, NVQs are offered over "five functional areas; reception, housekeeping, food and drink service, food and drink production, and multi-skilling" (Labour Market Review, 2000, p46/47). As Harrison (1999, p421) explains each NVQ qualification comprises of units which candidates can complete individually, or they can follow several units at the same time. Each unit represents a relatively discrete area of competence in an area of work or set of skills which are assessed and accredited to an individual:

> Every NVQ is made up of a number of units comprising groups of evidence which state precisely in outcome terms what people are expected to do, together with the performance criteria that define the key characteristics of competent performance for each element. Credits are then given for the acquisition of units.

The structure of an NVQ is presented in Figure 21.
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An NVQ consists of a number of units

A unit of competence breaks down into elements of competence

An element of competence is made up of a number of performance criteria and range statements

Figure 21: Structure of an NVQ

The quality assurance procedure that supports the NVQ assessment process is titled "verification". QCA argue that that verification should be regarded as a continual ongoing process that confirms all assessment decisions. As such QCA (2007) suggest on their website that:

verification is one aspect of quality assurance which relates to the day-to-day delivery of NVQs.

Verification is a two-pronged approach that requires candidates work to be checked initially by other independent assessors within the centre (i.e. within the college or industry based unit). This is known as “internal verification”. The Internal Verifier is responsible:
for establishing and maintaining the quality of assessment within the centre.
(QCA, 2007)

External Verifiers are then required to visit the centre to ensure that the assessed and internally verified work has been assessed in accordance to the national standards set by QCA.

The main purpose of the (external verifier) visit is to monitor the quality and consistency of the assessment centre.
(QCA, 2007)

However the rigour of these quality assurance processes is often questioned. Letters in the trade press regularly cite examples of internal verification being regarded as a paper exercise. Smithers (1999) cited in Wilkins (1999) argues that the internal verifier and external verifier processes are too bureaucratic to be of real benefit and that the NVQ quality assurance processes are not achieving the parity of national standards that was intended. Interestingly this issue was also identified as a cause for concern by the respondents to the e-questionnaire in phase 3 of this study which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

3.3.4 The learner's role

The main reason why the introduction of NVQs represented such a revolutionary development in training provision relates to the learner's role in the process and the assessment methods by which the qualifications are acquired. Some of these issues are introduced below and will be considered further in the next section.
Jessop (1991) claimed that the system prior to NVQs was provider-led, in which the learner was frequently neglected. As Deputy Director of the NCVQ he strongly supported the ethos and principles of a consumer-led training model:

*The measure of success for any education and training system should be what people actually learn from it, and how effectively. Just common sense you might think, yet this is a comparatively new idea.*

(Jessop, 1991, p3)

Competency-based assessment, in Jessop’s view, created a system in which the learner or candidate was central. With direct access to the “standards” of competence, people could see exactly what was required and put themselves forward for assessment without any barriers.

Jessop argued that traditional craft-based college based courses placed too much emphasis on attendance at taught sessions and the completion of assignments and examinations. NVQs however require candidates to present evidence that they can meet the “Occupational Standard” for a specific task. In order to prove their ability candidates need to present a portfolio of evidence, and they also need to be observed by assessors in a practical environment to confirm that they are competent. A key feature of the NVQ process is that candidate achievement is not graded (i.e. pass, merit, distinction criteria do not apply). As explained earlier the outcome of an NVQ assessment is that the candidate is deemed “competent” or “not yet competent”. Interestingly the word “fail” is not used in NVQ terminology.
In establishing this competence-based system Jessop therefore achieved his stated objective. He ensured that the emphasis in the NVQ process is on the learner, or to use the NVQ jargon, the system is entirely “candidate driven”.

3.3.5 Implementation issues

To appreciate further some of the arguments that surround NVQs it is necessary to consider some of the key implementation issues. Certainly working towards an NVQ provides the candidate with a degree of flexibility, without a time limit for completion imposed. Unlike traditional qualifications there are no deadlines to meet. The key principle behind the NVQ system is that the candidate acquires competence in completing a task at his/her own pace. Assessment is then provided “on-demand” when the candidate feels ready to complete the task. Therefore according to Cracknell et al (2000, p346), it is the pro-active attitude and commitment of the candidate that dictates how quickly the qualification is completed:

Under the NVQ system, students concentrate on a single operation or dish, getting to know all about it at their own speed by collecting data on it and completing a portfolio of work.

NVQs are therefore achieved through assessment and training. Assessment is normally through on-the-job observation and questioning. Candidates produce evidence to prove that they have the competence to meet NVQ standards. Assessors sign-off units when the candidates are ready, using questioning techniques to test the candidates’ knowledge and understanding, and observation or other appropriate evidence to confirm that the candidate can demonstrate competence in the workplace.
A significant feature of NVQ qualifications is the fact that candidates prove their ability, or competence, by practical assessments. There are no knowledge-based formal written examinations. In a hospitality context this arguably makes NVQ qualifications more relevant to the job that the member of staff is undertaking, and certainly the process is less daunting than sitting a final exam. As Hyde (1998, p16) argues:

*NVQs are flexible, there are no time limits or special entry conditions, no exams to sit or trick questions. They are based purely on your day-to-day work at your own speed.*

NVQs are also based on national standards, meaning that that the standards achieved by competent candidates should be the same across the UK. As explained earlier the process of assessment is supported by what the Awarding Bodies describe as a “rigorous quality assurance verification system”. This system includes assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers who together should ensure the consistency of standards and assessment decisions at all times. However, as Smithers (1993, p21) identifies:

*because there is no compulsory external testing, written or practical, all assessment is undertaken on a one-to-one basis by the candidate’s own trainers. Although there is an extensive system of verification this can only be done on a random check basis.*

Some observers therefore argue that one of the basic principles of the NVQ system (i.e. the assessment process) is flawed because of the subjective nature of the assessor/candidate relationship in the assessment decision-making process, and that this has contributed to the poor image of this qualification.

Another concern with the NVQ system is the process that candidates have to engage with in order to prove competence. Every assessment has to be recorded and filed by the
candidate in a portfolio. Often these portfolios become untidy and disorganised, especially when less able candidates are trying to file their assessment decisions. The process is regarded by many as a complex, bureaucratic, paper-chasing exercise with too little emphasis on developing key practical skills. As Foote (1999, p12-16) argues:

Ask yourself this; which would you deem more valid and reliable as an indicator of competence? The large portfolio, cross referenced, assessed and with all the many signatures or a keen experienced person, motivated by skills and hard working, one who has listened, done the business but not produced the portfolio ‘thesis’.

In recent research by Hunter-Powell & Watson (2006, p299), they identify how NVQ documentation including the processes for recording achievement discourages room attendants in hospitality outlets from undertaking NVQ programmes:

Only 10% of these room attendants held or were pursuing NVQs. Some interview responses connected this to the daunting and confusing NVQ documentation such as the Unit Record book.

Hyland (1994, p14), perhaps cynically suggests that NVQs are not primarily concerned with learning, but with the collection of evidence to satisfy competence criteria. He claims that:

It may be that some useful learning does take place during the gathering of evidence.....but this pales into insignificance beside the need to satisfy all the pre-specified units and elements of competence, performance and supplementary criteria required for certification.

Smithers (2000) argues that the way colleges are now funded is another factor that has undermined the quality of NVQs. He is concerned that colleges now have a financial pressure to “pass” students irrespective of the standards that they achieve. Although the “outcome-related funding” mechanism applies to most qualifications delivered within
further education colleges, Smithers (2000, p21) chose to use NVQs to support his argument:

*It means, for example, that if they (the colleges) do not pass a student on Youth Training as having achieved reached NVQ Level 2 in two years, they lose 25 per cent of that student's funding*.

To date this issue remains unresolved amongst the complex formulae which are used to calculate funding allocations for further education colleges. Clearly this situation identified by Smithers has done little to encourage public confidence in the quality of the qualifications awarded.

3.3.6 The role of knowledge

As discussed earlier, one of the issues that concerned those responsible for developing the NVQ system, which is founded on “competence-based standards”, was the role of knowledge and understanding within these standards. Concern was expressed as to how those who have been able to demonstrate effective performance “would be able to do but not understand what they do.” It was considered by Jessop (1991, p121) that:

*If a person performs competently we need not be concerned with what he or she knows.*

Indeed, according to Wolf (1995), competence strategies in their purest form are concerned only with measurement, assessment and accreditation, not with learning and education *per se*.

However Burke (1995, p26) uses the cartoon below to indicate that knowledge is not synonymous with understanding. He explains that:

*the trainee chef pursuing his/her NVQ knows that the application of heat may cause at least some apparently solid substances (such as butter) to melt, but*
clearly does not understand the essential principles underlying the boiling of an egg!!!

I've been boiling these eggs for half an hour but they are still hard!

**Figure 22: NVQs: The role of knowledge**
Burke (1995, p26)

Jessop's radical views were challenged when "range statements" within NVQ qualifications were revised to check and ensure the transferability of competence to different contexts, and the concept of "underpinning knowledge" was introduced.

Eventually the view emerged that "underpinning knowledge and understanding" could be inferred from performance. As Smithers (2000, p20) states;

*Because the theoretical knowledge required to carry out the tasks is said to be "embedded" in them, it is not independently tested. It is assumed if candidates can show themselves capable of performing a task, the relevant knowledge must have been acquired.*

This is clearly a controversial element of the NVQ system that has proved to be very contentious in the hospitality industry. David Nicholls, executive head chef at London's Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park hotel, described NVQs as "disastrously inadequate" due
to the lack of knowledge shown by NVQ qualified chefs working in his kitchen. In an article in the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* (October 27th, 2005), Nicholls stated that he always trialled young chefs in his kitchen before employing them because he couldn’t rely on accredited NVQs to provide the necessary skills and knowledge. His main criticism of NVQs was that they were not measured and tested properly with a final practical and theory exam, as had been the case with the previous City & Guilds craft-based qualifications. In the same article he claimed “the City and Guilds (706 series) wasn’t perfect – it was sick and needed medication, not euthanasia”. Interestingly many similar views agreeing with Nicholls were evident in the e-questionnaire responses from NVQ training providers discussed later in chapters 6 and 7.

### 3.3.7 Registrations and certification

Despite these continuing concerns regarding the suitability of NVQs as a method of training and skills acquisition, nevertheless they have proved to be very successful in terms of the Labour government’s agenda to create a better qualified workforce. Certainly the most recent figures available indicate that NVQs are proving to be very popular with evidence of continual growth for this qualification.

According to the QCA (Qualification and Curriculum Authority) website:

- The total number of NVQ certificates awarded to 31st March 2006 since their launch in 1992 was 5,520,138 (an increase of 11.5% on the total awarded to 31st March 2005).
• The number of NVQ certificates awarded in the twelve months to 31st March 2006 was 569,692 (an increase of 16% on the twelve months ended 31st March 2005).

• There were increases in the growth of all five NVQ levels in the twelve months to 31st March 2006 compared to the preceding twelve months ranging from 7.2% for level 1 to 19.9% for Level 4.

• There were also increases in growth for all the eleven “framework areas” ranging from 2.8% for framework area 6 (Transporting) to 37.3% for framework area 11 (Developing and extending knowledge and skill).

These figures therefore suggest that NVQs are a popular and growing qualification, and that hospitality and catering, which is placed in framework area 7 (Providing good and services), has also experienced a period of increased registrations and certifications during the 12-month period to 31st March 2006.

3.3.8 The role of the Sector Skills Council - and the future for NVQs

Interestingly, the growth in current NVQ registrations hides a significant development which may well impact on hospitality NVQ registrations in the future. In order to understand this development it is necessary to appreciate that a requirement of an NVQ award is that it should be made on the basis of national standards. Prior to the launch of NVQs in 1992, industry groups formed their own “lead bodies” to draw up acceptable standards for their respective industries. The “lead bodies” spent considerable time deciding on the outcomes that are important for employment-led standards. Assessment methods were determined jointly between employers and further and higher education
providers. Since NVQ assessment has to focus on competence, the methods selected had to be applied in the workplace as well as in education and training centres. These standard setting bodies were mostly employer-led, and were known by their correct title as National Training Organisations (NTOs).

There were considerable efforts made by the NTOs to rationalise the provision of NVQs particularly through the mechanism of mandatory and optional units in NVQ design. In the early days of NVQ development all qualifications had individually designed mandatory and optional units even when the skills required were the same as covered by other NVQ qualification titles. In September 1997 there were 976 titles which had reduced to 762 by March 2001. Unfortunately, despite the NTOs best efforts, the development of NVQs did not bring the envisaged coherence to the system of vocational qualifications that had been recommended by De Ville (1986), - rather it added a further framework of competence based qualifications.

In April 2002 the former 80-plus NTOs were abolished and replaced by approximately 20 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). The SSCs are independent UK-wide organisations developed by groups of employers. Controversially one of the casualties of this abolition was the hospitality industry’s own NTO – the Hospitality Training Foundation (HtF). The HtF had been a strong and loyal supporter of the NVQ system, but was replaced by People 1st who emerged as the hospitality industry’s new SSC. People 1st certainly represent a wider spectrum of the industry than the former HtF. In addition to hotels, pubs, restaurants, contract caterers and motorway service station operators, it also covers visitor attractions, sports clubs, casinos, bingo halls and nightclubs.
However since their launch People 1st have started to question the suitability of the NVQ system. John Brackenbury (2006), chairman of People 1st, states on their website:

As a SSC we will be able to respond to industry needs, helping to deliver what business wants and cracking some of the difficulties faced, whether addressing skills gaps and shortages, improving the suitability of vocational learning at all levels or ensuring that public funding for skills development in the industry is spent where the business needs it most. People 1st will be employer led,........employee-aware and customer-conscious.

In a section of their website headed “qualifications rationalisation” People 1st (2006) claim “There’s no doubt about it – the sector’s qualifications system is a mess”. They provide examples of how the NVQ system has impacted on chefs:

- Chef numbers are declining while demand is increasing,
- It’s cheaper to run a hairdressing course than a chef’s course. Result: there are now more hairdressers than chefs,
- It’s cheaper to run theory classes than practical cookery. So you can get a cookery qualification and not actually be able to cook,
- NVQs allow people to choose from a range of modules. So two people with the same qualifications on paper can have completely different skill sets.

(www.people1st.co.uk)

Many of these criticisms of the NVQ system were identified in my primary research. Indeed as is evident in Chapter 6, many respondents to my e-questionnaire made similar claims regarding the perceived failings of NVQs. People 1st have therefore been working with employers and colleges to develop a more practical chef-focussed qualification than the NVQ, one which can still be delivered in college and so, potentially, retain government funding. As reported in the Caterer and Hotelkeeper, “New college-based qualifications for chefs out soon” (4th July 2006), the resultant
vocationally-related qualification (VRQ) has been written in joint development with the Hospitality Awarding Body (HAB) and City & Guilds. This new VRQ was piloted in several catering colleges during 2006/07, and based on initial feedback has now moved into a second pilot year (2007/08). However the funding for this new qualification remains uncertain. As reported in the Caterer and Hotelkeeper (1st March, 2007, p7) the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) who fund FE colleges have not yet agreed the necessary funding to fully implement the VRQ:

John Dalton, senior policy manager at the LSC, said the agency needed more data from the trial before it could commit to further funding.

Without this funding colleges will be unable to offer the VRQ and the future of NVQs will be assured. I have made a review of the VRQ in chapter 7, including an appraisal of some of the initial feedback. The potential impact of this qualification (if it does receive funding) on the NVQ system is difficult to predict, but the literature certainly suggests that a change is required, - and will be welcomed by many.

3.4 Chapter review.

This chapter has explored the literature that supports the framework and the three phases of this study. The theory suggests that it is difficult to overestimate the importance of effective training. As Cushway (1999, p113) argues “training, like any of the organisation's other activities should be planned and should relate to the organisation's corporate strategy.” However as I have reviewed in this chapter there are different approaches and different attitudes evident towards training within the hospitality industry. Sometimes the benefits of training are compromised by the
operational pressures within this industry. As discussed, this is often a factor that affects SMEs particularly, who, as Torrington & Hall (1995) argue, do not consider training to be part of their competitive strategy formulation. Indeed only when all organisations accept that training does provide them with competitive advantage (Johnson et al., 2005), will training become embedded as a fundamental and necessary practice to ensure business sustainability and success.

The discussion of NVQs and their suitability within a hospitality context was reviewed in section 2 of this chapter. Since their introduction in 1986 they have remained a controversial training and assessment mechanism, loved or loathed by those involved in their implementation. Some authors even suggest that NVQs are not training programmes in the purest sense. As Fletcher (1994, p18) claims:

\[ \text{NVQs are not training programmes. A unit of competence is (instead) a unit of assessment.} \]

Whilst others regard this as a pedantic argument (Foot & Hook, 2002), it is certainly true that NVQs have had a substantial impact on attitudes to training and assessment in the UK. The learner’s role, or more accurately the candidate’s role, in the process is particularly contentious. Indeed the ethos of NVQs is that they are driven by the individual candidate rather than the tutor as is the case with more conventional training programmes. Other issues such as the role of knowledge in the NVQ process, the non-grading of NVQs, the recording documentation (portfolio) employed, and the rigour of the supporting quality procedures remain controversial and have been examined in this section. Clearly with a qualification that generates such extremes of opinion amongst
academic authors, it will be necessary to review the attitudes of the key stakeholders involved in NVQ delivery.

The following chapter progresses phase 1 and phase 2 of the research project, identifying and analysing the types of training undertaken by hospitality employers in Southeast Wales. In this chapter I will review the training models employed in the different sectors of the hospitality industry, and the chapter concludes with a pictogram which represents the key features influencing training within hospitality SMEs and larger companies.
Chapter 4.

The NEAT Project.

Phase 1 and Phase 2 Research.
## Chapter 4.

### The NEAT Project.

### Phase 1 and Phase 2 Research.

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<td>Restaurant sector</td>
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Attitudes towards training within the Hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

Development model for the study.

<table>
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<th>Target groups</th>
<th>Research methodology</th>
<th>Research methods</th>
<th>Objective(s)</th>
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<td>Case study 1.</td>
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<td>Case study 1.</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
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<td>Education and training providers</td>
<td>Case study 2.</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 (Part 2)</td>
<td>Education and training providers</td>
<td>Case study 2.</td>
<td>E-questionnaire</td>
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</table>
4.1 Introduction.

This chapter describes the first two phases of the primary research within this study which were undertaken to support an ESF (European Social Fund) project within the Welsh School of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Management at UWIC (University of Wales Institute, Cardiff). This project, entitled NEAT (Network of Excellence for Action in Tourism), was concerned with assisting hospitality and tourism employers in Wales to develop their business potential by meeting as 'cluster-groups'. These groups have been established in several areas throughout Southeast Wales and operate as a support network, meeting to share ideas and develop business practices. NEAT focuses on improving the quality management (operational, human resource development, environmental) of existing SMEs and on facilitating co-operation between micro and medium-sized SMEs.

The findings in this chapter contribute towards the achievement of the following research objectives in this study:

1. To develop a typology of vocational training models used in the hospitality industry, considering their effectiveness and acceptability to user groups,
3 To analyse the range of training paradigms employed, evaluating those internal and external factors which influence attitudes towards training in the hospitality industry.

4.2 Introduction to the primary research phases

4.2.1 Phase 1 research

One of the first and most successful cluster groups established by the NEAT project comprises employers in Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT), an area immediately north of Cardiff. These employers operate a range of hospitality outlets including hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions and public houses. Initial discussions of the RCT cluster included the types of training that participating organisations felt would be beneficial to their individual organisations. To discover the degree of overlap and/or individuality of the perceived training needs of the RCT cluster, a training needs analysis exercise was undertaken. An additional finding of this exercise was the supportive attitudes of employers towards training. This exercise was a catalyst for phase 2 of the research project.

4.2.2 Phase 2 research

To develop and progress the findings from phase 1, sixteen in-depth interviews were undertaken with hospitality employers across Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taff. The employers contacted represent a diverse cross-section of the hospitality industry operating within these areas including: hotels; restaurants; fast-food outlets; public houses; catering services and motorway service stations. The purpose of the interviews was to develop a typology of vocational training models used in the different sectors of
Chapter Four. The NEAT Project. Phase 1 & Phase 2 Research

the industry, and to identify how employer attitudes to training vary in these different sectors.

Specifically this phase of the research was concerned with:

1. Identifying the types of training models employed in different sectors of the industry across Southeast Wales,
2. Comprehensively exploring the factors that influence attitudes towards training,
3. Producing a pictogram which illustrates the impact of labour supply, training and labour turnover on hospitality businesses in Southeast Wales.

4.3 Elements of the phase 1 research process

4.3.1 Overview of the NEAT project.

The NEAT project emerged in 2000 from a successful funding bid for monies from the European Social Fund, specifically the European Union’s European Regional Development Fund (EUERDF), and is a joint initiative between UWIC and Education and Learning Wales (ELWa). ELWa was established by the National Assembly with a remit to build a new learning culture for Wales. The NEAT project aims to create a network of micro and medium sized hospitality, tourism and leisure businesses who share expertise in their quest to develop good practice and progressive business acumen.

Since its inception NEAT has proved to be a successful catalyst for change within SMEs in Southeast Wales. In 2001 Fagins Bars and Restaurants won the prestigious publican’s award for “Entrepreneurial Business of the Year”. Based in Rhondda Cynon Taff, Faggins are one of the SMEs that I worked with during both phase 1 and phase 2 of the
research process. At the time of the award, Mike Davies, managing director of Faggins Bars and Restaurants stated:

*The annual Publican Awards are considered to be the Oscars of the industry and being the only Welsh company to get to the finals in London was an achievement in itself, but to actually win the award was fantastic. We are grateful for the support provided by UWIC that assists us with our staff training and human resource development planning. As an indigenous Welsh company, to win an award like this demonstrates that Welsh businesses have entrepreneurial skills, expertise and vision to be able to compete with the best in the UK.*

In response, Sheridan Jeffrey, the UWIC project co-ordinator for NEAT, confirmed the positive effect that the NEAT project was having within Southeast Wales:

*I am delighted that Fagins Bars and Restaurants have achieved this accolade. They are very keen to develop their company and have made an immense contribution to the economy of the Southeast Wales valleys. They are active members of the Rhondda Cynon Taff NEAT cluster and are working hard to identify training needs and develop their growing workforce, with the assistance of the Welsh School of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Management at UWIC.*

It is appropriate therefore the track the development of the NEAT project and how it informed the research process for this study.

**4.3.2. The NEAT project Training Needs Analysis exercise.**

A statement in the minutes at the launch meeting of the Rhondda Cynon Taff cluster-group of SME participants declares:

*various techniques are used by the different participating organisations to get the business in, - the main objective of the NEAT project is to assist these organisations to keep the business in.*

*(NEAT Project Meeting, Heritage Park Hotel, 8th May 2000).*

This statement embodies the purpose of the NEAT project, - sharing expertise to develop attractive products and services, and so achieve commercial success.
At the initial meetings there was much discussion about the role of training in the business development process. The immediate picture was varied; some of the SMEs undertook extensive, on-going and systematic training with all their staff, while other operators paid little or no regard to the training function, with non-systematic ('sitting-with-Nellie') training being achieved at best. It was therefore agreed that it would be beneficial to the SMEs at the start of this NEAT project if a formal training needs analysis exercise was undertaken.

Over a period of several weeks I chaired two focus group meetings of the RCT cluster-group. All the employers were very positive about the project’s potential in terms of business development. By using a fixed agenda and semi-structured questions within the focus group meetings, I was able to develop a table which represented their identified training needs. Each participant initially identified those factors which they regarded as being influential on their business development and success. The key issues which emerged were:

- staff turnover/retention,
- training/staff development,
- using new technology to assist in the day-to-day business operations,
- development of marketing skills, and
- using new technology as a marketing tool.

From this list I was able to “focus-in” on what each participant regarded as their specific training needs. During the focus group meetings it was immediately obvious that a common quality that all the employers targeted when recruiting new operational staff
was “personality”. Indeed the development of specific hospitality skills was seen as a secondary consideration in the initial recruitment process. Several employers agreed that the hospitality practical skills can be developed once the “right” staff have been employed. This concurs with Lashley (2002, p8), discussed in Chapter 3, who stated that a striking feature of his research “was the low skills expectation among many employers; they merely sought to recruit basic social skills that were employable.”.

Interestingly as part of this “right personality” discussion, it was stressed by some RCT employers that being an extrovert personality is not generally considered to be part of “the Valley’s culture”. As a result even when a person with the right personality is recruited, developing a pro-active selling and sales culture is a key training requirement for most front-of-house operative staff employed in RCT hospitality outlets.

Figure 22 therefore identifies the training needs identified by the employers in the RCT units as being necessary not only for their operative staff, but also for the management within these units. During the data collection/focus group process some employers indicated that they did not want their training needs to be publicly identified. I have therefore referred to all the units by number.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Need</th>
<th>Unit 1</th>
<th>Unit 2</th>
<th>Unit 3</th>
<th>Unit 4</th>
<th>Unit 5</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing marketing promotion, communication skills</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Training: (word, excel, etc)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Marketing Skills (4 Ps)</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Internet to source business contacts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employm’t legislation</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing a business plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence building/ assertiveness techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; safety legislation</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public speaking techniques – making a presentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer care – dealing with customers / Interpersonal Skills</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling skills for staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard analysis</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building teams and leadership skills</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group training techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 23:** RCT Training Needs Analysis Table
The training needs analysis exercise produced some interesting results which were useful in the continued development of the RCT NEAT project. The overall findings also enabled me to conclude phase 1 and produce a series of recommendations which were used to inform phase 2 of the research process. The conclusions and recommendations from phase 1 were:

- All employers regarded the NEAT project as offering potential benefits for the development of tourism with RCT, and specifically the development of skills for both management and staff within those tourism businesses.

- In identifying the training needs it was important for employers to differentiate between the training that they perceived as important for their staff, and the training which was necessary for the supervisors/managers.

- There was a clear demand for all aspects of training relating to the use of IT and related software packages. This was mainly for supervisory/management functions at this stage in NEAT’s development (word-processing, spread-sheets, developing a data-base, mail-merge, etc).

- Linked with the above was an identified requirement for training in marketing skills and applications of marketing techniques. This extended from web-marketing and use of the internet, to more basic theoretical marketing principles and how these could be applied by supervisors and managers to their specific businesses.
Knowledge of current legislation relating to employment, health & safety, hazard analysis was regarded as important and an identified training need for employers.

Employers indicated that they were keen to develop their own skills in developing teams and promoting leadership skills amongst employees who showed potential for supervisory/management roles.

Interestingly the employers also indicated that the following skills were of specific importance to their staff, but of less importance to themselves:

Customer care,

Dealing with complaints/difficult customers,

Selling skills,

Interpersonal communications (verbal/non-verbal skills).

Employers were supportive of the proposed training and the perceived beneficial effects of having trained employees. Significantly several RCT employers commented that they regarded training "as on-going and important activity which contributed to the more effective use of staff by their appropriate development", and that having trained staff would hopefully impact on "bottom-line profitability."

The training needs analysis exercise (phase 1 of the research process) therefore identified the types of training that the majority of employers in the NEAT project hoped to gain benefit from. In consultation with colleagues from UWIC I therefore had
to move the project forward by setting-up appropriate training sessions which were shared by, and benefited, all the participants in this project.

4.3.3 Conclusion of phase 1.

With the cluster-group training activities completed, the first phase of the research process had been achieved. Feedback from the RCT participants was positive and there was general satisfaction that the NEAT project was achieving its main objective of assisting SMEs in Southeast Wales “to get business in, and keep business in.” However this first phase had produced an additional finding by revealing how supportive the employers were of formalised training, especially when they measured the potential impact of training on their business performance. Having started from a base of little or no formal approaches to training, the employers were now positive and pro-active towards training, - and wanting more training to be undertaken on an on-going basis. This therefore informed phase 2 of the research process as I was now keen to discover the range and types of training models used in the different sectors of the hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

4.4 Elements of the phase 2 research process.

4.4.1 Introduction to phase 2.

Much has been written in the literature, reviewed in Chapter 3, on the different types of non-systematic and formalised systematic approaches to training. The results from the NEAT project training needs analysis exercise caused me to reflect of the types of training models used in the hospitality industry. I was keen to learn how the training for operative and supervisory staff is different, and the extent to which formalised
systematic training is used across the various sectors of the hospitality industry in Southeast Wales. I also wished to identify those factors that influence and affect the training function within a hospitality outlet/organisation.

In order to achieve the research objectives of phase 2 I decided to use a qualitative research process, formally interviewing those people involved with and responsible for training in different types of hospitality outlets across Southeast Wales. I targeted both the commercial sector (profit-focused where hospitality and catering is the primary activity), and the catering services sector (not necessarily profit focused where hospitality and catering is a supporting activity). A total of sixteen interviews were completed which gave appropriate representation across the sectors.

4.4.2 Emerging issues from the phase 2 qualitative research.

Prior to going “live” with the qualitative research, I decided to trial my questions with one of the hospitality outlets that I had worked with as part of the RCT NEAT project. This trialling process enabled me to refine my questions so that there was no ambiguity. I was also concerned to ensure that the focus of the questions accurately reflected the research objectives for phase 2. (A copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendices.)

The results from phase 2 enabled me to produce a typology of training models used in the Southeast Wales hospitality industry. I was also able to create a pictogram that illustrates the impact of labour supply, training and labour turnover on the tourism and
hospitality industry in this region. In order to explain the results it is necessary to divide
the outlets into sectors of the industry as there are key differences between the sectors.

The types of training undertaken and the approaches to training vary considerably
depending on the particular sector of the hospitality industry. The size of the hospitality
unit is also a significant factor, as is the type of ownership. There are clear messages for
both SMEs and larger outlets in terms of staff recruitment, retention and development in
relation to business performance. Figure 23 provides an overview of the types of
training undertaken in the different sectors of the Southeast Wales hospitality industry.
The following is an analysis of the findings from each of the individual hospitality
sectors included within this research:
## Chapter Four. The NEAT Project. Phase 1 & Phase 2 Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hotels &lt; 20 rooms</th>
<th>Hotels &gt;20 rooms</th>
<th>Restaurants</th>
<th>Fast-food</th>
<th>Public Houses</th>
<th>Motorway Service Stations</th>
<th>Catering Services</th>
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<td>x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
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<td>☑</td>
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<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
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<td><strong>On-going Practical</strong></td>
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<td>☑</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
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<td><strong>Selling Skills</strong></td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Building</strong></td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>S M</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>S M</td>
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<td>☑ x</td>
<td>☑ x</td>
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**√ = Yes**

**x = No**

**S = Supervisory level only**

**M = Management level only**

**Figure 24:** Types of training undertaken in the Southeast Wales hospitality industry
4.4.2.1. Large Hotels (more than 20 rooms).

All the managers interviewed indicated that they have formalised induction and staff training programmes. The managers regard staff development as critical to business success and growth. As stated by one Personnel and Training Manager:

*We are very proactive in terms of staff development at all levels. The level of training is increasing all the time. Our model is proactive rather than reactive.*

Operational managers (Food & Beverage and Reservations) also recognised the importance of training, but admit that they expect a high level of staff turnover, especially within Cardiff. Two operational managers admitted that because Cardiff is busy between Monday and Thursday nights, there is a certain level of complacency about staff turnover levels and this is reflected in attitudes to training. One of the Bar Managers interviewed in large brand-name hotel again indicated this complacent approach:

*Cardiff is booming, business is good. We expect a high level of staff turnover as many of our employees are students. What's the point in spending lots of time and money training them when we all know that they'll be gone after their exams in May*

As a result of these comments it is evident that training and staff development can take second place when business pressure is high, and this can result in a less than satisfactory service received by guests.

However this view does not represent the official company policies towards training articulated by non-operational, more senior management in the large hotels. They insisted that staff training is critical towards the growth of their business. One General
Manager interviewed was emphatic that training was the key to winning a competitive edge in an increasingly competitive market:

_We have to be better than our competitor hotels in order to grow business. Each year new hotels are opening (in Cardiff) and people obviously will want to try a new product. But our product and our staff are critical to our future success. My hotel must offer products and services which are 100% reliable. That is why people return when they have tried the new hotels. They like what we offer...........and that is only achieved by investing in appropriate staff training._

Another Personnel and Training Manager interviewed admitted that:

_yes, like most of our competitors we have a recruitment and retention problem, but we are improving our staff training to ensure that staff are encouraged to develop their skills by attending in-house training programmes, including NVQs if appropriate to their job role._

The evidence from the city-based hotels with more than twenty rooms therefore indicates that staff training is regarded by senior management as being a key factor which can assist future market share growth and profitability in an increasingly competitive market-place. Despite the high turnover of seasonal staff (predominately students studying at local universities), the hotels are prepared to invest in staff training. As such they encourage staff to undertake formal training, including NVQs, when they consider that there is a dual benefit progressing both the organisation and the individual.

The research findings indicate some similar attitudes in the larger hotels in Rhondda Cynon Taff. In terms of staff retention and training, at unskilled operative level money appears to be the key motivator for staff; especially where students working on a part-time basis form a large proportion of the work force:
Staff retention is difficult because competitor hotels will constantly be trying to poach our best staff. Usually this is done by offering a higher wage rate per hour.

In order to address this problem, several of the hotels tried to accommodate requests from their staff for specific working hours. They also try to present themselves as 'caring' employers; concerned that full-time staff receive staff development appropriate to their career aspirations and encouraging part-time staff by providing appropriate training and offering working hours around their primary occupation. All the large hotels interviewed offer well-established staff development programmes to their full-time staff. These include in-house courses (health & safety, food hygiene, etc.); NVQs; and more formal management qualifications, including CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) and degree programmes. One manager stated:

All staff are encouraged to achieve their potential within this company. The training model used depends on the member of staff and their identified training needs.

The research therefore indicates that the general attitude evident in the large hotels towards training, both within the city area and Rhondda Cynon Taff, was very positive. Figure 24 shows the types of training courses generally available to operative, supervisory and management staff. The only concern is that the official training policies explained by the more senior staff were sometimes not replicated in the attitudes of the supervisory and operational staff, - the very staff who deal most directly with the paying customers.
4.4.2.2. Small hotels (less than 20 rooms)

There was a marked contrast between the progressive and 'pro-active' approaches to training evidenced in the large hotels and the attitudes apparent in the smaller, independent hotels. In such hotels the traditional training model is non-systematic; i.e. 'sitting-with-Nellie', is the most common approach. The hotels contacted for the research explained that they appoint staff based on personality, and then “pair new staff with reliable established staff until they have learned our standards.” Although this is a very basic training model the smaller hotels argue that they do not have the financial resources, ‘financial safety-nets’ or time available compared to larger hotel organisations. As one small operator stated:

Achieving daily bottom-line is what keeps this business afloat. I would like to spend more time and resources on training, but we are a small concern. I have to make sure that the business makes enough each week to pay the staff.

Nevertheless, as a proportion of the total workforce, labour turnover in small hotels is not as significant as in the larger hotels. Although the training provided is very basic in small hotels, one of the key reasons offered as to why staff retention levels are high is that ‘... there is more of a family atmosphere, therefore people stay’. This was seen as a key factor that benefited the small hotels against the larger operators. Indeed one of the smaller outlets claimed that some people choose to stay in smaller hotels because “we are more personal and individual.... home from home.”

The research findings indicate that, in this sector, there is little evidence of formal induction; on-going training; or of career enhancement strategies such as encouraging staff to study for further qualifications. The only formal training evidenced was in a
semi-rural small hotel where the owner had trained the front-of-house staff to use the
front office reservation and guest accounting package so that “we can continue to take
bookings and make money when I’m away.” One operator claimed not to have heard of
NVQs, even less understand how he could use them within his business. “I have no
contact with the local catering college...........I don’t understand the qualifications they
offer.”

However the fact that little, if any, training is carried-out is not perceived as an issue in
terms of business success within the small hotel sector. The proprietor of a 12-bedroom
guest-house admitted that the only training she undertook with new staff was basic
health & safety training “to ensure that I’ve covered myself in case of problems.” She
clearly managed a very popular and successful city-centre guest-house operation
achieving high occupancy levels, but again revealed that the key issue in this sector is:
‘bottom-line.....we don’t have time (for training), everything else is a secondary
consideration’.

4.4.2.3. Restaurant sector

This is probably the most diverse sector within the hospitality industry ranging from
branded national restaurants to specialist local restaurants. In the branded restaurants
there is a more articulated approach to training with a good knowledge of the NVQ
framework, yet there is little evidence of formal training beyond induction and
adherence to the necessary health & safety legislation. High staff turnover is regarded
as inevitable with young people and students forming a high percentage of the total
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workforce. Some of the issues in the city restaurants were therefore similar to the views
of the operational managers in the large city hotels.

* A high proportion of our workforce is students. Most of them are fine, with
  common sense and good social skills. They need minimal training. The only
  problem is that we lose most of them at Christmas, Easter and during the
  summer, - our busiest trading periods.

Some operators argued that because the majority student workforce is so fluid and
transient, this excused the need for formalised, structured training:

* We know that they (the students) won’t want to work here when they’ve
  finished their studies, so there’s little point us spending lots of time and
  effort training them.

Interestingly the only staff who did receive any formal training in the branded restaurant
sector were food preparation staff. The manager in a chain-operated popular roadside
restaurant outlet admitted that he recruited food-service staff based on appearance and
personality, but that:

* food preparation staff have to be trained so that they can cook and present
  the meal the standard required in the SOP (standards of performance)
  manual.

However when I contacted the head-office of this organisation, their training department
insisted that all staff receive induction, practical skills development, on-going health &
safety, selling skills, and necessary IT training. As was evident in the large hotels, the
unit-based operational manager clearly has a different perspective on training within his
organisation to his more strategically-focussed senior managers.

In smaller privately-owned, non-branded restaurants training is regarded as a low
priority because ‘it doesn’t generate revenue’. This attitude is very typical amongst
small employers in the hospitality industry who provide little training beyond induction. The research also included ethnic non-branded restaurants. Although no formal training of any kind was undertaken following "a brief introductory session" in the ethnic restaurants visited, nevertheless a caring and compassionate attitude was evident towards their staff. This replicated the situation in the small hotels. As one Chinese restaurant owner stated:

*We are one family here (in the restaurant), we look after each other. If someone needs help doing their job we all help.*

Again there was very little knowledge or understanding of the NVQ system in the non-branded restaurants. However one independent restaurant manager who did have some experience of the NVQ process, and claimed to have employed both food preparation and food service staff with NVQs from local colleges in recent years, stated:

*The NVQ system does not reflect the reality of the industry....it's a paper chase exercise which means little in practice.*

Overall therefore non-branded restaurants display similar attitudes to the smaller independent hotels in terms of providing less post-induction training when compared with their larger branded counterparts. Unfortunately, in Southeast Wales, it is small and medium-sized businesses which form the basis of the commercial hotel and restaurant sector, hence the significant consequential impact of a lack of training on the end product.
4.4.2.4. Fast-food sector

Evidence from this research indicates that training in this sector is ‘regimented and structured’, with formalised training extending from operative level to senior management. Certainly this sector has the most structured and systematic training evidenced in any hospitality sector covered by this research. The ethos of the fast-food sector is based on compliance and promotion achieved by appropriate training. Indeed managers in this sector revealed that within the fast-food sector staff are unable to progress in the organisation without passing the training appropriate to that level/stage.

*In order to achieve promotion you must have done the job and completed all the appropriate training associated with that job*

Although staff turnover levels are high, the fast-food organisations do regard themselves as ‘caring’ employers, encouraging all employees to ‘progress within the company as far as their abilities permit’. The major fast-food operators make significant resources (financial, physical and time) available for staff training and their staff training is extensive with standards manuals that cover almost every eventuality. Certainly the contrast between the fast-food sector and other sectors of the hospitality industry when considering attitudes towards training, and the importance awarded to this function, is significant. As one manager explained:

*Appropriate training is the glue that holds our company together. All managers can perform the full range of operative jobs from counter-assistants to floor-staff.....Training is an on-going function that covers all work roles and prepares us for all aspects of store operations.*
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However the biggest problem for this sector is that it employs a large proportion of young people who are transient and wage sensitive, and for whom money is the key motivating factor. As revealed in other sectors considered in this research, the “here today, gone tomorrow” attitude displayed by some young people causes management even in the fast-food sector to become dispirited. The same manager explained:

*We have the most extensive and professional training programmes available which support and encourage staff at all levels. We want staff to gain promotion within our organisation and to achieve optimum success. That’s what our training programmes are intended to achieve........but unfortunately some young people are too cynical and just take the money and run at the earliest opportunity.*

4.4.2.5 Public house sector

The public house sector replicates many of the features found in small hotels. One manager in a city-centre pub admitted that the approach to training in his outlet was non-systematic, with the “sitting-with-Nellie” model evident:

*Our current approach to training is very basic. In terms of induction training staff spend the first couple of shifts working closely with a more established member of staff. It’s very much a case of learning by doing.*

A significant factor is that as in the small hotel sector, a large proportion of operative staff (bar-staff) are employed on a part-time basis. However more concerning is the poor retention rate for pub managers:

*We lose too many bar staff, restaurant staff, kitchen assistants, and most importantly the pub managers. This is probably linked to poor selection and training at the start. That’s why we’ve got to improve our approach to recruitment and training.*
Traditionally, financial resources for training have been limited within this sector, although the large breweries are now beginning to invest heavily in training and are starting to recognise diversity and a need to change the focus in many British pubs, such as the increase of food sales compared to drink (wet) sales. Interestingly several public house operators, including the larger chains, have exploited the smoking ban in public places (introduced in 2007) and the resultant increase in pub food sales, by training staff in upselling skills when selling menu items.

However, it is not only financial implications which have traditionally impeded the development of the training function in this sector. Another major constraint is time. As another pub manager explained:

_We operate long hours seven days a week, finding time for training during the working day is very difficult._

Clearly this is a significant problem for the public-house sector, particularly since the relaxation of licensing hours in 2005 which has encouraged many branded pub operators to extend their opening hours. However it can be argued that the main retailers in the UK also have long opening hours, but this has not stopped Tesco, Asda, _et al_, from developing highly effective and successful staff training programmes. The issue surrounding the training debate in public houses is therefore the same as for the high-street retailers; i.e. for training to be effective and successful it has to be actively supported by senior management.
4.4.2.6 Motorway service stations

Despite the poor public image of this sector (primarily due to perceived high pricing), the research revealed clear evidence of a formal and pro-active approach to staff training. This extends from well-planned, systematic induction programmes, to on-going training covering health & safety, customer care, interpersonal and selling skills. As in other sectors there is a high turnover of young staff at operative level, but this is anticipated and does not compromise the training programme against which all staff are appraised. The catering manager interviewed for this research indicated that supervisory and management staff tend to be 'more reliable and stay.....so there is a reward for the training investment'.

In this sector formal training is provided for all staff at induction and further specific training is provided throughout their employment. Staff are encouraged to progress within the organisation and regular staff appraisals are an on-going feature of employment. It was explained that where possible staff are promoted within the same outlet:

this sends out a clear message of the importance of training within our organisation, and the high regard that management attach to training within this outlet.

NVQs are used primarily for food production skills and other in-house training courses are provided either on or off-site depending on demand. However it was evident that the NVQ structure was "trusted and regarded as a suitable benchmark qualification to assess ability". Interestingly the NVQs are delivered and assessed in-house by qualified assessors. Indeed, the catering manager had no reservations about the NVQ system and
praised their flexibility compared to the rigidity of the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications:

*They (NVQs) are a modern qualification that have provided a flexible approach to learning for non-traditional learners. They are ideal in my unit as staff can learn at their own pace with appropriate guidance and encouragement from myself.*

It was encouraging to hear such an endorsement of the NVQ system within this sector. As will be explained later, most other sector managers interviewed had been apathetic at best or scathing in their criticism of the NVQ competence-approach to learning.

From the research therefore it was evident that the major employers within the motorway service station sector have a high commitment to training. However, as in other sectors, time is the major constraint on the amount of training completed by operative staff and management:

*We’re a 24/7 operation so time is always a problem, something that we’re fighting against, but we don’t use it as excuse not to train.*

4.4.2.7. Catering services sector

In recent years the catering services within education, hospitals and industry have been provided, in many cases, by contract caterers and as such the catering provision is no longer an ‘in-house concern’. This research found that staff employed by the main contract catering companies all receive induction training, followed immediately by training in basic skills at operative levels:

*The intention is that our staff are immediately made to feel a useful part of the unit in which they are employed. It is important that they believe that they have a valuable role from day one.*
The contact catering companies are very pro-active in terms of staff training. The research indicates that all staff from operative to senior management regularly attend refresher and development workshops. The companies are also concerned about their external image, and believe that being regarded as a ‘caring employer who invests in its employees’ is important for their future business development. Formalised and ongoing training (including the achievement of NVQ qualifications) is therefore a key feature of the expanding contract catering sub-sector where staff retention levels are high.

Whilst contract catering accounts for a large proportion of the catering services sector, nevertheless there is a broader focus to this sector. The definition of the catering services sector according to Johns et al (1995, p2) is a sector that exists “to provide hospitality and catering services in a manner similar to the commercial sector, the difference being that these services are secondary or indirect.” I was therefore keen to include other catering services sub-sectors in my research. Based on this definition I chose to conduct interviews in health & fitness clubs, and in a hospital where catering is provided as a secondary activity to support the primary function of the outlet.

My research at the health & fitness clubs specifically focused on the training provided for the catering staff. However the clubs contacted were keen to stress that induction training is provided for all staff. The nature of the business means that most of the employees are part-time and young, and as a result staff turnover levels “tend to be very seasonal” as many staff are students attending courses at the local universities. The well-known brand operators in this sub-sector are concerned about their image, and
wish to be regarded as "caring employers...encouraging staff to progress within (their) organisations." In-house courses covering fire, health & safety, assertion and conflict management skills, and selling skills are the main types of training activities undertaken. Permanent staff employed in the kitchen and restaurant can pursue NVQs "if they wish."

The overall attitude towards training in this catering services sector was upbeat and positive. Staff within the health and fitness centres provided evidence of training log books which were up-to-date, and included certificates awarded for the successful completion of courses attended. My findings within this sub-sector indicate that the training is structured and responsive to the needs of individual staff. As one of the health and fitness club managers explained; "If a member of staff wishes to develop skills related to their job we are happy to provide the necessary support."

The catering manager at a local NHS hospital was also very proactive in his pursuit of "training excellence." He explained that staff turnover levels within his unit were low and he credited this to an active policy of staff development with "individual training programmes to suit individual needs." Many of the courses are offered in-house to all catering staff and cover food hygiene and health & safety issues. However kitchen staff are encouraged to pursue advanced food hygiene qualifications and NVQs.

All catering staff in this NHS hospital undergo regular six-monthly appraisals with their line manager. These appraisal meetings review work performance and also identify any training needs that may have emerged since the last meeting. Staff are actively encouraged to progress and develop their skills in order, according to the catering manager, "to achieve their potential in that job role." This often means that staff are
promoted as a result of their skills development, and this is perceived by management and staff as a key benefit of such a pro-active approach to training.

The overall attitude within the hospital was positive towards training, and staff considered it to be both beneficial to themselves and the hospital to be well-trained. All staff have individual training records which include all training courses attended from formal induction training to more job specific skills such as NVQs. Indeed the catering manager was very supportive of NVQs regarding them as “focusing on the necessary skills needed in a modern kitchen.”

The catering services sector was therefore very positive in the attitudes of both management and staff towards training. My research indicates that this sector actively encourages people to develop their skills through formal and systematic training programmes, and the outcomes are perceived as being beneficial for both the individual and the organisation. NVQs are also encouraged where the development of specific craft skills is regarded as necessary for progression within a job role.

4.4.3. Developing the training pictogram.

In order to consolidate the research findings at the end of phase 2, I was keen to develop an overall training pictogram which illustrates the impact of labour supply, training and labour turnover on hospitality businesses in Southeast Wales. This pictogram applies to both SMEs and larger companies as such businesses had been used in the data collection process. In order to produce the pictogram it was therefore necessary to further examine
the interview responses and the training typology, considering the effectiveness, suitability and acceptability of the different approaches.

4.4.3.1. Induction training

All the hospitality sectors recognised the benefits of good staff retention, and most acknowledged that a formal induction programme indicated to new employees that the hospitality organisation was 'caring' and recognised the importance of staff in the delivery of hospitality products and services to customers. All the organisations who undertake formal induction programmes pay the staff during their training. Some organisations conclude their induction process by awarding formal certificates of achievement to the employees. This was seen by one hotel as a very necessary part of the induction process, as awarding a certificate with the company name and logo embossed upon it made the new employee feel part of that successful organisation.

4.4.3.2. Time and resources for training

Most of the employers interviewed recognised that a formal on-going individual training plan which is regularly discussed and reviewed with each employee indicates a commitment to training. However, the daily operational pressures of the business often mean that training is relegated in terms of importance during busy periods, when the need to make money is the priority. This was particularly evident in the 'traditional' commercial sectors and within SMEs. The time factor is a key influencing factor in determining how and when staff will undergo training and the frequency of training. In theory, larger organisations have more staff and can therefore more easily afford to take staff 'off the front line' for training purposes. However, this research indicates
disparities in practice. The catering services and motorway service station sectors ensure that staff have individual training plans which are adhered to, with operative staff attending regular staff development activities despite the operational pressures of the business. Additional staff are used to cover their shifts and where necessary overtime rates are paid. The larger, brand-name hotels also timetable staff training days/events, but admit that sometimes unforeseen operational pressure can cause these events to be postponed. As a result staff are requested to attend these training events at a later date because, as stated by a hotel restaurant manager: *'the immediate priority is to deal with the current volume of business and make money'*. 

The resources made available also influence the effectiveness of the training function. These include: the financial commitment of an organisation to the training function and specialist rooms/areas for such training to be undertaken. The larger organisations including hotels with over 20 rooms, motorway service stations, fast-food operators and the catering services sector were found to have the best resource allocations. Training in the fast-food sector, for instance, was found to be very well-resourced financially.

Although organisations were not willing to divulge financial information it was evident that within the above sectors staff undertook training at the unit where they are employed or at designated ‘training centres’. The importance of a *'pleasant, comfortable environment, removed from operational pressures'* was considered to be a key factor by a Training Manager from the large hotel sector. The staff running such events are usually employed within the personnel and training function, or include specialist training consultants hired as and when necessary. Specialist videos have also
been commissioned by hotel companies, motorway service stations, branded public houses, and organisations within the catering services sector. A willingness to pay for staff to attend college courses as part-time students (particularly for accreditation of NVQs) was also evident amongst the above operators. However, such companies are increasingly recruiting staff who hold requisite TDLB (Training & Development Lead Body) units so that formal NVQ accreditation can be undertaken in the workplace. SMEs, by their very nature, struggle to compete in respect of available time and resources for training.

4.4.3.3. Organisation size

The most evident factor that influences a commitment to training is the size of the organisation. In the larger organisations in both the commercial and catering services sectors there are either specialist training departments, or alternatively the responsibility for training is embedded in the work of the personnel department. Training records are kept for individual staff members, and within one large hotel group the full-time operative staff are encouraged to work towards either internal company certificates of achievement or external qualifications such as NVQs. Regular staff appraisals for full-time staff were found to be undertaken in all the sectors included in the research, except for the small independent: hotels; restaurants and public houses. Clearly this is an issue which SMEs must tackle if they are to compete effectively against the bigger players. It is interesting to note that branded public houses are increasingly using staff appraisals to ‘reward’ staff for their loyalty to that particular unit, and there is a growing availability of short, sector-specific courses from the British Institute of Innkeeping. The growing demand for training courses within the licensed trade sector is being mirrored by the
increased availability of specialist full-time and part-time courses within colleges and universities.

4.4.3.4. Company image

It is particularly interesting that the licensed trade sector is now recognising the benefits of training at a time when there is massive investment in public houses in terms of the ‘image’ projected to consumers. Many licensed premises are being re-branded and re-furbished in order to appeal to more discerning customers. Breweries recognise the contribution a trained workforce can make in selling this professional image to the public and many organizations use their staff to present their ‘brand image’. For example, T.G.I. Friday's employ staff who are specifically trained to be gregarious and lively when serving the public. The public expect a certain type of meal experience when visiting a T.G.I Friday's restaurant and the staff reflect that brand. The company achieves this by using effective recruitment and in-house training techniques.

There are clear messages here for SMEs. Whilst SMEs may not need the powerful brand image of a quality restaurant or hotel chain, the customer’s first impression will often seal the fate of that SME. Positive introductions by well-trained staff will help ensure repeat business. A poor initial service image will cloud the customer's perception of that SME throughout their visit, regardless of the quality of the product. For SMEs therefore, as for larger businesses, image is a key factor in today's competitive environment and well-trained staff can enhance that image.
4.4.3.5 Formality of the training function

A final factor that is perceived to influence the training function is the formality of the training provided. This 'formality' refers to the importance placed on training by the organisation; how this importance is conveyed to staff by the unit management; the regularity of staff appraisals; and the type of training records used. Within some non-branded restaurants and SMEs the training undertaken is very ad hoc, and therefore its importance as a key organisational function is often lost and staff begin to regard training as an inconvenience rather than a benefit. As stated by one restaurant manager:

*It's something (health & safety including fire training) that we've got to cover, but the staff know that we'd rather not have to do it, its impact therefore is probably lost.*

However, at the other extreme, the fast-food sector records all the training completed by all staff at all levels. The process is very competence-based and progressive, with staff not permitted to move up to the next level until all their training at a particular level has been recorded. Unfortunately this sector suffers from a very high turnover of staff at operative level. This has probably little to do with the organisation's commitment to training but more with the type of people employed at this level within the UK fast-food sector - typically young, transient and wage-sensitive with no long term commitment to the fast-food sector.

Within motorway service stations and the catering services sector the importance of training is made clear to all new staff at induction. In the branded larger hotels there is an increasing recognition that all training undertaken by staff needs to be recorded, and
new staff are informed of their individual training file at induction. One personnel and
training manager stated:

\textit{It's important for staff to feel that training is their responsibility as well
as ours, - its function within this organisation is given a high profile
from day one.}

Such positive attitudes are doing much to emphasise the importance of training within
identified sectors of the Southeast Wales hospitality industry, thus making the formality
and focus of the training function clear to all employees.

\textbf{4.4.4 Conclusions from phase 2}

These research findings have been developed into a pictogram (see Figure 24) which
represents the key features influencing training within hospitality SMEs and larger
companies. This pictogram summarises how labour supply represented by a pool of
staff within a hospitality organisation can either leak away, resulting in wastage for that
hospitality organisation, or be retained by adopting a combination of several key factors
that have emerged from this research, ensuring that the organisation works towards
better staff retention by displaying a commitment to training.

The tap indicates the labour source available in Southeast Wales. As discussed in the
introduction many vacancies within the hospitality industry remain unfilled. Therefore,
the tap drips 'water' rather than supplying a steady stream. Hence, the staff that are
employed and create the ‘pool of staff’ need to be cared for by their employers to ensure
that they are retained by the organisation. It is well documented (e.g. Boella, 2000) that
the hospitality industry has a reputation for offering poor levels of pay; unsociable hours
of work and poor working conditions. This combination of factors causes many people to prematurely leave hospitality employment. If the training provided is poor or non-existent then there maybe no motivating factor to remain in that employment in order to become better qualified and progress within that organisation. Therefore, as indicated by the model, such de-motivated staff leak away from the pool of hospitality staff.

Alternatively organisations can display a clear commitment to training, which is the result of a combination and sum total of several key factors including:

- image of the organisation,
- size of the organisation,
- time available for training,
- resources available, and
- formality of the training function.

Although the pictogram presented is a generalisation of the current situation across the different hospitality sectors, it is representative and has significant messages for SMEs in Southeast Wales. For SMEs to develop and compete in the ever-changing, dynamic and competitive hospitality marketplace, issues relating to staff training and effective implementation need to be given more of a focus. The research indicates that many of the larger organisations already invest heavily in training, but the training may need to be refined; restructured or given greater importance. Unless SMEs follow the lead of larger organisations many will fail because they are unable to meet the increased expectations and service quality required by today’s customers. The hospitality industry makes a significant contribution to the Southeast Wales economy and supports a high
proportion of jobs in this emerging tourism destination. The model suggests that if the hospitality industry is to succeed and provide high quality products and services to an increasingly discerning public, all sectors must invest in their most important asset - their staff. The way to do this is through a commitment to training.

Figure 25: Impact of labour supply, training and labour turnover on the pool of staff available to tourism and hospitality businesses
4.5. Informing phase 3 of the research process

During the interviews for phase 2 it became evident that many employers had strong views on the college and education system in the UK, particularly the types of qualifications available for people working in the hospitality industry. Often during my meetings with employers the focus of the interview would move onto the NVQ system, and it quickly became evident that the employers were opinionated on this competence-based approach to learning. As indicated in the phase 2 findings, opinions were sharply divided between traditionalists (evident in small hotels, independent restaurants, public houses, etc.), and employers with a more progressive attitude in respect of training provision (large hotel operators, motorway service station managers, catering services sector).

I therefore decided in consultation with my supervisor that, in order to further progress and develop the study, it was appropriate to question the validity and suitability of the NVQ training model. This model is now used extensively for the development of hospitality and catering craft skills in the Further Education (FE) sector. As the training typology reveals NVQs are also used by the larger hotel employers, motorway service station operators, and extensively in the catering services sector as part of on-going staff development programmes.

However the development and use of NVQs to develop practical skills is controversial. The catering trade press regularly features letters and articles from concerned employers, and the Literature Review (Chapter 3) identifies the main arguments that surround this training approach. Indeed, as was evident when undertaking the phase 2 research, many
people in the industry continue to reminisce about the perceived quality and rigorous standards demanded by the previous City and Guilds craft qualifications (i.e. the 706 and 707 series).

Phase 3 of the study will therefore involve very close analysis of what the education/training providers believe should be available in terms of training courses for operative and supervisory staff. Arguably this group can be more objective about training provision for the hospitality industry because they are removed from the operational pressures of a profit-focussed outlet, although many have worked in the industry. They are also the influencers in terms of encouraging young people to pursue a career in hospitality and catering. Their experience of qualification delivery and their views on the on-going standards within these qualifications is important to assess in the NVQ debate.

The key consideration within phase 3 was whether the education/training providers were satisfied with the NVQ model and the assessment mechanisms used (discussed in the Literature Review), and what they perceived to be the main strengths and weaknesses of this qualification. In order to assess whether attitudes in Southeast Wales towards NVQs are indicative of attitudes across England and the rest of Wales, it was necessary to undertake the primary research for phase 3 both within and outside Southeast Wales. The study will therefore continue by analysing the attitudes of these education and training providers.
Chapter 5.

An assessment of the NVQ approach to skills development.

Phase 3 Research.
Chapter 5.

An assessment of the NVQ approach to skills development.

Phase 3 Research.

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5.5 Chapter Review
Attitudes towards training within the Hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

Development model for the study.

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<th>Research methodology.</th>
<th>Research methods.</th>
<th>Objective(s).</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>“NEAT” project SMEs</td>
<td>Case study 1.</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
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<td>Case study 2.</td>
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<td>3 (Part 2)</td>
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<td>Case study 2.</td>
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5.1 Introduction to phase 3.

This chapter describes the phase 3 research process. The study findings so far have contributed towards the achievement of the overall aim by completion of the following research objectives with a Southeast Wales focus. These include:

2. The development of a typology of vocational training models used in the hospitality industry, considering their effectiveness and acceptability to user groups,

3. The analysis of the range of training paradigms employed, evaluating those internal and external factors which influence attitudes towards training in the hospitality industry.

The phase 3 research process, which contributes to the remaining research objectives, is concerned:

4. To explore and review the suitability of the NVQ approach to skills development as a model for hospitality education/training,

5. To make recommendations for future developments in hospitality skills training.
As discussed previously, it was evident in the research activities undertaken for phase 1 and phase 2 that many Southeast Wales employers had very polarised positive or negative attitudes towards NVQs. Few people interviewed were ambivalent or claimed not to have an opinion. As a lecturer with a background in Further Education colleges, I am aware of the on-going debates that surround the perceived suitability, or otherwise, of these qualifications. I therefore reasoned that in order to assess attitudes to hospitality and catering NVQs, other than those of the employers, it was necessary to contact those people who deliver these qualifications as education and training providers.

5.2 The phase 3 research process.

5.2.1 Overview of phase 3.

The main focus of the phase 3 research process was concerned with assessing the attitudes of education and training providers towards NVQs. Another feature of this phase of the research was to assess whether attitudes towards NVQs in Southeast Wales are typical of, and represent attitudes across England and the rest of Wales. (An alternative but similar system is provided in Scotland, - Scottish Vocational Qualifications [SVQs] which are accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority [SQA]).

It was necessary therefore to undertake initial interviews both within and outside Southeast Wales so that an immediate comparison of attitudes could be made (phase 3, part 1). The initial interviews also would serve to inform the design of the main data collection process for phase 3 which would be achieved using an e-questionnaire (phase
3, part 2). I hoped that by using an e-questionnaire I would be able to target potential respondents more precisely, thus encouraging replies.

5.2.2 Phase 3 (part 1)
The first part of phase 3 involved face-to-face interviews with thirteen education and training providers; six were conducted within Southeast Wales, and seven were undertaken with staff in England and the rest of Wales. This interview process took four months to complete during the summer of 2004. As with the employer interviews for phase 2, this second set of face-to-face interviews provided very detailed responses and much data to review. As expected, the education and training providers also had much to comment on regarding the use and suitability of the NVQ model.

A secondary objective of this interview process was to assess whether the attitudes of NVQ education/training providers in Southeast Wales were similar to attitudes prevalent in other parts of Wales and in England. My concern was to measure the similarities and differences between stakeholders delivering the same qualifications but in different locations. Clearly if there were differences it would be necessary to look more closely at local delivery issues and this would affect the design and participant targeting of the e-questionnaire.

5.3. Issues emerging from the interviews.

5.3.1 Background to the interviews
The interviews were conducted with a variety of education and training providers involved in the delivery of NVQs. The education providers represent lecturers in FE
colleges, and the training providers represent agencies and companies delivering hospitality and catering NVQs. Due to the sensitivity of this subject some of the interviewees were reluctant to have their conversations recorded in their work environments, and as many of the comments made were "off-the-record" it is not appropriate to identify individuals. Indeed, a successful feature of the interview process was that the assurance of anonymity encouraged people to talk openly. However, it is appropriate to provide a profile of each interviewee to assist the analysis of the responses. (A copy of the interview questions is included in the appendices.)

5.3.2 Interviewee profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Job Role</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<td>Late 30s</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Late 30s</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 26: Phase 3 (Part 1) Interviewee profiles

5.3.3 Discussion of the key issues emerging from the interview process.

The following is a discussion of the key issues emerging from the interview process. I will present a consolidation of these issues at the end of the discussion.
Respondents could clearly explain the differences between traditional City and Guilds craft qualifications and the replacement NVQ system. Without exception college lecturers and other training providers appreciated the mechanics of the competence-based approach to learning, and how this contrasted with the traditional exam and final practical assessment model:

They (the learner) can present themselves when they’re ready for assessment, they don’t have to wait for the exam series to come round.

(INT5, 2004)

This was generally seen as a positive element of the NVQ system. One respondent admitted that she didn’t like final exams and therefore believed that other people shouldn’t have to “suffer” them as she had to:

When I was training everything rested on the final exam......it was a lot of pressure focussed on a very short period of time. We knew that if we didn’t pass we would have to wait several months before we could take it again.

(INT8, 2004)

Another respondent claimed that when she was a student:

the lecturers used the final exam as a threat........some people responded well to that, but it just made me nervous.

(INT11, 2004)

However one interviewee claimed that the exam component of the City and Guilds craft qualifications gave her a sense of achievement:

Although I don’t find exams easy, nevertheless I felt as though it (the exam) made the qualification worth having.............I don’t think there is that same sense of achievement if you don’t have an exam.

(INT2, 2004)

Most interviewees thought that it was easier to achieve an NVQ than the previous C&G 706/707 series qualifications, although a minority of respondents considered the role of
the portfolio, explained by Whitear (1995), to be a significant challenge in the
competence-based system:

*I think the portfolio is a difficult and complex document to put together. Some critics of the NVQ system are dismissive of portfolio-building and evidence gathering........but I think it's quite a complex exercise, particularly for Level 1 learners.*

(INT6, 2004)

Some respondents voiced concerns about the levels of qualifications and comparability between traditional qualifications and the NVQ system. Walton (1996, p19) stated that it was important to establish how “old” and “new” qualifications relate to each other. He argues that:

*Students and candidates will wish to know how a qualification in one system relates to another in terms of progression.*

This was clearly an issue for one of my interviewees who questioned whether skill levels could be compared across the different qualifications:

*Is a Level 2 NVQ in Food Preparation the same standard as someone with C&G 706/2? I don’t know whether they are meant to be the same, but I don’t think are. I would always employ the person with the C&G rather than the NVQ.*

(INT7, 2004)

Another interviewee was concerned about the confusion created by having both qualifications used in job advertisements. She claimed that regularly in the trade magazine, the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*, chef appointments requested C&G 706/3 or NVQ 3 “although they’re not the same” (INT4, 2004).
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It is therefore evident that most interviewees appreciated the main differences between NVQs and the previous C&G suite of craft qualifications. Before progressing from this initial question it was clear from the responses that opinions were sharply divided as to the merits of the NVQ system. However there was no evidence that geographical location (Southeast Wales, rest of Wales, England) was an influencing factor dividing these responses.

5.3.3.2 Question 2. Perceived value of NVQs.

The feedback from the employers in phase 2 had caused me to reflect on how the NVQ system is valued by the education/training providers, and their perceived value of the qualification to the hospitality industry. The employers' feedback, as discussed in Chapter 4, was very mixed, with some sectors showing a high regard for the NVQ process (large hotels, motorway service stations, catering services), and other sectors indicating little or no perceived value against this qualification.

The interviewees conducted in this phase (phase 3) produced similar mixed responses. One FE lecturer argued that the hospitality industry shares his disdain for NVQs by suggesting that “most people in industry, and certainly most lecturers, don't think they compare with the rigour of the C&G qualifications.” (INT8, 2004). Another lecturer was equally dismissive:

We’re all caught-up in the system, ...........we have to pretend that they (NVQs) have value in the industry.  

(INT1, 2004)

However, this view was rejected by a young lecturer (late 20’s) who claimed that standards both in colleges and in the industry are improving:
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Year on year we hear the same arguments, traditionalists harping-back to the good old days. But they weren’t that good, hygiene standards are better than ever and customer expectations of the industry keep increasing. More people than ever are eating-out on a regular basis, so the industry must be doing something right and NVQs are helping to improve standards for everyone.

(INT10, 2004)

Another FE lecturer argued that the perceived poor value of NVQs was peculiar to the hospitality and catering industry. He claimed that other trades had accepted NVQs and were making them work, blaming the traditionalists in hospitality for not “moving with the times” (INT5, 2004).

You don’t hear other industries reminiscing about what used to be, they move forward and deal with today’s issues. NVQs are today’s qualifications. They’re not perfect, but let’s get on and make them work. Then people will put a value against them.

(INT5, 2004)

It was refreshing to hear such a proactive attitude from a lecturer, with three years experience in FE, who wanted NVQs to succeed. It was significant that the younger interviewees, especially college lecturers who had left the hospitality industry in recent years to pursue careers in education, were far more supportive of the value of NVQs than their more senior colleagues. However an analysis of the responses based on geographical location indicates that this is not an influencing factor.

5.3.3.3 Question 3. A competence-approach to learning.

Huddleston and Unwin (2002, p147) describe the competence-approach to learning as a model “where candidates will present themselves for summative assessment whenever they consider they can demonstrate competence”. Huddleston and Unwin continue by
explaining that evidence may take a variety of form including "log books signed by supervisors testifying that certain procedures have been undertaken." This log book and portfolio approach to evidence building was clearly a major criticism of the NVQ system during the interviews. One interviewee argued that completing log books and portfolios:

> puts too much emphasis on the students. The portfolios are difficult to put together and students get fed up filling out the log books.

(INT13, 2004)

A college lecturer suggested that the NVQ competence-approach has "too much emphasis on gathering evidence rather than actually doing it" (INT11, 2004). Another lecturer thought that the system in theory was fine, "but the reality of trying to make it work with 16 and 17 year-olds is something different" (INT4, 2004). Portfolio development was described by one interviewee as:

> a paper-work nightmare. The learners don’t understand how the portfolio system works, so we spend hours trying to get them to organise their evidence.

(INT1, 2004)

It emerged from the interviews that most college lecturers agreed that this competence-approach to learning is "too long-winded and complex for many students" (INT2, 2004). A particular concern was for Level 1 learners, for whom the system was considered "too unstructured" and flexible.

However the approach did have some supporters. One lecturer who, it emerged in conversation outside the interview, had recently left industry for a career in education, stated:
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It's a very appropriate method of learning and assessment for trade skills. It recognises what people can do, and encourages them to identify skills that they would like to develop. The system is flexible, so there are no unrealistic time constraints.

(INT10, 2004)

Another interviewee, a training provider, acknowledged that this competence-approach to learning is probably best suited to industry where NVQs were initially intended to be delivered. He reasoned that:

*The assessment model is too flexible to suit most college lecturers, but its flexibility is a big strength as far as industry is concerned.*

(INT9, 2004)

This confirmed the findings from some of the employers in stage two of the research. As discussed in Chapter 4, the motorway service station managers like NVQs because “they have provided a flexible approach to learning for non-traditional learners...staff can learn at their own pace.”

However it is this principle of learners learning at their own pace and assessment on demand that caused one interviewee to be very cynical of the NVQ system:

*This notion of assessment on demand and no final practical tests doesn’t give value to NVQs. It just makes people think that anyone with enough perseverance will get the qualification in the end.*

(INT8, 2004)

Another equally cynical view from a college lecturer confirmed that many staff employed in FE are working with a competence-approach to learning that they don’t believe-in:

*It’s a deliberately complicated system in the hope that by making it complicated people will think that the qualifications are of value. No final practical assessment, no final exam, just on-going assessments on demand, - no wonder you can’t fail.*

(INT7, 2004)
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It was evident therefore that most interviewees, including lecturers and training providers, regarded the NVQ competence-approach to learning as most suited to industry where the qualification can be assessed as the employee is undertaking their work role. Even most of the “younger” lecturers confirmed that NVQs are best delivered in the workplace. However geographical location is not revealed as an influencing factor influencing attitudes towards a competence approach to learning. Indeed, similar responses were recorded in all the locations were the interviews were held.

5.3.3.4 Question 4. NVQs have created a more-skilled workforce.

One argument used by the government to support the development of NVQs is explained by Dakers (1998, p4):

The government noticed that our most successful competitors had highly qualified workforces in most occupations. It therefore decided that our future economic success probably depended upon better training and qualifications.

Most interviewees accepted that the initial decision to develop the NVQ system was made with the best of intentions. It was certainly the case in the late 1980s that the UK did trail behind other European countries in terms of staff achieving formal skills-based qualifications. This was identified by the De Ville Report (1986), explained in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), where it was argued that in the UK there was a need for a clear, coherent and comprehensive system of vocational qualifications which should be directly relevant to the needs of employment and the individual.
A main objective of introducing NVQs therefore was to create a more qualified workforce. However, most interviewees were critical of the suggestion that the NVQ system has produced a more skilled workforce. A typical response from one interviewee, a training provider, argued that:

*A lot of money has gone into the NVQ system, but I don't think people are more skilled now. They may be more qualified with their NVQ certificates, but there's a difference between qualified and skilled.*

(INT13, 2004)

Another interview with an FE lecturer produced a similar response: “*It means we have a more qualified workforce, but does that mean the workforce is more skilled. I'm not sure that it does.*” (INT8, 2004). One respondent suggested that skill levels and standards have fallen since the introduction of NVQ. His argument supports Hyland (1994), discussed in Chapter 3, who argued that NVQs are not primarily concerned with learning but with the collection of evidence to satisfy competence criteria: *it's the paperwork trail that has given NVQs a bad name.* (INT2, 2004)

A more objective response from a college lecturer suggested that:

*I don't think skills will develop because of NVQs as that is not their purpose. They are there to recognise skills achievement not necessarily to develop more skills.*

(INT6, 2004)

Another respondent argued that skills have changed over time, and that NVQs have been part of this skills change process. However this FE lecturer questioned whether the NVQ system produces a “rounded” individual who is able to a fully carry-out a job role based-on the NVQ qualification that he/she has achieved:

*No, I don't think skills have improved with NVQs, - I just think that skills are different. Many of the traditional skills are not taught any more, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. But the NVQ system doesn't develop*
an individual with enough skills to do the job of a chef, it just provides him with enough skills to pass the NVQ.

(INT4, 2004)

This argument however can be applied to any qualification, i.e. it is often suggested that a person only really starts to learn how to drive once they have passed the formal driving test.

However despite these criticisms, a minority of interviews produced some positive statements which support the government’s education and training agenda. A training provider argued that any system that encourages people to become more qualified has got to be regarded as beneficial for both the individual and the hospitality industry:

More qualifications increase people’s confidence and ultimately this has got to have a positive knock-on effect on skill levels in the industry.

(INT9, 2004)

An FE lecturer suggested that as NVQs became established and people recognised the value of becoming more qualified, so skill levels generally would improve:

The NVQ system is all about rewarding people for what they can do, - it acknowledges their skills and encourages them to progress to the next level. On that basis skill levels must improve over time.

(INT5, 2004)

The issue of skills development, and whether skills have improved since the introduction of NVQs, is clearly contentious in most industries. The interviewees were generally sceptical as to whether skill levels within the hospitality industry have improved since NVQs replaced the C&G craft qualifications, with the majority arguing against. It will be useful to consider this question again in the larger sample e-questionnaire, but again location is not revealed as an influencing and discriminating factor in the attitudes held by the interviewees.
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5.3.3.5 Question 5. What is “competence”?

A regular discussion among people delivering NVQs in colleges and training centres surrounds the core issue of “competence”. As discussed in Chapter 3, NVQs are not graded pass/fail qualifications, instead the candidate is either deemed to be “competent” or “not yet competent”. It was appropriate therefore to seek opinions on this core issue, and how to measure competence, as part of the phase 3 data collection.

Fletcher’s definition of competence (1994, p53) comprises of several arguably controversial elements:

In competence-based assessments, it is individual performance which is judged – and judged against explicit standards which reflect not what the individual should know, but the expected outcomes of that individual’s competent performance. How individuals perform in comparison to others is irrelevant.

Firstly, as discussed earlier in the study, NVQs are not concerned with knowledge per se. Secondly competence is judged against specific standards (known in NVQ jargon as “performance criteria”), and finally an NVQ assessment is wholly criterion-based and not norm-referenced.

I was therefore interested to assess how the college lecturers and training providers responded to such a prescriptive approach in applying assessment standards when deciding whether a candidate’s performance is competent.

Some interviewees clearly worked strictly within the qualification guidelines. One college lecturer stated that she found the assessment system logical and structured:

As an assessor I work with and apply the performance criteria. If the candidates’ work satisfies the performance criteria then they are
The system is prescriptive, but the process is very logical and well-structured, so I find it relatively easy to apply.

(INT5, 2004)

Another lecturer supported this claim and suggested that competence was evident “by applying my own professional standards and working with the performance criteria at the different levels of the NVQ system.” (INT10, 2004). Another FE lecturer also thought there was little confusion with the issue of competence and the practical assessment process, although he revealed that he was more sceptical about the role of portfolios in NVQ assessments:

They (the candidates) pass the practical assessments by meeting the performance criteria. In other words they can carry-out the task to the required standard. There’s nothing complicated about practical assessments with NVQs, it’s other aspects of assessment that cause me more concern, the portfolios.

(INT4, 2004)

Some interviewees accepted that they used a “balanced” approach when carrying-out practical assessments, relying not only on the NVQ performance criteria to decide competence but also using their practical trade experience. A typical interview response suggested that when the performance criteria are difficult to apply, then professional industrial judgement is applied:

My judgement is based on working in the industry. I use the NVQ criteria, but often the wording is complex to interpret. So basically I consider someone to be competent when they display a skill level appropriate to that level.

(INT13, 2004)

Other interviewees were more blatant about their use of professional judgement rather than the NVQ criteria when making practical assessment decisions:
Well I'm supposed to work with the NVQ assessment criteria. But my own professional judgement is a better indicator as to whether someone has reached the right standard or not.

(INT12, 2004)

This statement is both revealing and concerning because it indicates that an assessor is prepared to ignore assessment criteria when making assessment decisions. Another interviewee acknowledged that “my trade experience helps me a lot in making assessment decisions. I always think, - could we serve this to a customer? That has got to be the best interpretation of competent or not.” (INT9, 2004)

The issue of identifying practical competence was clearly one aspect of the NVQ assessment process that many education and training providers had concerns about. A chef lecturer, who earlier in the interview had criticised NVQs because she believed that they lacked the rigour of the previous C&G qualifications, stated:

I rely on my own skills and ability to assess my students. Any decent chef can identify when someone has completed a task or dish correctly, and when something is not right.

(INT8, 2004)

Personal aspects of defining competence must result in differential standards. Such attitudes clearly create concerns about NVQs and national standards. The whole ethos of the NVQ system is that the level of competence required by candidates is consistent wherever, and to whoever, that competence is demonstrated. My findings suggest that the national standards are instead often local standards which are open to interpretation by individual assessors.
This situation is compounded even further when assessors identify other factors, other than professional judgement issues, which influence practical assessment decisions. An example of this occurred when an FE lecturer suggested:

*There are official performance criteria which I have to use my professional judgement against. But the pressure is on to pass the candidates, and the candidates know that.*

(INT7, 2004)

This is a well-rehearsed argument in a consumer-led training model, and one which Smithers (2000), discussed in Chapter 3, refers to as “outcome-related funding”. The funding pressures and how they impact of NVQ achievement will be considered further when examining the next question (4.3.8).

Occasionally, however, it was encouraging to meet an interviewee who clearly believed in the NVQ system and the overall assessment processes:

*They (the candidates) are assessed against specific standards or criteria. If they achieve those performance criteria then the candidate is competent. The beauty of the NVQ system is that it is so straightforward, only the critics try and make it sound complicated.*

(INT3, 2004)

The overall responses to this question concerning how to identify competence were divided. Some assessors applied the performance criteria correctly, striving to achieve parity and national standards across the qualification. Other assessors were influenced by local issues in their college or workplace, or made too great reliance on their professional judgement. This issue of measuring competence against prescribed criteria to achieve national standards is fundamental to the mechanics and credibility of the qualification. Although geographical factors are not revealed as an influencing factor...
resulting in different attitudes to competence in different locations, clearly this question needs to be tested again on a larger sample size using the e-questionnaire.

5.3.3.6 Question 6. Abuses of the NVQ system.

When asking about possible abuses of the NVQ system as part of the qualitative data collection process it was interesting, and very revealing, how different interviewees put different angles on their responses.

The issue of funding for NVQs was considered to be a significant factor by several interviewees. A criticism was that the funding model “paid” colleges based on successful outcomes, and this caused college management to put pressure on staff to ensure that NVQ candidates completed their qualifications:

\[\text{At the end of the academic year there’s a big push to get them through. Are they competent, well not as competent as those who got through the practical assessment earlier in the year. But there’s no grades, so as far as everyone is concerned both sets of candidates are equally competent.} \]

(INT1, 2004)

Grading, or the lack of it, when assessing NVQs is clearly a concern. However, according to Smithers (2000), QCA won’t accept grading because, in their view, it indicates a less than 100% competence.

Another interviewee expressed a similar view, explaining how the funding methodology was responsible for abuses of the NVQ system:

\[\text{The whole system is flawed because of the way it is financed. There is pressure on lecturers from management to pass candidates as the college is funded based on successful outcomes.} \]

(INT7, 2004)
This theme was continued by a college lecturer who stated that:

the funding system encourages assessors to ‘pass’ candidates so that they achieve the qualification. We are encouraged to get people through rather than make them do lots of re-assessments.  

(INT4, 2004)

However, other interviewees put the blame for abuses of the system with the individual lecturers and assessors, rather than college and training-centre management. One lecturer claimed that “assessors…….pass candidates for an easy life. I know it goes on, and this unfortunately is what gives NVQs a bad press.” (INT5, 2004)

This view was echoed by another interviewee who suggested that:

Assessors…….. push people through because it’s too much hassle to fail them. No-one thanks you for failing a student, so if they’re almost there it’s best to get them through.  

(INT2, 2004)

It was also claimed that some “assessors get tick happy”. This is a common criticism of the NVQ system due to the volume of documentation that candidates and assessors must complete. It is argued that the portfolios and log books are so burdensome that “inevitably you start to tick the boxes just so that some of the students will complete before the end of the year.” (INT13, 2004)

Other interviews however produced very different answers on the “potential abuses of the NVQ system question”. Some interviewees were concerned about the copying or plagiarising of written evidence. “I think evidence can be faked, copied, etc. I know of portfolios being passed around for students to copy from.” (INT9, 2004) A lecturer in FE claimed that “candidates……..cheat and copy evidence from friends, or swap
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portfolios.” (INT10, 2004). However an interesting statement from another FE lecturer suggested that evidence was often fraudulently produced by both candidates and assessors:

There are lots of abuses of the NVQ system by both candidates and assessors. Lots of evidence is made-up and signatures forged. (INT12, 2004)

One interviewee blamed the supporting quality procedures for abuses within the NVQ system. He claimed that the “rigorous” NVQ quality assurance systems described by Burke (1995) were often flawed and ineffective for their intended purpose:

It’s easy to get learners through the qualification as there are no ‘real’ checks. The IV (Internal Verifier) and EV (External Verifier) are supposed to be quality checks, but they are just a check in name only. I don’t think any assessor is really intimidated by the IV and EV system as they used to be when they had to prepare students for an external exam. (INT6, 2004)

However, by far the majority of respondents when questioned further about abuses of the NVQ system returned to the issue of funding. Many claimed that it was not a problem within their own institutions, but that they were aware of problems in other centres and colleges. This issue of “not in my back yard” (to use a colloquialism) was evident in many of the interviews conducted. The following is a typical response:

Funding drives the courses. College management wants us to be regarded as successful, therefore the pressure is on lecturers to ensure that the students pass. It doesn’t happen here, but you hear stories of students being invented so that colleges can claim funding for them. (INT11, 2004)

It was evident from the responses that both training providers and FE lecturers were concerned that paying deliverers of NVQs based on successful outcomes opens the
assessment system to risk of abuse. There was no clear distinction as to whether the age profile of the interviewees affected their responses. Nor was there any distinction between locations. However there was a sufficient strength of response to necessitate asking this question again to a larger sample size using the e-questionnaire.

5.3.3.7 Question 7. Improvements to the NVQ model.

A key question concerned the improvements that interviewees would like to be made to the NVQ model to improve its credibility, reliability, perceived value, etc. as a suitable skills-based vocational qualification. I was aware from my role as an EV visiting FE colleges that many lecturers have strong opinions regarding the current deficiencies with NVQs, and there in no shortage of suggestions as to what needs to be done to remedy these weaknesses.

Many of the responses claimed that NVQs were flawed due to the assessment process. As an FE lecturer explained: “everyone knows that the system isn’t working as it should. More rigorous assessment undertaken by external examiners would help to improve standards.” (INT1, 2004). Another lecturer supported bringing back formal exams as part of the summative assessment process. She argued that:

\[
\text{They (exams) were a good benchmark to measure students' abilities. It put pressure on the students, made them do some work, something the NVQ system lacks.}
\]

(INT11, 2004)

One interviewee suggested that the assessment process was flawed because of the close relationship between the assessor and the candidate. She reasoned that independent
assessors would be more impartial, and better able to make “reliable” assessment decisions. Her suggestions for improvements therefore included:

Independent assessors who aren’t linked to the college, or in industry who don’t work for that hotel. The assessment of NVQs is the weak link, the relationship between the assessor and the candidate is too close.

(INT2, 2004)

However the theme of introducing formal written assessments was a key feature of the responses to this question: “Some kind of formal written test would give the candidates something to focus on” (INT3, 2004), and “It needs to put more pressure on the students rather than the staff. That’s why I favour an exam” (INT4, 2004) were typical responses.

Other suggestions for improvements concerned the assessors themselves. A lecturer suggested that the NVQ system could be improved:

By dealing with rogue assessors. The IV and the EV system needs to be sharpened-up. That is a weakness in the quality process at the moment.

(INT5, 2004)

However this criticism of some assessors and the quality procedures supporting NVQs was a unique opinion. Other interviewees were more concerned about the content, documentation and recording processes for NVQ assessments. A lecturer explained:

I would like to see the recording documentation for assessment simplified. The portfolio is complicated, - it requires too much documentation particularly for cross-referencing evidence.

(INT6, 2004)

and a training provider suggested:
Revert back to the craft courses which had more varied and interesting content. Then remove portfolios and introduce summative assessment by an external body.

(INT9, 2004)

However it was again the issue of funding that emerged as a factor that interviewees thought should be reviewed in order to improve the NVQ system:

The whole system needs to be reviewed including the way colleges are funded. The NVQ is fundamentally flawed because of the outcome based funding. It puts pressure on the lecturers but not on the students.

(INT7, 2004)

Another lecturer continued this theme by arguing that improvements could be made: “by altering the way the courses are funded, and not basing everything on successful outcomes.” (INT8, 2004). She also added that “the assessment system should include some final practical and written assessments.”

Two interviewees thought that the whole system needed to be revised in order to achieve improvements. A training provider claimed that this would be achieved by “introducing a new qualification that is something between an NVQ and an examination” (INT13, 2004). A college lecturer was more radical and suggested:

I think the whole system needs a re-think. The current system is so flexible that is almost falls over trying to pass candidates. There needs to be some rigour and stress in the system. Then candidates and employers would start to take these qualifications seriously.

(INT12, 2004)

Only one interviewee, an FE lecturer with two years teaching experience in an FE college, thought that the current NVQ system operated effectively benefiting both the candidate and industry:
I think that they (NVQs) are generally OK as they are. They suit the needs of the learners’ and meet the requirements of the industry.

(INT10, 2004)

Overall therefore several key themes emerged from this question. Some of these themes have been identified in earlier questions and include suggestions for improvements to the assessment process, NVQ recording documentation, the funding methodology, and the structure of the qualification. However an analysis of the geographical location of the interviewees does not indicate a correlation between location and a specific type of response.

5.3.3.8 Question 8. Suitability of NVQs as preparation for employment.

A feature of NVQ qualifications during their development was that they were designed by industry to meet the needs of industry. According to the 1991 White Paper (Education and Training for the 21st Century) NVQs are based on:

Up-to-date standards, set by employers, which define the knowledge and skills that people require in the workplace.

As such it was important to question the education and training providers about their opinions as to whether the NVQ system better prepares candidates for employment in the hospitality industry rather than the system it replaced.

The majority of the respondents clearly thought that the NVQ was a poor replacement for the previous C&G craft qualifications. A college lecturer provided a typical response:
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The system gets them (the learners) an NVQ. But whether they can do a useful job in industry afterwards I doubt. I think they have to start to learn craft skills properly once they start working in industry.

(INT1, 2004)

Other lecturers argued that the NVQ standards don’t compare with the standards expected of learners completing the C&G 706 & 707 series:

Certainly when I chat to industry they’re always moaning about the poor standards of students from colleges. No, the standards aren’t as good.

(INT2, 2004)

and:

When I talk to employers they’re always bemoaning how skill levels have fallen since the introduction of NVQs. I tend to agree with them.

(INT8, 2004)

Interestingly another lecturer (INT7, 2004) thought that the problem with the NVQ qualifications is that they are too flexible. NVQs were deliberately designed to allow learners to build their own learning pathways from the modules available. This, in theory, allows learners to develop the specific skills that they need from the modules attached to a particular qualification. However, as People 1st identify on their website (www.people1st.co.uk/about-us/core-activities/qualifications-rationalisation):

NVQs allow people to choose from a range of modules. So two people with the same qualifications on paper can have completely different skill sets.

This issue was identified by the lecturer above who suggested that:

With NVQs you can miss out whole areas of skills development which are important for a chef. NVQs don’t provide an all round skills base, therefore they can’t better prepare students for employment.

(INT7, 2004)
Clearly this is an area for concern, particularly as the qualifications are marketed as achieving a national standard. There is obviously a discrepancy in standards if two people can achieve a qualification with the same title but achieve competence in very different skills.

Two FE lecturers suggested that despite the flaws with the NVQ system, which are known to both industry and education, the hospitality industry always criticises the colleges for not properly preparing young people for employment. This was an issue identified in the literature with the example of Nicholls (2005) who claims to trial young qualified chefs in his kitchen before employing them because he can’t rely on NVQs to provide the necessary skills and knowledge. One lecturer argued:

*The industry used to complain about the old 706 series qualifications, and that students weren’t prepared for the industry with them.............but with NVQs they do their own training once the student starts full-time employment.*

(INT12, 2004)

Another chef lecturer agreed that industry was always critical of the colleges and the qualifications awarded to students:

*At the end of it employers will still complain that they don’t have the necessary skills. That used to be the case with the City & Guilds craft qualifications.*

(INT6, 2004)

However, a training provider conceded that there are gaps in the knowledge of young chefs leaving colleges with NVQs, and therefore these qualifications aren’t better preparing people for employment:
I think many students think they're ready, but when they start working in the industry they realise that there are huge gaps in their knowledge which the NVQ course hasn't covered.

(INT9, 2004)

This view was confirmed by a FE lecturer who has worked in the same college with both the C&G craft and the NVQ qualifications:

The industry has to accept people with NVQs, But no, I don't think they're as able to do as good an 'all round' job as people who went before (into industry) with craft qualifications.

(INT11, 2004)

A final negative view on this question was provided by another training provider, who admitted that whist he had to sell these qualifications to young people, he regarded:

.......NVQs as just a paper-chase qualification. They have certainly not prepared people better for a career in catering. Most chefs I talk to say the same thing.

(INT13, 2004)

However, despite these dissenting opinions, several interviewees thought that NVQs had succeeded in better preparing candidates for employment. One college lecturer, who left the industry three years ago, was adamant that NVQs were far more suitable for the modern needs of a “modern industry”. He argued:

It's a modern qualification for a modern industry. The industry doesn't need the same craft skills as twenty years ago. Many things can be done using equipment that weren't around when the old C&G qualifications were the benchmark. NVQs recognise that the skills base needed in a modern kitchen is different.

(INT5, 2004)

Another FE lecturer, with eight years experience teaching in a college, agreed with earlier respondents that the industry is always critical of the colleges. However he was positive about the responsiveness of NVQs to the modern kitchen environment:
The industry is always critical of catering colleges, but many establishments don’t need qualified chefs anymore as everything is bought-in ready prepared and then re-heated in convection ovens or microwaves. The NVQ system recognises that traditional craft skills have changed. In that way they do better prepare youngsters for what they will meet in industry.

(INT4, 2004)

Such a view was certainly refreshing amongst all the cynicism that I had encountered in other interviews. It was evident that this chef lecturer recognised that many of the previous craft skills that were a predominant feature of the City & Guilds 706 craft series qualifications were no longer needed in the modern hospitality industry.

This view was echoed by another college lecturer, who had left the hospitality industry within the last two years. He agreed with the above respondent and stated:

Yes, I think that NVQs are realistic and relevant. They were designed by employers for delivery in the workplace, so they must be better at preparing people for employment than the college-based qualifications that preceded NVQs.

(INT10, 2004)

However, another recent entrant to education and training, a college lecturer with two years experience in FE, was more neutral in his views. He argued that neither the C&G nor the NVQ system better prepared learners for employment in the hospitality industry. Instead he claimed that young people only really became prepared for working life by joining the industry:

It (the NVQ system) prepares them no better and no worse than the previous ‘706’ system. Students always find industry very different to life in a college kitchen, - that’s always been the case.

(INT3, 2004)
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Such differences of opinions amongst education and training providers make it difficult to draw firm conclusions as to whether NVQs do prepare people more effectively for careers in the hospitality industry. There was no clear distinction between the education and training providers, and certainly the employment location (Southeast Wales, rest of Wales, England) was not an influencing factor. However, as in earlier questions, it was evident that the younger interviewees (with relatively few years experience in full-time education/training) were more positive about NVQs, and regard the NVQ system as more accurately reflecting the needs of the modern hospitality industry.

5.3.3.9 Question 9. Alternative model to the NVQ approach.

A critical question in the primary research process was to assess whether the interviewees were sufficiently dissatisfied with the NVQ system for them to ideally wish for an alternative model. I was also interested to learn how such an alternative model would operate, and why it would be better.

There was general consensus from both FE lecturers and training providers that there are problems with the NVQ system which can addressed either by “tinkering” with the current system or by a major revamp of vocational training qualifications. The key issue of concern was the lack of formal examinations, both practical and written, on NVQ programmes. A college lecturer with 18 years experience of delivering practical craft catering qualifications argued that NVQs could only be improved if formal assessments were introduced that tested both written and practical skills, and these assessments would have to be moderated by external, independent assessors:
The practical assessments would need to be watched by external examiners, and the written exams would have to be sent outside to be marked. This would improve quality immediately.

(INT1, 2004)

This view was supported by another college lecturer who only left the industry 6 years ago. He argued that the close relationship between the assessor and the candidate makes it difficult for the assessor to be objective and impartial when making assessment decisions:

I would ensure that practical competence should be assessed by an independent external assessor. That’s the main weakness with the current NVQ system, - the close assessor/candidate relationship. It doesn’t make for good objective testing of the candidate performance.

(INT6, 2004)

Several assessors argued for the re-introduction of formal exams as a mechanism in a revised model to ensure the quality of the NVQ qualification:

Put in exams and formal practical assessments. Also don’t call them NVQs, they will need a new name because the NVQ name is tarnished.

(INT11, 2004)

and:

(Include) formal external assessment for both written and practical skills. It’s the only way to ensure the quality of the qualifications.

(INT7, 2004)

The call for a return to a qualification model similar to the previous City and Guilds 706 craft qualifications was a repeated theme in the interviews. A training provider stated:

Most employers would like a re-vamp of the old 706 series, with more flexibility built in for different organisations to choose from units that more suit their needs.

(INT9, 2004)
A college lecturer developed this idea by suggesting:

I'd scrap the NVQ system and re-introduce an updated version of the 706 series. There would be formal practical and written assessment, but at least then the qualification would have some credibility and employers would take it seriously.

(INT12, 2004)

Another lecturer repeated the plea for more formal assessments, similar to those used in the C&G qualifications, to replace the “informality” of current NVQ assessments:

I would like a model similar to the old C&G qualifications with end-testing rather than on-going assessments.

(INT8, 2004)

However other interviewees accepted that it was not possible to return to the model used by the previous qualifications. They argued that industry needs have changed and that the qualifications produced for the catering industry need to reflect current rather than “previous working practices” (INT3, 2004). It is significant however that even respondents in this category accepted that the NVQ model needed amendment:

The NVQ system as a craft-based qualification is generally OK. But......a written test might improve it further.

(INT3, 2004)

and:

I would try to improve what we have. I don't think that there is anything fundamentally wrong, the system just needs refining.

(INT5, 2004)
Indeed, it was the suggestion of external assessment that was the reoccurring theme even among this group of interviewees who generally accepted NVQs as a suitable craft qualification for the modern hospitality industry. As an FE lecturer concluded:

*Unfortunately, although I don’t like exams, I think that some kind of external assessment is needed. The NVQ system is too loose, it needs tightening-up, then standards will improve.*

(INT2, 2004)

Only one respondent from the 13 interviewed (an FE Lecturer in his late 20’s who was appointed to a full-time college role two years previously) claimed that the current model for delivery and assessment of NVQs was wholly appropriate:

*I think that what we have got now is very suitable for today’s needs. Obviously as and when industry needs change in the future we will have to have revised skills-based qualifications that reflect those changes. However, I am quite satisfied with the NVQ system as it operates at the moment.*

(INT10, 2004)

However, more typical was the response from another lecturer, who has been in FE for eight years, who argued that the NVQ model could only be improved once the NVQ portfolio is replaced as an assessment and evidence building vehicle:

*Get rid of the portfolio which is administratively burdensome. No-one likes portfolio building,- it is just a paper exercise.*

(INT4, 2004)

This theme, exploring possible alternative training models and amendments to the current NVQ approach, was clearly very contentious revealing varying levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the NVQ model. The responses suggest that the age of the interviewees and their length of time in teaching are influencing factors on the
attitudes held, whereas an analysis of the geographical location of interviewees and their responses indicates no variation. However, it was evident that all respondents could identify improvements that they considered necessary to improve the current qualifications. This was clearly a key issue which would need to be explored further using the e-questionnaire.

5.3.3.10 Question 10. Attitudes to other hospitality and catering qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The intention in asking the interviewees about the NQF (National Qualifications Framework) was to learn about their attitudes to alternative hospitality and catering qualifications, e.g. ND (National Diploma), GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification), AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) etc. I was keen to learn if there was a correlation in the attitudes of assessors delivering different types of hospitality and catering qualifications to those attitudes evident when delivering NVQs. However the responses to this question were disappointing. Many respondents claimed to have no experience delivering and assessing other types of hospitality and catering qualifications. This was surprising, particularly among those interviewees from the FE sector. Typical responses included:

*I don’t teach on these courses, sorry.*

(INT13, 2004)

and:

*I have no experience of GNVQs and AVCEs. I did an ND myself but I know the new NDs are very different.*

(INT5, 2004)

One interviewee relied on historical knowledge to answer this question:
I don’t teach on GNVQ and AVCE, but the National Diploma was regarded as a good benchmark qualification for supervisors.

(INT4, 2004)

However another interviewee from an FE college made an interesting comment by linking GNVQs and AVCEs with NVQs, when in practice no clear links exist:

I like the National Diploma, it’s a good benchmark qualification. GNVQs and AVCEs are regarded as off-shoots of NVQs, and therefore people don’t trust them.

(INT11, 2004)

The training providers offered no useful responses to this question: “I have no detailed knowledge of these qualifications” (INT9, 2004), and “I don’t deliver those courses” (INT13, 2004).

On the basis of the poor interview responses received I therefore decided not to pursue this question theme in the e-questionnaire.

5.3.3.11 Question 11. Suitability of the NQF to improve understanding of different hospitality qualifications.

The responses to this question, which again concerned the NQF, were more focussed and fully answered than for the previous question. The intent was to discover whether the NQF has assisted employers, students, and the hospitality industry to achieve improved understanding of different hospitality qualifications, and how the qualifications relate to each other in terms of level. The responses however revealed no differences between any of the interviewees. A typical response from an FE lecturer suggested that the whole qualifications structure is confused, and the NQF has only added to the confusion:
Does anyone really understand what it all means? Is an NVQ 1 equal to 706/1? No it isn't, - but lots of people think it is. The whole system needs to be sorted so that we all understand what equates with what.

(INT2, 2004)

Another lecturer suggested that “people are more confused than ever.” (INT6, 2004), and a training provider claimed that “everyone is confused, - students, lecturers and industry.” (INT9, 2004)

An interviewee from a college suggested that:

The whole qualification system has become funding driven so that quality is compromised and no-one really understands how different qualifications equate with each other.

(INT7, 2004)

This view was confirmed by another college lecturer who stated:

I don’t think many lecturers understand it, never mind anyone else. The qualifications system has become a maze. We’re all lost in it, and no-one really knows how to move forward to get us out of the confusion.”

(INT8, 2004)

A training provider argued that the government’s involvement in training and the qualifications framework had made an already confused situation worse. He claimed that:

I think that since the government got so involved in the qualification system the whole thing has become bureaucratic and administratively burdensome. So no, the NQF has made things worse.

(INT13, 2004)

The responses to this question indicated complete agreement from all the interviewees which I concluded could not be usefully explored further. As with the previous question
concerning the NQF, I therefore decided not to include this theme in the larger sample size e-questionnaire

5.3.3.12 Question 12. Issues affecting recruitment onto hospitality courses.

A key issue within hospitality and catering education in recent years has been the downturn in recruitment figures onto college courses. In my interviews with employers during phase 1 and phase 2 of the research process, it became evident that many employers blame the colleges themselves for the decline in demand for practical catering courses. The employers argue that the college courses do not suitability prepare students for careers in the catering industry, and by default the NVQ system must be a contributory factor. I therefore chose to use the concluding question with the education and training providers to test this hypothesis.

The responses however were very wide-ranging covering a plethora of recruitment and retention issues. One college lecturer argued that school-leavers have too much choice:

*There are so many options available at 16 today, and catering has a poor image. I think that a variety of factors have caused the decline, but I don’t have any answers.*

(INT1, 2004)

This theme of the image of the industry was endorsed by a lecturer who left the industry three years ago. She argued:

*Some television programmes do us no favours and parents react to what they see on TV. I’m sure that lots of young people who would like to go into catering, and have the flair and skills, are put off by parents and teachers.*

(INT5, 2004)

A lecturer who also recently left the industry (two years previously) suggested:
Young people today are put off a career in catering by their school, their parents, and the media. It's all to do with image. Until the image of catering improves we will continue to have problems with recruitment. There are NVQs in all trades, and they don't all have problems with recruitment, so we can't blame the qualifications.

(INT3, 2004)

Another FE lecturer suggested:

The market-place is too competitive. Add to that the fact that schools want 16 year olds to go into their 6th forms. It's not surprising that recruitment onto hospitality and catering courses has fallen.

(INT2, 2004)

and a lecturer with fifteen years experience in an FE college said:

I don't think NVQs are to blame. Young people have so much choice now, they want to work in glamorous jobs, so you can't blame them for not wanting to work in hot and sweaty kitchens. Despite the fact that top chefs earn a lot of money, it's all to do with the image of the industry.

(INT11, 2004)

However it was the influence of NVQs on recruitment and retention that was of particular interest to me. A lecturer with eight years experience in an FE college was emphatic that NVQs were not responsible for the decline in recruitment:

NVQs are not to blame. The decline in numbers doing catering was evident before they (NVQs) were introduced.

(INT4, 2004)

This view was echoed by a lecturer with ten years FE experience:

I'm sure recruitment levels will improve in time, we can't blame NVQs. It's all to do with the image of the industry, and the careers that are fashionable for young people at the moment.

(INT8, 2004)

Even a training provider agreed that NVQs were not the root cause of the problem:

I don't think NVQs have helped, but I think the issue is more complex than simply blaming NVQs.

(INT9, 2004)
However an established lecturer with 15 years experience delivering practical catering within an FE environment was more philosophical with his perspective on the situation.

> It's all to do with fashion. In the 1970's it was fashionable to study hotel and catering. Now leisure, media, and sports courses are in vogue. But the wheel will turn again, fashions change. Plus, where are the jobs in leisure, media and sports? That's never a problem in catering.

(INT7, 2004)

It is difficult therefore to draw any solid conclusions from these interview responses. Some interviewees were convinced that the falling recruitment figures are primarily caused by the poor image of the catering industry, while others argued that school-leavers have too many career choices. Most interviewees accepted that NVQs had not helped the situation, but equally they argued that NVQs are not solely responsible for poor recruitment in recent years. Clearly the education and training providers hold very different views to the employers on the issues affecting recruitment onto catering courses.

This question therefore succeeded in creating further questions, which if explored could potentially serve only to further complicate and move the focus of my research in a new direction in the final stage of primary data collection. I therefore decided not to include a question on recruitment in the e-questionnaire.

### 5.4 Consolidation of key themes from the interviews.

The interview responses therefore provided a detailed analysis of the attitudes of education and training providers towards the NVQ approach for skills development. It was necessary therefore to review these interview responses and consolidate the issues
into a series of key themes. This would then inform the design and content of the e-questionnaire. The following is a discussion of the emerging key themes:

5.4.1. Image of catering and hospitality NVQs.

It was evident that many of the interviewees were concerned about the image and perceived value of NVQs. A recurring theme was that NVQs are regarded as a poor replacement for the City & Guilds craft qualifications that preceded them. Some interviewees also questioned the value attached to the NVQ system by the various stakeholders involved (the hospitality industry, the education and training providers, and the candidates enrolled on NVQ programmes).

As reviewed earlier in this chapter there were some strong opinions voiced about the comparability of the NVQ system with alternative qualification models. Some interviewees argued that NVQs suffered from a poor image because they are “too easy” and that skill levels in the industry have declined since NVQs were introduced. Others blamed the poor image on the lack of formal assessment, the notion of “assessment on demand”, and the demise of any form of unseen written examination.

On the basis of these responses I concluded that the first section of the e-questionnaire should focus on a series of questions relating to the image of NVQs and whether the education and training providers perceive any differences in image between the different stakeholders. I also designed the e-questionnaire so that there was a space at the end of each section to allow respondents to develop and qualify their quantitative responses.
5.4.2. Suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the industry.

It can be argued that the primary purpose of any vocational qualification is to develop the necessary skills and expertise for the learner to undertake a valid role within that industry on successful completion of the qualification. On the basis of this premise several of the interview questions focused on the suitability of the NVQ competence-approach to learning for the hospitality and catering industry.

A key concern to the interviewees was whether NVQs reflect the needs of the modern hospitality and catering industry. It was accepted that NVQs had been developed in an attempt to improve the number of staff holding formal skills-based qualifications, but many interviewees argued that this measure had done little to improve overall skill levels within the industry. Indeed a recurring theme in the interviews was that NVQs have resulted in both a fall in craft skills and overall standards since their introduction.

Another related issue concerned how effectively NVQs provide learners with opportunities for career progression, and whether a qualified employee is likely to be better motivated and confident in the workplace. Several interviewees questioned whether NVQs delivered outside the work environment (i.e. in a college) contribute anything to a learner’s overall knowledge and appreciation of current working practices in the industry. Interviewees were also concerned about the government’s agenda and intent to create a better qualified workforce, and whether, as a result of this policy, NVQs achieved at Level 1 are of any real value.
I therefore decided that it would be useful to summarise these issues into a series of questions that focussed on the suitability of the NVQ system for the catering and hospitality industry. Again space was left at the end of this section on the e-questionnaire for respondents to provide a fuller explanation of their quantitative responses.

5.4.3. Issues associated with the implementation of NVQs.

The majority of interviewees bemoaned the intense and time-consuming administration that is necessary to deliver NVQs effectively within both college and industry environments. In several of the interview questions reviewed earlier it was suggested that the NVQ system is too bureaucratic and "long-winded" for the fast-paced, time-constrained hospitality industry. It was argued that NVQs required "too much emphasis on gathering evidence rather than actually doing it" (INT11, 2004). Other interviewees claimed that the assessment, tracking and portfolio systems are too intense and repetitive, and that NVQ accreditation has become a paper-exercise removed from reality.

Another key implementation issue concerned the assessment model used by NVQs. Many education and industry based assessors question the notion of a candidate being deemed as "competent" or "not yet competent" following an assessment. As discussed in Chapter 3 this is a contentious issue as grading is not used in NVQ assessments. The argument is that a person can either "do" or "not do" the task. As explained earlier the application of grading would suggest that a person could perform a task at less than 100% competence.
However, it was evident when reviewing the interview responses that many education and training providers are uncomfortable with the current assessment model. As explained earlier, several interviewees suggested that externally set written tests should be introduced in order to make the assessments more independent and less subjective. Others argued that practical competence should be assessed by an independent external assessor who is removed from the financial pressures created by achievement-based funding mechanisms. Even the flexible approach to assessment with no time constraints and “assessment on demand” was regarded by some interviewees as a weakness rather than a key strength of the NVQ system.

During the interviews it was evident that many of the interviewees had experienced, or were aware of, abuses of the NVQ assessment system due to the funding mechanisms employed. These were discussed earlier (4.3.8), but the fact that these abuses were acknowledged by some interviewees suggested that it was necessary to include this issue in the e-questionnaire.

I therefore concluded that there were several important factors impinging on and affecting the implementation of NVQs, and that these factors needed to be explored more fully in an identified section of the e-questionnaire. Again I decided that in order to encourage respondents to develop their quantitative responses, I would leave space at the end of this section on the e-questionnaire for any additional comments (qualitative data).
5.4.4 Other emerging themes and issues.

The other two main themes emerging from the interviews were concerned with:

1. possible improvements that could be made to the NVQ system, and
2. suggestions for an alternative model to replace the NVQ approach.

Indeed, the analysis of the interview responses provided some interesting and useful data which developed these themes and was discussed earlier. However as these two themes are key to this study, I was keen to generate further discussion and acquire more data by using a series of questions that required qualitative responses in the e-questionnaire. I therefore devised questions which developed these themes by questioning respondents about:

- the perceived strengths and weaknesses of NVQs,
- their satisfaction with the current catering and hospitality NVQs,
- their knowledge of the proposed revisions to catering and hospitality NVQs,
- the possible alternative qualification models which could replace NVQs, and
- the funding arrangements which should be made available to support vocational qualifications in hospitality and catering.

The e-questionnaire responses to these questions are presented and discussed fully in Chapters 6 & 7.

Interestingly the interviews also revealed that some factors which initially I had considered may influence attitudes, and would therefore be significant in this study, actually had little or no influence. The most obvious of these was geographical location.
As stated earlier, a secondary objective of the interview process was to assess whether the attitudes of NVQ education and training providers in Southeast Wales were similar to attitudes prevalent in other parts of Wales and England. However the analysis of responses from the thirteen interviews held across Southeast Wales, Wales and England indicates that the identified attitudes towards NVQs do not differ based on location. Indeed the similarity of interview responses across the different regions is evident, with no single question or issue creating any differences or divisions in attitudes.

This finding is clearly critical to the study title: “Attitudes towards training within the hospitality industry in Southeast Wales”. It indicates that Southeast Wales is typical and representative of the attitudes towards NVQ training in the hospitality industry that prevail in other parts of Wales and England. As such I could confidently target the e-questionnaire across Wales and England on the basis that the results from the macro-environment would equally reflect and represent the micro-environment of Southeast Wales.

Interestingly a factor that did emerge as an influence on attitudes was the age of the interviewees. Attitudes were further influenced by how recently the interviewees had left employment within the hospitality industry to pursue careers in education and training. Certainly younger people, with recent experience of the hospitality industry, were more positive about NVQs than their colleagues who had delivered the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications. Arguably this may be a case of the more “experienced” education and training providers reminiscing and looking-back through “rose-tinted glasses”.

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However, although age is an important factor, I did not wish to introduce this additional dimension into the e-questionnaire. As with some of the interview questions discussed earlier I was concerned that the key focus of “attitudes” in this study could become blurred if I included other measurable variables. I therefore concluded that a study based on the influence of the ages of the educators and trainers delivering NVQs could be developed as a separate but complimentary research project to my own.

5.5 Chapter review.

In this chapter I have presented and reviewed the results from the initial face-to-face interviews which were used to identify issues and inform the design of the e-questionnaire. I am pleased with the outcomes in this chapter which assisted the production of an e-questionnaire with a concise and clear focus. The results also enabled me to exclude certain issues from the study which could have detracted and blurred the final two research objective.

The key issues identified in this chapter will now be progressed further in Chapter 6 where I will present the results from the e-questionnaire data collection process. Chapter 7 will consolidate the findings from this final primary research process and I will make recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training.
Chapter 6.

NVQs in Hospitality & Catering –
A blessing or a curse?

E-Questionnaire Results.
Chapter 6.

NVQs in Hospitality & Catering –
A blessing or a curse?

E-Questionnaire Results.

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Background to the Data Collection Methodology

6.3 Presentation of the Data and Overall Findings

6.4 Description of the E-Questionnaire Layout

6.5 Analysis of the E-Questionnaire Results

6.5.1 About you

6.5.2 The image of catering and hospitality NVQs

6.5.3 The suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry

6.5.4 Issues associated with the implementation of catering and hospitality NVQs

6.5.5 Strengths and weaknesses of the NVQ system

6.6 Chapter Review
Attitudes towards training within the Hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

Development model for the study.

Phases completed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase.</th>
<th>Target groups.</th>
<th>Research methodology.</th>
<th>Research methods.</th>
<th>Objective(s).</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>“NEAT” project SMEs</td>
<td>Case study 1.</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Southeast Wales employers (SMEs &amp; large national brand outlets)</td>
<td>Case study 1.</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
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<td>Case study 2.</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
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<td>3 (Part 2)</td>
<td>Education and training providers</td>
<td>Case study 2.</td>
<td>E-questionnaire</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attitudes towards training within the hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

Chapter 6.

NVQs in Hospitality & Catering – A blessing or a curse?

E-questionnaire results.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the primary data collection for the study, and focuses on the fourth research objective:

4. To explore and review the suitability of the NVQ approach to skills development as a model for hospitality education/training.

The findings from this final stage in the research process will be used to review the attitudes of education and training providers towards catering and hospitality NVQs, and to make recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training.

6.2 Background to the data collection methodology

The interview responses, discussed in Chapter 5, helped to inform the design of the questions used in the e-questionnaire (phase 3, part 2), ensuring that key issues were included and less relevant themes were omitted. The e-questionnaire was deliberately structured to allow participants to reply quickly. I was conscious that college lecturers and other training providers would be unwilling to engage with an email document attachment that looked too complicated and took more than about ten minutes to complete. The e-questionnaire was therefore designed using primarily quantitative response-based questions (“quick-fire questions”) whilst also including a minimum
number of qualitative response questions. This gave participants the opportunity to develop and further explain their responses as they thought appropriate.

The e-questionnaire, written on SNAP software (a specialist software package designed for surveys and research data collection) was e-mailed to 140 education/training providers in Southeast Wales, the rest of Wales, and England during the spring/early summer 2005. The deadline for completion was the 30th September 2005. During this period 73 completed e-questionnaires were received (52.14% response rate).

6.3 **Presentation of the data and overall findings.**

In order to achieve clear visual presentation of the findings I decided to export the results from SNAP onto SPSS (a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which enables the production of higher quality graphics. This transfer of data onto SPSS enabled me to produce graphs/bar charts which clearly illustrate the research findings in a non-complex format. To further assist my data analysis process then I chose to apply the Kruskal-Wallis test to each set of results. The Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric test (distribution free) that is used to compare three or more independent groups (grouping variables) of sampled data. It is used to examine the significance of the factors in a multi-factor model. In my survey the grouping variables compared using this test were the further education (FE) respondents, the higher education (HE) respondents, and the training providers (TP). I decided to exclude “others” as I was unable to allocate a precise identity to these respondents. The Kruskal-Wallis test determines that if the probability of the result of comparing the variables is less than 0.05 (<0.05) then there is a significant difference in the responses received. I have
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

applied this test and commented on the result for each quantitative question included in the e-questionnaire. (The abbreviation used for this calculation is [KW, P], where KW = Kruskal-Wallis, and P = Probability.). The Kruskal-Wallis test calculations are presented in the appendices.

6.4 Description of the e-questionnaire layout.

The e-questionnaire was designed to encourage the target audience to engage with this primary research process. I deliberately chose a layout that was easy for respondents to navigate, presenting a structured approach to the sequencing of the questions. The section headings represent the key issues identified in the interviews discussed in Chapter 5, which, as explained above, informed the focus of the questions used in the e-questionnaire.

I introduced the e-questionnaire (section 1) by assuring respondents of their anonymity. As the implementation issues relating to NVQs have been contentious, particularly in the FE sector, I decided that it was appropriate to allow respondents to choose not to identify themselves other than by the sector that they represent.

The following sections (sections 2, 3, 4 and 5) in the e-questionnaire cover the key themes of:

- the image of catering and hospitality NVQs,
- the suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry,
- issues associated with the implementation of catering and hospitality NVQs, and
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- strengths and weaknesses of NVQs.

In each section I allowed respondents the opportunity to develop their answers by providing additional comments. A copy of the e-questionnaire is included in the appendices.

The e-questionnaire design therefore was an attempt to combine both quantitative and qualitative data in a user-friendly format. The aim was to ensure that the responses received provided a comprehensive analysis of the attitudes of educators and training providers towards the suitability of NVQs.

6.5 Analysis of the e-questionnaire results.

The following is an analysis of the data received and the results obtained from the e-questionnaire data collection process:

6.5.1 ABOUT YOU

Q1. Sectors involved in the questionnaire

A total of 73 e-questionnaires were returned. The breakdown of the respondents was:

Further Education Institution (FE) 45
Higher Education Institution (HE) 23
Training Provider (TP) 02
Others (education and training consultants) 03

The majority of respondents targeted were from the FE sector, and this is reflected in the high proportion of responses received from this sector.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

6.5.2 THE IMAGE OF CATERING AND HOSPITALITY NVQs.

Q2a. Catering and hospitality NVQs suffer from a poor image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>13 (28.9%)</td>
<td>18 (40.0%)</td>
<td>12 (26.7%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>10 (43.5%)</td>
<td>11 (47.8%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24 (32.9%)</td>
<td>32 (43.8%)</td>
<td>14 (19.2%)</td>
<td>3 (4.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 2a: Catering and hospitality NVQs suffer from a poor image

The results indicate that in both the FE and HE sectors there is agreement that NVQs suffer from a poor image. The majority of respondents in these sectors “agree” with the question statement (FE 40.0% and HE 47.8%), and “strongly agree” (FE 28.9% and HE 43.5%). Interestingly opinions were more forthright in the HE sector, with only 8.7% of
HE respondents claiming to “neither agree nor disagree”, compared to 26.7% of FE respondents opting for this statement.

The training providers were divided in their attitudes with one agreeing and one disagreeing with the statement. When considering all the respondents, a significant majority either “agree” (43.8%) or “strongly agree” (32.9%) with the statement. Only a small minority “disagree” (4.1%), and no respondents “strongly disagree” with the statement.

When the Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to the results [KW, P = 0.067], it reveals that no difference in attitude is evident between FE, HE and the training providers.

**Q2b. NVQs are valued by catering and hospitality lecturers.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>13 (28.9%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>19 (42.2%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
<td>5 (21.7%)</td>
<td>10 (43.5%)</td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (33.35%)</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 (24.7%)</td>
<td>15 (20.5%)</td>
<td>31 (42.5%)</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results indicate that the majority of respondents (42.5%) from the different sectors “disagree” with the statement that NVQs are valued by catering and hospitality lecturers, and a further 12.3% of all respondents “strongly disagree”.

Further analysis reveals that the majority of FE lecturers (the main education/training sector involved in NVQ delivery) “disagree” (42.2%), and a further 11.1% “strongly disagree”. From the HE sector 43.5% of respondents “disagree” with the statement, while 17.4% “strongly disagree”. There were no respondents who “strongly agree” that NVQs are valued by hospitality and catering lecturers.

This is particularly interesting as it may have been expected that younger lecturers, particularly in the FE sector, with limited experience of the previous C&G craft qualifications, would have been more strongly supportive of NVQs and would have
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

skewed the results. The Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.263] confirms that there is no significant difference in attitude across the sectors surveyed.

**Q2c. NVQs are valued by the catering and hospitality industry.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education 45</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>15 (33.4%)</td>
<td>18 (40.0%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education 23</td>
<td>1 (4.4%)</td>
<td>3 (13.0%)</td>
<td>6 (26.1%)</td>
<td>11 (47.8%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider 2</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 73</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td>10 (13.7%)</td>
<td>21 (28.8%)</td>
<td>31 (42.5%)</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 2c: NVQs are valued by the catering and hospitality industry

The majority of respondents indicated that they "disagree" (42.5%) or "strongly disagree" (12.3%) with the statement that NVQs "are valued by the catering industry".
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Only a minority of respondents from all sectors “agree” (13.7%) or “strongly agree” (2.7%).

Similar proportions of FE and HE respondents “disagree” with the statement (40.0% and 47.8% respectively), but interestingly a significant minority of FE lecturers took an extreme response and indicated that they “strongly disagree” (13.3%). The Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.816] again indicates no significant variation in attitudes between the FE, HE and Training Provider respondents.

**Q2d. Catering and hospitality NVQs are a good successor for the craft qualifications they replaced.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Further Education 45</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 (44.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>12 (26.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education 23</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
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<td>9 (39.2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>12 (52.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training Provider 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 73</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5 (6.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12 (16.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 (39.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>27 (37.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Graph 2d: Catering and hospitality NVQs are a good successor for the craft qualifications they replaced

There was a very decisive response to this question. In all sectors the majority of respondents skewed towards “disagree” (39.8%) or “strongly disagree” (37.0%) with the statement. No respondents from any sector “strongly agree” with the statement.

From the FE sector a significant majority either “disagree” (44.4%) or “strongly disagree” (26.7%). Only a small minority of FE respondents “agree” (6.7%) that NVQs are a good successor for the previous C&G craft qualifications. The HE responses also reflected strongly towards “disagree”, with the majority of HE lecturers (52.2%) indicating strong disagreement with the statement.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The two training provider responses were divided in their views with one “agree” and one “strongly disagree” response. From the “other” respondents one education/training consultant indicates “agree”, while the remaining two register “strongly disagree”

Application of the Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, P = 0.071] indicates general agreement in attitudes between the sectors questioned.

Q2e. NVQs have a positive image with young people seeking a career in the catering and hospitality industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>13 (28.9%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14 (31.1%)</td>
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<td>73</td>
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<td>23 (31.5%)</td>
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</table>
Responses to this question showed a more even distribution between “agree” and “strongly disagree”. No respondents relied that they “strongly agree” with the statement. The majority of all respondents (32.9%) indicated that they “neither agree nor disagree”, but this was very closely followed (31.5%) by respondents who “disagree” with the statement. The distribution was skewed towards the negative responses with a further 12.3% of all respondents replying that they “strongly disagree”.

An analysis of the sectors indicates that there is a relatively even distribution of responses between “agree” and “strongly disagree”. The HE sector has a higher proportion of respondents who “neither agree nor disagree” (47.8%) compared to
(28.9%) in FE. This may be because more FE lecturers have a day-to-day working relationship with the young people taking NVQs, and therefore they have a better appreciation as to how these young people regard the qualification.

Application of the Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, P = 0.60] again indicates no significant variation in attitudes between the sectors.

**Q2f. Additional comments on the image of catering and hospitality NVQs.**

At this stage in the questionnaire the respondents were requested to provide any additional comments on the image of catering and hospitality NVQs which would expand their previous quantitative data responses. The SNAP software enabled me to sort the comments into the specific sectors. The following therefore is an analysis of the comments received from the different sectors:

**a) Further Education.**

The FE lecturers were very forthright in their opinions regarding the image of NVQs not only within an educational context, but also how the qualification is regarded by industry. One lecturer suggested that NVQs are regarded as “shallow” by all concerned in their delivery:

*NVQ's are only an assessment tool but they wiped out the previous qualifications that delivered a wider theoretical and practical basis to students.*

(FE, 34)
A typical statement revealed that many FE lecturers do not regard catering NVQs as preparation for work in the industry. They are too competence specific rather than preparing the learner for a multi-task role in a modern kitchen:

*NVQ's are not seen as a training programme by most people in industry, but a statement of competence to do a specific job role.*

(FE, 41)

Another FE lecturer suggested that the image of NVQs has become confused and tarnished, and that the qualification is not being delivered in the way that was originally intended when they were devised:

*In my view NVQs were never designed for education, they were a tool to qualify workers (working) in industry already who hadn’t got a qualification.*

(FE, 52)

This theme of poor image due to inappropriate delivery was developed further by a respondent who stated:

*Although NVQs were originally intended to be industry-based rather than college-based, industry based NVQs lead to short cuts with evidence being made up and not being assessed correctly.*

(FE, 56)

Another simply argued that the image of NVQs is confused because:

*Industry still doesn't understand the process for achieving NVQ's.*

(FE, 66)

Another theme that the FE lecturers used when focussing on the image of NVQs concerned the way they are assessed. The common criticism, confirmed in the literature, was the NVQ jargon and too much paperwork as part of the assessment process:
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

NVQs have been made too academic reliant. Most learners want to concentrate on the practical side and do not like filling in reams of paperwork.

(FE, 70)

and:

the image of NVQs......no good, too shallow, no depth, difficult jargon used for simple tasks. Too much paperwork for lecturers.

(FE, 82)

Several FE lecturers supported this criticism, and one specifically claimed that:

Education doesn't like them, and industry isn't that keen. NVQs have a poor image in the hospitality industry because of the way they are assessed.

(FE, 86)

Another lecturer blamed the assessors in both the colleges and industry for the problem of poor image due to assessment:

NVQs have not always been rigorously assessed which means standards have been eroded and compromised.

(FE, 95)

However other FE lecturers argued that the poor image of NVQs is simply due to comparisons that are continually made to the previous C&G craft qualifications:

I feel that NVQ's are valued more by those who are less familiar (or not at all familiar) with the previous H&C qualifications. There is also an anecdotal notion of deskilling which I don't necessarily think is completely true.

(FE, 67)

There was also the suggestion that image of NVQs may be being tarnished because of people looking back with “rose-tinted glasses”:

Whilst NVQs have a poor reputation, the success rates in the last few years of the 706/2 were very low with many students being unable to answer the written question paper.

(FE, 107)
One FE lecturer suggested that it was time to move on and accept the current qualifications:

*NVQs are now just an accepted part of the qualification requirements. College staff are probably more anti because they require more work than the previous qualifications. Students are bewildered because they don't know anything about the previous craft qualifications.*

(FE, 39)

and another simply stated:

*Young people don't understand about the poor image of NVQs in colleges and the industry. They've never known anything else other than NVQs.*

(FE, 103)

Interestingly one lecturer blamed industry for the confusion and the poor image of NVQs, claiming that they don’t understand how the qualification is structured and that they (industry) continue to make incorrect comparisons with the previous qualifications:

*Many employees still refer to the "old" 706/2 qualifications. They question how a student can have a Level 2 qualification and know so little, showing that they do not understand the set up of the NVQs and that comparisons can’t be made between the 706 qualifications and NVQs.*

(FE, 74)

An astute comment made by an FE lecturer argued:

*I think you need to forget about the old qualification and concentrate on what is needed for a changing industry.*

(FE, 51)

and another summarised the current confused image of NVQs by concluding:

*I have sat on the fence as I feel there is a real split. Younger people are in NVQ mode and see its value. Older employers feel that it has been downgraded............ Employers of the old school prefer a written exam to see how much knowledge is retained by the student, and perhaps a compromise solution is what is needed.*

(FE, 50)
b) Higher Education.

Respondents from the HE sector were similarly focused and opinionated in their views about the image of NVQs. A key concern of HE was the perceived lack of “national standards” with NVQs.

_There are no national standards with NVQs. Students with NVQs are usually only as good as the establishment where they trained._

(HE, 85)

Another HE respondent suggested:

_Since there is no national standard, some (NVQ qualifications) are good and others are not worth the paper. This means that overall the image is of a weak, erratic, meaningless qualification._

(HE, 89)

I was surprised by these comments as one of the reasons for introducing NVQs was to achieve national standards of competence. Indeed the quality assurance systems, including external verification (discussed in Chapter 3), are intended to ensure that all candidates achieve to the same standard at a given level. However the HE respondents were convinced that the standards achieved by learners on the same NVQ qualification but at different centres (e.g. FE colleges, other training providers) varied markedly:

_Businesses that I’ve spoken to certainly don’t rate NVQs because the levels of staff that they recruit are so variable, - even when they apparently have the same NVQ._

(HE, 94)

Another HE respondent claimed that NVQs have a poor image as a suitable qualification for craft skills:

_They have a poor image overall re: the craft image._

(HE, 93)
This comment was supported by another HE lecturer who claimed that the image of NVQs across all sectors is problematic:

*It is difficult to separate out the image of one sector NVQs against the whole cross-sector NVQ image problem.*

(HE, 92)

A common theme amongst HE lecturers when considering the image of the qualification was that NVQs have de-valued craft skills in the catering industry. They argue that this is because the design of the curriculum allows centres to cover only the generic basic skills but omit specialist skills:

*They have de-valued the craft qualification status because they have to generically cover all the industry, e.g. stocks and sauces do not have to be covered.*

(HE, 101)

Other HE respondents considered the theme of image by comparing NVQs with the predecessor qualifications:

*They may be perceived as a poor substitute for the old City and Guilds qualifications.*

(HE, 98)

However a minority of HE respondents claimed that it was up to the colleges and training providers to ensure that NVQs have a positive image and are regarded as quality qualifications:

*Candidates don’t know what they want in terms of qualifications. It’s up to the colleges to make sure we have quality qualifications available.*

(HE, 34)

Another HE lecturer agreed with this angle on the argument:

*I don’t think young people know of the previous craft qualifications. Therefore they’re satisfied with NVQs.*

(HE, 71)
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and another suggested:

_Young people don’t know of other practical catering qualifications other than NVQs._

(HE, 83)

c) Training Providers.

Only one training provider contributed to the discussion on the image of NVQs by suggesting that NVQs are a modern qualification for a new generation. The training provider argued that because NVQs are concerned with developing competence skills suitable for the needs of both modern industry and the learner, there is no reason for a poor image:

_Young people know no different. New lecturers know no different. NVQs are competency based, or should be! Work based hence relevant to the needs of the learner and the industry._

(TP, 72)

6.5.3 THE SUITABILITY OF CATERING AND HOSPITALITY NVQS FOR THE CATERING AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Q3a. Catering and hospitality NVQs reflect the needs of the industry today.

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<td>73</td>
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Page 6.19
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Graph 3a: Catering and hospitality NVQs reflect the needs of the industry today.

The results indicate that a large minority of FE lecturers (20.0%) “agree” that NVQs reflect the needs of the modern hospitality and catering industry. Interestingly no HE lecturers indicated that they “agree” with this statement. Although no respondents replied that they “strongly agree” with the statement, a high proportion from all sectors indicated that they “neither agree nor disagree”; (FE 31.1%, HE 34.8%, TP 50%).

In terms of “disagree” with the statement, the proportions from FE (40.0%) and HE (47.8%) were fairly consistent. However it was the “strongly disagree” response that identified the differences between the sectors; FE lecturers (8.9%) against HE lecturers (17.4%). As NVQs are predominately delivered in FE rather than HE (indeed NVQ delivery accounts for a high proportion of FE income), it is perhaps understandable why more FE lecturers are cautious to suggest that NVQs do not reflect the needs of industry.
The Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.048] suggests that there is a difference in attitude between FE, HE and TP. The reason for this difference is explained in the above analysis.

**Q3b Catering and hospitality NVQs provide opportunities for career progression.**

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<tr>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4 (5.4%)</td>
<td>38 (52.1%)</td>
<td>15 (20.5%)</td>
<td>16 (22.0%)</td>
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</table>
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The disparity between HE and FE respondents is again evident in the responses to this statement. Although the overall analysis indicates that the majority of respondents “agree” that catering and hospitality NVQs provide opportunities for career progression (20.5%), the detailed analysis of the sectors reveals a different picture.

In FE the vast majority of respondents (68.9%) suggest that they “agree”. However in HE a minority of lecturers state that they “agree” with the statement (26.1%), whilst larger proportions of staff indicate that they “neither agree nor disagree” (39.1%) or “disagree” (30.4%). The training providers are divided between “strongly agree” and “neither agree nor disagree”, and the others (education and training consultants) provide responses at each stage between “agree” and “disagree”.

As a result of the above analysis it is not surprising that application of the Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, P = 0.02] indicates a difference in attitudes between the sectors in response to the statement.

Q3c. NVQs develop a learner’s overall knowledge of the catering and hospitality industry.

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<td>23</td>
<td>6 (26.1%)</td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
<td>10 (43.5%)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>16 (21.9%)</td>
<td>11 (15.1%)</td>
<td>36 (49.3%)</td>
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Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The overall responses indicate that the majority of respondents either “disagree” (49.3%) or “strongly disagree” (13.7%) with the statement. No respondents replied that they “strongly agree”.

When analysing the different sectors the proportions of responses from the FE and HE sectors are fairly consistent: “agree” FE (20.0%), HE (26.1%); “neither agree nor disagree” FE (11.1%), HE (17.4%); “disagree” FE (55.6%), HE (43.5%); and “strongly disagree” FE (13.3%), HE (13.0%). The training providers divide between “agree” and “neither agree nor disagree”, and the others are divided equally between “neither agree nor disagree” and “strongly disagree”.

The Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, P = 0.223] confirms that there is no significant difference in attitudes to this statement across the sectors.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Q3d. The NVQ system has improved the overall standards achieved in the catering and hospitality industry.

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<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (6.8%)</td>
<td>16 (21.9%)</td>
<td>34 (46.6%)</td>
<td>18 (24.7%)</td>
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Graph 3d: The NVQ system has improved the overall standards achieved in the catering and hospitality industry
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The overall figures show that a majority of respondents “disagree” (46.6%) that the NVQ system has improved the overall standards achieved in the catering and hospitality industry. Only a small minority of all respondents “agree” (6.8%) with the statement, whilst a high proportion (24.7%) “strongly disagree”.

However when the results are analysed on a sector basis, there are some interesting differences. Although the majority of FE lecturers either “disagree” (60.0%) or “strongly disagree” (13.3%), this negative strength of opinion is more extreme and pronounced in the HE sector. As a result a smaller proportion of HE lecturers “disagree” (30.4%) with the statement, but a majority (43.5%) “strongly disagree”. Even among the others, the responses are skewed towards “strongly disagree” (66.7%).

As a result of the above it is not surprising that the Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, P = 0.024] indicates that there are differences in attitudes between the sectors in response to the statement. The FE lecturers are clearly more moderate in their negative responses than their HE counterparts.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Q3e. Achievement of an NVQ creates a more motivated and confident employee.

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<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>20 (27.8%)</td>
<td>25 (34.7%)</td>
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One FE lecturer did not respond to this statement.

Graph 3e: Achievement of an NVQ creates a more motivated and confident employee.

The overall figures reveal a fairly even mid-point distribution of opinions regarding the statement that achieving an NVQ creates a more motivated and confident employee ("agree" 27.8%, "neither agree nor disagree" 34.7%, "disagree" 25.0%). Similarly at
either extreme of response the results are comparable; ("strongly agree" 4.2%, "strongly disagree" 8.3%).

A comparison of FE and HE responses again reveals fairly consistent cumulative totals for the mid-point responses: "agree" FE (29.5%), HE (30.4%); "neither agree nor disagree" FE (34.1%), HE (34.8%); and "disagree" FE (27.3%), HE (17.4%). It is only at the extreme "strongly disagree" response that there is a noticeable difference in the attitudes of respondents; FE (4.5%), HE (17.4%). Significantly no HE respondents "strongly agree" with the statement compared to FE (4.5%).

The training providers and others record a range of responses between "strongly agree" to "disagree". Neither of these two groups "strongly disagree" with the statement.

The above analysis therefore reveals no significant overall differences in attitudes between the sectors in relation to the statement, and this is confirmed by the Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.705].
Q3f. Achieving catering and hospitality NVQs provides better career prospects for learners.

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<td>8 (34.8%)</td>
<td>8 (34.8%)</td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
<td>27 (37.0%)</td>
<td>28 (38.4%)</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td>5 (6.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cumulative totals indicate that the majority of respondents either “agree” (37.0%) or “neither agree nor disagree” (38.4%) with the statement. Relatively few respondents take an extreme view: “strongly agree” (5.5%), “strongly disagree” (6.8%).
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The analysis of sector responses indicates consistency between the FE and HE respondents. Interestingly exactly the same proportions of FE lecturers “agree” and “neither agree or disagree” (40%) with the statement, whereas the HE lecturers also record equal proportions for “agree” and “neither agree nor disagree” (34.8%). Only a minority of lecturers in each sector have extreme attitudes; “strongly agree” (FE 4.4%, HE 4.3%), and “strongly disagree” (FE 4.4%, HE 8.7%).

The training providers and others use the spread of responses except for the “disagree” option. As a result of the above it is not surprising that the Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.503] indicates that there is no significant difference in attitudes between the sectors towards the statement.

Q3g. Catering and hospitality NVQs meet employer needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>14 (31.1%)</td>
<td>15 (33.3%)</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>1 (4.4%)</td>
<td>6 (26.1%)</td>
<td>11 (47.8%)</td>
<td>5 (21.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>2 (67.7%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>10 (13.7%)</td>
<td>22 (30.1%)</td>
<td>28 (38.4%)</td>
<td>12 (16.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The cumulative results reveal that the majority of respondents (38.4%) “disagree” with the statement that catering and hospitality NVQs meet employer needs. Another high proportion of all respondents (30.1%) “neither agree nor disagree” Only one respondent (an FE lecturer) claims to “strongly agree” with the statement (1.4%).

The individual sector analysis also reveals that the majority of FE respondents (33.3%) “disagree” with the statement, and a smaller proportion (15.5%) “strongly disagree”. Similar attitudes are evident in HE, although interestingly higher proportions of HE lecturers “disagree” (47.8%), and “strongly disagree” (21.7%). When the “agree” response is considered, only a small minority (4.4%) of HE lecturers use this response compared to a much higher proportion in FE (17.8%).

The training providers and others provide responses ranging between “agree” and “disagree”. There are no extreme responses from these respondents.
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Application of the Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, P = 0.178] confirms the above analysis and indicates that there are no significant differences in attitudes between the sectors.

Q3h. Catering and hospitality NVQs have improved practical/craft skills in the industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education 45</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>12 (26.7%)</td>
<td>19 (42.2%)</td>
<td>9 (20.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education 23</td>
<td>1 (4.4%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td>11 (47.8%)</td>
<td>9 (39.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider 2</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 3</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 73</td>
<td>8 (11.0%)</td>
<td>15 (20.5%)</td>
<td>31 (42.5%)</td>
<td>19 (26.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 3h: Catering and hospitality NVQs have improved practical/craft skills in the industry.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The cumulative totals indicate that a clear majority of respondents (42.5%) “disagree” with the statement that catering and hospitality NVQs have improved practical/craft skills in the industry, and a further 26% “strongly disagree”. A total of 68.5% of respondents therefore made a negative response. Considering that NVQs are competence-based qualifications with the clear intent of improving skills, this response is a clear indictment of the qualification. Only 11% of respondents “agree” with the statement, with no respondents indicating that they “strongly agree”.

There is an interesting distribution of responses when making a sector analysis. A minority “agree” with the statement; 11.1% in FE, 4.4% in HE. However it is the negative responses that are particularly interesting. In FE a total of 42.2% “disagree” with the statement compared to 47.8% in HE, and for “strongly disagree” there are 20.0% in FE and a larger 39.1% in HE. The response to “neither agree nor disagree” was 26.7% in FE, and 8.7% in HE. As it is predominantly FE lecturers who deliver NVQs, it is therefore not surprising that a higher proportion of FE staff prefer to offer neither a positive or negative opinion compared to their HE counterparts. This probably also explains why the HE staff are prepared to take a more extreme negative response.

The training providers and others range from “agree” to “strongly disagree”, but due to low number of respondents in these categories it is difficult to make a precise analysis of their responses.
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The Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.13] indicates that there is no significant variation in the responses that distinguish one sector from any other in relation to the statement.

Q3i. Catering and hospitality NVQs at Level 1 are of little value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
<td>9 (20.0%)</td>
<td>11 (24.4%)</td>
<td>15 (33.3%)</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>8 (34.8%)</td>
<td>6 (26.1%)</td>
<td>5 (21.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15 (20.5%)</td>
<td>15 (20.5%)</td>
<td>20 (27.5%)</td>
<td>15 (20.5%)</td>
<td>8 (11.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 3i: Catering and hospitality NVQs at Level 1 are of little value.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The cumulative totals reveal an even distribution of responses across “strongly agree”, “agree” and “disagree”, with 20.5% of respondents against each of these responses. The lowest cumulative total was against “strongly disagree” at 11.0%, with “neither agree nor disagree” recording the highest number of respondents at 27.5%.

It is necessary therefore to analyse the sector responses to determine any differences between the sectors in response to the statement. Certainly the FE sector was more cautious than the HE sector in recording “agree” (20.0%) or “strongly agree” (15.6%) responses, compared to HE responses of “agree” (26.1%) and “strongly agree” (34.8%). However, similar totals in each sector suggested “neither agree nor disagree”; FE (24.4%), HE (21.7%).

It is in the analysis of disagreeing with the statement that there is the most noticeable difference. FE respondents to “disagree” (33.3%) and “strongly disagree” (6.7%), compared to HE “disagree” (zero) and “strongly disagree” (17.4%). Therefore overall negative responses are in FE (40.0%) compared to HE (17.4%). These differences are probably accounted for by the fact that Level 1 NVQs are not delivered in HE, and therefore HE lecturers will attach “little value” against this level of qualification. However, lecturers in an FE environment will more commonly work with NVQ Level 1 learners, and therefore they are more likely to be supportive of a qualification which recognises the acquisition of basic skills.

The training providers and others predominate at the “neither agree nor disagree” response, with one training provider opting for the “strongly disagree” response.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Although the Kruskal-Wallis test result indicates no significant difference in attitudes across the sectors [KW, P = 0.087], nevertheless the closeness of this calculation to the 0.05 determinant suggests that there are some marginal differences of opinion across the sectors as my analysis reveals.

Q3i. Additional comments on the suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry.

Having concluded the section 3 questions, I asked respondents to provide any additional comments on the suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs. As in section 2, a high proportion of respondents did provide supplementary answers. The following is an analysis of their comments presented under the sector titles:

a) Further Education.

As with the comments provided for section 2 (image of catering and hospitality NVQs), opinions were equally divided about the suitability of NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry. A common concern I often hear when visiting FE colleges is that qualifications are being de-valued so as to increase the number of students who "pass". This criticism was extended to NVQs by several FE respondents in this section of the e-questionnaire. A typical response from one lecturer suggested that:

NVQs have devalued catering education, particularly craft skills.

(FE, 86)

Another FE respondent argued that:

NVQs are 'lightweight' qualifications which do not improve industry or educational standards.

(FE, 103)

A very forthright criticism suggested:
Fit for purpose? NVQs in some cases have had a deskillling effect. You only need to do that PC (performance criteria) and nothing else. Evidence collection on some units can be so basic that they (learners) have to try hard not to pass.

(FE, 56)

Several respondents suggested that NVQs do not provide learners with the skills needed by industry:

NVQs do not meet the needs of industry. The focus has to be on shorter courses giving more immediate impact where the learner gains skills and knowledge.

(FE, 75)

Another respondent compared the skill levels achieved via an NVQ compared to the previous C&G craft qualifications:

The quality of skills and professionalism acquired through NVQs is nowhere near the one that City & Guilds used to deliver.

(FE, 46)

However one respondent blamed industry for the suggestion that NVQs do need suit industry needs:

The industry does not know what it wants with regard to NVQs. They are designed to be implemented in the industry, but very few employers can be bothered with them.

(FE, 70)

It was argued by another lecturer that this lack of understanding, or acceptance, by industry of NVQs is due to the philosophy of the NVQ process:

There is no provision within the NVQ process for training and development, - it is an assessment process.

(FE, 66)

As one FE lecturer correctly stated:

NVQs are not about how the person got there, but giving them credit for what they know.

(FE, 51)
There was also concern about the perceived inconsistent standards of NVQs delivered in different colleges and training centres by different assessors, and the effect that this has on employers when they can’t trust that a national standard has been achieved:

*Although there should be national standards, they are very difficult to quantify. The quality of the NVQ is very subjective and I fear that some assessors allow funding issues to affect their assessment decisions.*

(FE, 39)

Many FE lecturers questioned the suitability of the NVQ Level 1 qualifications as a means of preparing learners for jobs and careers in the catering industry. One lecturer argued that the skills acquired on a Level 1 course are so basic that as a “stand-alone” qualification it serves no purpose:

*NVQ 1 only really useful as a progression route to L2.*

(FE, 87)

Another FE lecturer suggested that the Level 1 qualification does not equip the learner with any craft skills that are useful to industry:

*Level 1 Food Preparation tends to be focused on the use of convenience foods rather than a foundation for craft skills.*

(FE, 95)

However an alternative opinion was suggested by a lecturer who took an educational rather than an industry perspective on the value of Level 1 NVQ:

*Low achievers should have access to qualifications in the industry. Removing NVQ Level 1 would reduce the opportunity of training for many of these learners.*

(FE, 45)

This educationalist view was confirmed by other respondents:

*NVQ Level 1 provides a starting point for those less able learners.*

(FE, 107)
and:

Level 1 does cater for some repetitive tasks/posts (jobs) that otherwise would not have any accreditation.

(FE, 96)

A final opinion from an FE lecturer took a rather cynical view of NVQs suitability for industry:

The only thing I can agree with about NVQs is that they have assisted industry to de-skill. Industry no longer makes everything from start, e.g. packet sauces and soups. NVQs have assisted industry with this de-skilling process.

(FE, 57)

b) Higher Education.

Many of the views from the HE lecturers replicated the qualitative comments received from the FE teaching staff. There was concern that NVQs have de-valued and de-skilled industry practices, and this has had a detrimental effect on attitudes towards careers in hospitality and catering. A typical attitude suggested:

The H&C (hospitality and catering) industry has been de-skilled, - I believe that there is a direct link between NVQs and de-skilling.

(HE, 71)

Another HE lecturer suggested:

NVQs have diluted and de-valued standards.

(HE, 83)

This view was further developed by a HE respondent who claimed that industry has lost confidence in the NVQ approach:

When it comes to career progression many employers are so disillusioned with NVQs that they don’t care whether their employees have a qualification or not.

(HE, 85)
Although many HE lecturers indicated little confidence in the NVQ system, some were supportive of the Level 1 qualification:

*For the less able (learner) the attainment of a Level 1 NVQ can mean the difference between employability or not. For the fully able they (NVQs) prove very little.*

(HE, 89)

Another lecturer argued:

*The value of NVQs lies with the learner. For some learners even a Level 1 NVQ is progression and a significant achievement.*

(HE, 91)

However most HE lecturers were disappointed with the standards of NVQs compared with the previous City and Guilds craft qualifications. A typical comment from one HE lecturer suggests;

*NVQ qualifications do not in any way mirror image the City and Guilds qualifications.*

(HE, 93)

A final statement reveals the discontent of many in HE who, agreeing with some employers, regard NVQs as unsuitable for jobs and careers in the catering and hospitality industry:

*They should reflect the needs of industry, they don’t. As a result many employers are disillusioned with NVQs and can’t be bothered with them.*

(HE, 94)

c) Training Providers.

No comments regarding the suitability of NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry were received from either of the two training providers who responded to the e-questionnaire.
## 6.5.4 Issues Associated with the Implementation of Catering and Hospitality NVQs.

### Q4a. Colleges are well-resourced for the delivery of catering and hospitality NVQs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education 45</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td>17 (37.7%)</td>
<td>8 (17.7%)</td>
<td>10 (22.3%)</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education 23</td>
<td>8 (34.8%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td>10 (43.5%)</td>
<td>3 (13.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (33.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
<td>26 (35.6%)</td>
<td>11 (15.1%)</td>
<td>21 (28.7%)</td>
<td>11 (15.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 4a: Colleges are well-resourced for the delivery of catering and hospitality NVQs.**

- **No reply**
- **Strongly Agree**
- **Agree**
- **Neither agree nor disagree**
- **Disagree**
- **Strongly Disagree**

- **Bars**:
  - Red: Others
  - Orange: Further Education Institution (FEI)
  - Green: Higher Education Institution (HEI)
  - Blue: Training Provider
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The cumulative figures reveal a majority spread of responses between “agree” (35.6%), “neither agree nor disagree” (15.1%), “disagree” (28.7%), and “strongly disagree” (15.1%). Only a minority of all respondents (5.5%) indicated that they “strongly agree” with the statement. As a result of incorporation of the FE sector in 1995 (which took this sector outside the direct control of the Local Authorities), colleges have been able to fund courses and projects based on income generation. Hospitality and catering has always been regarded as an expensive vocational sector within an FE college, and some colleges since 1995 have “sized-down” or closed their catering departments. The responses confirm this situation, which is more evident in the analysis of the individual sectors.

The responses from FE reveal a minority (6.7%) who “strongly agree” with the statement, and a majority (37.7%) indicate that they “agree”. However a total of 39.9% either “disagree” (23.3%) or “strongly disagree” (15.6%). The remaining FE respondents (17.7%) “neither agree nor disagree”. The spread of responses therefore suggests that resource allocations for catering and hospitality NVQ delivery vary in different colleges. This confirms my observations when undertaking external examining roles in FE colleges.

The HE respondents are skewed towards negative responses to the statement with “agree” (34.8%) compared to “disagree” (43.5%) and “strongly disagree” (13.0%). As most HE lecturers will have no direct knowledge of resource allocations for catering and hospitality NVQs in a college environment, their responses are likely to have been
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influenced by their own previous experiences working in FE or by contacts that they currently have with the FE sector.

It is difficult to make any clear interpretation of the responses provided by the training providers and others. The spread of the five respondents (two training providers, three others) is allocated against each of the five option responses.

The Kruskal-Wallis test result \([KW, P = 0.101]\) indicates that there is no significant difference in attitudes between the sectors.

**Q4b. Catering and hospitality NVQs are only suitable for delivery in the workplace.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
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<td>11 (24.4%)</td>
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<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>5 (21.8%)</td>
<td>5 (21.8%)</td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
<td>6 (26.0%)</td>
<td>3 (13.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2 (100.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td>17 (23.3%)</td>
<td>16 (21.9%)</td>
<td>25 (34.3%)</td>
<td>6 (8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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During my visits to FE colleges I often hear the comment that NVQs are best delivered in the workplace. Indeed many FE colleges now employ NVQ assessors who undertake assessment (usually of part-time candidates) solely in the workplace. The argument is that although colleges have developed RWEs (Realistic Work Environments) in order to get accreditation from the Awarding Boards to offer NVQs in the colleges, nevertheless the qualifications were designed by industry and are best delivered and assessed in industry. I was therefore keen to learn how the different sectors responded to a statement that incorporates this argument.

The cumulative responses indicate no agreement. The majority (34.3%) “disagree” with the statement, but similar cumulative totals “neither agree nor disagree” (21.9%) or “agree” (23.3%). A minority of respondents opted for “strongly disagree” (8.2%), or “strongly agree” (12.3%).
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When applying an FE versus HE sector analysis, again the responses are “bunched” between “agree” and “disagree” with a minority at each extreme. There is therefore no evident difference in attitudes between these two sectors. Similarly the training providers and others do not impact or skew the results significantly.

As a result of the above it is not surprising that application of the Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, \( P = 0.466 \)] indicates no significant difference in attitudes between FE, HE and TP.

**Q4c. NVQs are administratively burdensome.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Further Education</td>
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<td>17 (37.8%)</td>
<td>5 (11.2%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>14 (60.9%)</td>
<td>6 (26.1%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (100.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>37 (50.7%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>24 (32.8%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 (13.7%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 (1.4%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 (1.4%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The cumulative totals indicate that a clear majority of respondents “strongly agree” with the statement (50.7%), and a further high proportion (32.8%) “agree” that NVQs are administratively burdensome. Only 13.7% “neither agree nor disagree”, and significantly only 1.4% “disagree” and a further 1.4% “strongly disagree”. The vast majority of respondents (83.5%) therefore replied positively to the statement. This high figure does not surprise me, as one of the key criticisms of NVQs (identified and discussed in the literature review) is the amount of paperwork that both assessors and learners have to complete as part of the assessment process. It is interesting therefore to examine these responses on a sector basis.

In FE the respondents overwhelmingly replied that they either “agree” (37.8%), or “strongly agree” (48.8%) with the statement. The fact that the majority “strongly agree” is a key indicator that the qualification has perceived deficiencies in the way it is
delivered and assessed. Only one FE lecturer (2.2%) replied “disagree” with the statement, and there were no “strongly disagree” responses.

The responses from HE were even more resounding in terms of agreement with the statement; “agree” (26.1%), “strongly agree” (60.9%). Only two HE lecturers (8.7%) replied that they “neither agree nor disagree”. There were no “disagree” responses, although interestingly one HE lecturer (4.3%) replied with “strongly disagree”.

The two training providers responded with “neither agree nor disagree”, while the three others each took one of the three options available between “strongly agree” and “neither agree nor disagree”.

The Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.431] reveals no significant difference in attitudes to the statement between the sectors.

**Q4d. Portfolio building is a paper exercise.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>17 (37.8%)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>11 (47.8%)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 (4.4%)</td>
<td>3 (13.0%)</td>
<td>1 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29 (39.8%)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7 (9.6%)</td>
<td>10 (13.6%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another criticism identified in the literature and regularly referred to during the interviews which informed the e-questionnaire design, is the amount of paperwork generated by both the learner and the assessor when completing NVQ documentation. The cumulative responses received suggest that this is a real concern, and a major issue associated with the implementation of catering and hospitality NVQs. Over 75% of the respondents (75.4%) indicated that they either “agree” or “strongly agree” that portfolio building is a paper exercise. Of the remainder, 9.6% “neither agree nor disagree”, and a total of 15% replied negatively to the statement (“disagree” 13.6%, “strongly disagree” 1.4%).

In an analysis of sector responses the FE lecturers indicated decisively that they either “agree” (35.6%), or “strongly agree” (37.8%) with the statement. No respondents from this sector “strongly disagree”, and only a small minority (13.3%) “disagree”. The responses from HE are similar, with a majority (47.8%) taking the “strongly agree”
option, followed by “agree” (30.4%). In a comparison with FE, a similar proportion of HE lecturers “disagree” (13.0%) with the statement, but interestingly one HE respondent (4.4%) opts for “strongly disagree”.

When considering the training providers and others, their responses are focussed on either “agree” or “strongly agree” with no other options used.

Application of the Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, P = 0.381] conclusively indicates that there is no significance in attitudes to this statement across the sectors.

Q4e. Catering and hospitality NVQs have succeeded in creating national standards of competence in practical skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education 45</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>19 (42.2%)</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education 23</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td>9 (39.2%)</td>
<td>11 (47.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 73</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>11 (15.1%)</td>
<td>12 (16.4%)</td>
<td>30 (41.1%)</td>
<td>19 (26.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Graph 4e: Catering and hospitality NVQs have succeeded in creating national standards of competence in practical skills.

The cumulative figures reveal that the majority of respondents either “disagree” (41.1%) or “strongly disagree” (26.0%) with the statement, and believe that national standards of competence have not been created by NVQs. As indicated in the literature, the establishment of national standards was a key feature of the NVQ system. However, an analysis of the sectors reveals some differences in attitudes between FE and HE.

In the FE sector, where a major component of the qualifications portfolio is focussed on NVQ delivery, the majority of respondents (57.6%) responded in the negative to the statement; (42.2%) “disagree”, (15.6%) “strongly disagree”. This contrasts with a
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

A minority of respondents who “agree” (22.2%) or “strongly agree” (2.2%). Interestingly quite a high proportion of FE lecturers did not commit to either a positive or negative response, and opted for “neither agree nor disagree” (17.8%).

In HE no lecturers “strongly agree” with the statement, and only one (4.3%) responded with “agree”. A small proportion (8.7%) did not commit and opted for “neither agree nor disagree”. However a very high percentage of HE respondents (87.0%) replied in the negative; (39.2%) “disagree”, and an even higher (47.8%) “strongly disagree”. The results indicate therefore that attitudes in HE are more strongly pronounced against the statement than in FE.

The training providers and others responded with answers between “neither agree nor disagree” and “strongly disagree”. There were no respondents from these sectors who replied in the positive to the statement.

The Kruskal-Wallis test result (KW, P = 0.005) is significantly less than 0.05, and therefore confirms that there is a difference in attitude to the statement when comparing the sectors.
Q4f. NVQs should have externally-set written tests as part of the assessment mechanism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>20 (44.4%)</td>
<td>7 (15.7%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>8 (34.8%)</td>
<td>12 (52.2%)</td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19 (26.0%)</td>
<td>34 (46.5%)</td>
<td>8 (11.0%)</td>
<td>8 (11.0%)</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 4f: NVQs should have externally-set written tests as part of the assessment mechanism.

A comment received regularly during the interview process to inform the content and question themes used in the e-questionnaire concerned the lack of formal “external”
written assessment in NVQs. It was therefore necessary to investigate this criticism further in the application of the e-questionnaire. The cumulative response indicates that the majority of respondents (46.5%) “agree” with the statement that NVQs should have externally-set written tests as part of the assessment mechanism. A further 26% replied that they “strongly agree”. In terms of “disagree” (11%) and “strongly disagree” (5.5%), this represents a minority total of 16.5% who have a negative attitude to the statement. Interestingly only 11% responded with “neither agree nor disagree”, indicating that most respondents have a definite opinion either positive or negative.

A sector analysis of the responses indicates general agreement. In both FE and HE the majority of respondents replied that they “agree” with the statement; FE (44.4%), HE (52.2%). In both sectors the second favoured option was “strongly agree”; FE (22.2%), HE (34.8%).

Only a minority of respondents from the FE and HE sectors relied negatively to the statement. The responses to “disagree” were FE (13.3%) and zero from HE, and “strongly disagree” FE (4.4%) and HE (8.7%). This again indicates that HE lecturers are more prone to take an extreme opinion than there FE counterparts who are more immediately involved in the delivery of NVQs.

When considering the training providers and others, their responses also are skewed towards a positive reaction to the statement. Application of the Kruskal-Wallis test reveals a result [KW, P = 0.166] which confirms no significant difference in attitude between the three variants compared (FE, HE & TP).
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Q4g. Practical competence should be assessed by an independent external assessor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>5 (11.6%)</td>
<td>23 (53.4%)</td>
<td>7 (16.3%)</td>
<td>6 (14.0%)</td>
<td>2 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>8 (34.8%)</td>
<td>13 (56.6%)</td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14 (19.7%)</td>
<td>39 (54.9%)</td>
<td>9 (12.7%)</td>
<td>7 (9.9%)</td>
<td>2 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two FE lecturers did not respond to this statement.

Graph 4g: Practical competence should be assessed by an independent external assessor.

During the interviews it was evident that the FE sector held quite a wide range of opinions as to whether practical competence should be assessed by an independent external assessor. Currently assessments are arranged between the learner and the assessor, with the assessor often also being the learner's tutor. This is key criticism of
the NVQ assessment process identified in the literature. It was important therefore to assess attitudes across the sectors to the use of external “independent” assessors.

The results from the e-questionnaire confirm that FE lecturers hold a spread of attitudes towards this statement ranging from “strongly agree” (11.6%) to “strongly disagree” (4.7%). The majority of FE staff (53.4%) “agree” with the statement, but a cumulative total of 35.0% either “strongly disagree” (4.7%), “disagree” (14.0%), or “neither agree nor disagree” (16.3%).

These figures contrast with the responses received from the HE lecturers. A cumulative total of 91.4% of HE staff either “strongly agree” (34.8%) or “agree” (56.6%) with the statement. Only 8.6% of respondents took the other options of “neither agree nor disagree” (4.3%) or “disagree” (4.3%). No respondents from HE replied using the “strongly disagree” option.

The responses from training providers and others range from “neither agree nor disagree” to “strongly agree”. There were no negative responses to the statement from these sectors.

The Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.014] reveals that there is a difference in attitudes to this statement when the sectors are compared. The FE sector, as identified in the analysis above, is more cautious about the use of independent external assessors than other sectors. This is probably explained because FE lecturers have a very close
working relationship with NVQ learners in the college environment, and thus arguably develop a more personal interest in their success.

**Q4h. A strength of the NVQ system is the flexible approach to training with no time constraints.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td>21 (46.7%)</td>
<td>11 (24.4%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>3 (13.0%)</td>
<td>9 (39.2%)</td>
<td>3 (13.0%)</td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (100.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6 (8.2%)</td>
<td>32 (43.8%)</td>
<td>16 (22.0%)</td>
<td>13 (17.8%)</td>
<td>6 (8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 4h: A strength of the NVQ system is the flexible approach to training with no time constraints.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The cumulative totals indicate that the majority of respondents (43.8%) “agree” that a strength of the NVQ system is the flexible approach to training with no time constraints.

As discussed in the literature this flexibility is a distinctive feature of NVQs, and is considered by QCA (Qualification and Curriculum Authority) to be a positive factor underpinning the qualification. Not surprisingly there is a broad spread of responses to this statement, and it is therefore useful to review the individual sector responses.

In FE just over half of the respondents (53.4%) had a positive attitude to the statement; “agree” (46.7%) and “strongly agree” (6.7%). Interestingly, however, nearly one quarter of FE lecturers (24.4%) took the “neither agree nor disagree” option, and the remainder replied that they “disagree” (17.8%) or “strongly disagree” (4.4%).

In HE the spread of responses was more evenly distributed, contrasting “strongly agree” (13.0%) with “strongly disagree” (17.4%). However for the “agree” (39.2%) and “disagree” (17.4%) responses, the percentage totals are very similar to those from the FE sector.

The responses from the training providers and others focus between “agree” and “disagree”, with no extreme responses received. It is not surprising therefore that the Kruskal-Wallis test result [K,W, P = 0.581] reveals no significant differences between FE, HE and TP.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Q4i. Assessment on demand is a positive feature of the NVQ system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>4 (9.1%)</td>
<td>25 (56.8%)</td>
<td>11 (25.0%)</td>
<td>3 (6.8%)</td>
<td>1 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>3 (13.6%)</td>
<td>4 (18.2%)</td>
<td>7 (31.8%)</td>
<td>4 (18.2%)</td>
<td>4 (18.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (100.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7 (9.8%)</td>
<td>31 (43.7%)</td>
<td>20 (28.2%)</td>
<td>8 (11.3%)</td>
<td>5 (7.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One FE lecturer and One HE lecturer did not respond to this statement.

Graph 4i: Assessment on demand is a positive feature of the NVQ system.

Assessment on demand is a unique feature of the NVQ system which allows learners to request assessment when they think they are competent in a particular practical skill. The assessor then carries-out the assessment, making a judgement as to whether the candidate is "competent" or "not yet competent". The arguments concerning this assessment process were discussed in the Chapter 3 (Literature Review).
It was evident in the interviews that preceded the design of the e-questionnaire that interviewees had strong views concerning the NVQ “assessment on demand” process. The cumulative responses indicate that the majority of respondents (43.7%) “agree” that this is a positive feature of the NVQ system. However, interestingly, over a quarter of the respondents (28.2%) did not offer a positive or negative opinion, and opted instead for “neither agree nor disagree”. More detailed analysis of the sector responses reveals some interesting differences between FE and HE attitudes.

In FE a total of 65.9% of respondents made a positive reply to the statement; “agree” (56.8%), “strongly agree” (9.1%). This contrasts markedly with the HE responses where only 31.8% of lecturers in this sector made a positive response; “agree” (18.2%), “strongly agree” (13.6%).

This contrast is also noticeable in the negative responses to this question. Only a small minority of FE lecturers chose a negative option; “disagree” (6.8%), “strongly disagree” (2.3%). However in HE the percentages using a negative response were much higher; “disagree” (18.2%), “strongly disagree” (18.2%). An explanation of these discrepancies in response attitudes between FE and HE may be due to the fact that in FE “assessment on demand” is an accepted practice when working with NVQ students. This approach to assessment is not used in HE, and therefore for many HE lecturers it is anathema.

An analysis of the training providers and others reveals responses at each stage between “agree” and “disagree”. These sectors did not reply using either of the two extreme responses.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.034] confirms the above analysis and, not surprisingly, indicates that there is a difference in attitudes between the sectors in response to this statement.

Q4j. Paying deliverers of NVQs based on successful outcomes opens the assessment system to risk of abuse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>21 (47.7%)</td>
<td>13 (29.6%)</td>
<td>6 (13.6%)</td>
<td>3 (6.8%)</td>
<td>1 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>15 (65.2%)</td>
<td>6 (26.1%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (33.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36 (50.0%)</td>
<td>21 (29.2%)</td>
<td>9 (12.5%)</td>
<td>5 (6.9%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One FE lecturer did not respond to this statement.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

Graph 4: Paying deliverers of NVQs based on successful outcomes opens the assessment system to risk of abuse.

The funding of NVQs has been, and continues to be, a contentious and controversial issue. As explained in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), Smithers (2000) believes that colleges and other NVQ providers are now under a financial pressure to “pass” students as a result of the outcome-related funding mechanism. The cumulative responses show clearly that the majority (50.0%) of respondents “strongly agree” that this approach, whereby deliverers of NVQs are paid based on successful outcomes, opens the assessment system to risk of abuse. A further large proportion (29.2%) relied that they “agree” with the statement. Interestingly only 8.3% of respondents replied in the negative; “disagree” (6.9%), “strongly disagree” (1.4%).
An analysis of sector responses indicates that in HE a substantial majority of lecturers (91.3%) believe the statement to be true; “agree” (26.1%), “strongly agree” (65.2%). There were no negative responses from HE, and only 8.7% opted for “neither agree nor disagree”.

Although the majority of FE lecturers (77.3%) also supported the statement; “agree” (29.6%), “strongly agree” (47.7%), the totals are not as overwhelming as in HE. Respondents from FE also used the full range of response options; “neither agree nor disagree” (13.6%), “disagree” (6.8%), and “strongly disagree” (2.3%). This again suggests that HE lecturers can afford to be more extreme and opinionated because they are not dealing with the students on a face-to-face basis as is the case for the FE lecturers.

The training providers and others used the mid-point responses between “agree” and “disagree”, with no use of the extreme responses at either end of the scale. Again therefore it is the FE versus HE responses that best inform the analysis of the results. The Kruskal-Wallis test result [KW, P = 0.069] indicates that there is no significant difference in attitudes between FE, HE and TP. However the closeness of the result to the indicator point (0.05) confirms that marginal differences are evident as identified in the above analysis.

Q4k. Additional comments on issues associated with the implementation of catering and hospitality NVQs.

As at the close of each previous section of questions, I now asked respondents to provide any additional comments to further develop and support their answers in section
4. A total of 30 respondents provided additional comments on the implementation of catering and hospitality NVQs. The following is an analysis of their comments presented under the sector titles:

a) Further Education.

As anticipated, and evidenced in the interviews which informed the design of the e-questionnaire, the FE respondents had a real mix of opinions regarding NVQ implementation issues. A major concern regarding implementation focussed on the funding arrangements for the qualification. A typical response communicated by several FE lecturers lamented the fact that elements of the overall funding are withheld to encourage the retention and achievement of the learners:

*It is not true that there is no time limit. In colleges you are dictated to as to the speed you deliver the qualification due to the funding linked to retention and achievement.*

(FE, 39)

Another concern was the perceived suitability of NVQs for delivery within an FE college. As one respondent argued:

*NVQs are for the workplace, Full time 16yr olds should be allowed to continue their catering education in college with a funded course other than the NVQ.*

(FE, 74)

The new VRQs (Vocationally Related Qualifications, discussed in Chapter 3), which are currently being piloted, are set to test the suitability of full-time NVQs that are currently delivered and assessed within a college environment. However as funding for
this new qualification remains uncertain (Caterer & Hotelkeeper, 1st March 2007), it appears that these concerns of FE lecturers will not be resolved in the short term.

Many FE respondents claimed that the main problems relating to the implementation of NVQs were created by the assessment process. These concerns ranged from the problems created by “assessment on demand” to the “paper-driven” quality assurance systems that support the qualification. Typical responses included:

*Assessment on demand is impractical in the college context.*

(FE, 78)

*NVQs have devalued catering as a career. There are no national standards. The quality assurance systems are paper exercises, just like the NVQs themselves.*

(FE, 86)

and

*NVQs are paper-driven qualifications.*

(FE, 103)

However, it was the issue of national standards, or the lack of them, that concerned many FE lecturers when commenting on implementation issues relating to NVQs. A typical response berated how assessors interpret the standards:

*There are no true standards as the assessment is based on opinion.*

(FE, 66)

In order to deal with this problem of applying a national standard, some lecturers suggested that external examiners should be employed who are independent of the internal assessment processes:
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There is a need to concentrate on the assessment of practical skills............with visiting assessors could be helpful"

(FE, 107)

However, as one lecturer acknowledged, the resourcing (both human and financial) for this extra quality assurance mechanism, would put an additional strain on the NVQ implementation system:

very difficult to create a system whereby assessment is carried out by an independent external assessor, this would create considerable pressure on resources.

(FE, 75)

A final concern from the FE lecturers regarding implementation issues concerned the quality of evidence provided by the learners. As identified in the interviews preceding the e-questionnaire, many lecturers are unsure about the authenticity and reliability of the student work that they are presented with as evidence for assessment:

The system as it stands is open to too many issues around authenticity and levels of credibility.

(FE, 41)

The argument in favour of written tests is well rehearsed in order to combat this problem, but interestingly one lecturer suggested that the notion of “assessment on demand” could even be extended to external tests:

Written tests could be introduced ........... If they are introduced it should only be as an on line system that can be accessed any time.

b) Higher Education.

Several lecturers within HE lamented the “commercialisation of education/training”, and blamed this approach for the perceived decline in standards at all levels. A typical respondent claimed;

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The commercialisation of education/training combined with the NVQ style qualifications which are open to abuse, have driven down standards.

(HE, 71)

Another HE lecturer argued that the government’s policy of encouraging the UK workforce to become better qualified is doing little to improve overall standards:

The NVQ system has little to do with improving standards, - it is driven by government to create qualifications for all.

(HE, 83)

However it was the practical implementation issues surrounding the delivery and assessment of NVQs that caused the HE lecturers particular concerns. The portfolio system used for evidence collection was subject to particular criticism:

Portfolio building is seen in my opinion as a paperwork exercise as it is too repetitive and perhaps not the best way to record evidence.

(HE, 88)

However one HE lecturer could identify some merits in the portfolio approach:

With regard to portfolio building as being a paper exercise, I think that it depends upon the learner. For some, the process of following a structured set of processes and reflection is a useful learning exercise.

(HE, 91)

Another concern of the HE lecturers focussed on the assessment process, and the suitability of using internal staff as objective assessors of practical skills. One HE respondent argued that the NVQ assessment process should be undertaken by an independent “unit” to ensure the achievement and consistency of a national standard:

They (NVQ assessments) should always be administered by a competent academic unit or college that carries out assessments and tests in collaboration with the candidates mentor to ensure that national standards are achieved.

(HE, 98)
However other lecturers were critical of the implementation of the whole assessment process, and the fact that successful outcomes are liked to funding:

*The system has no benchmarks for standards.*  
(HE, 93)

and:

*If you pay someone on successful outcomes, outcomes will be clearly distorted.*  
(HE, 101)

Interestingly one HE lecturer argued that there is only one group of people who support the implementation of NVQs:

*NVQ's are also burdensome for employers to deliver. The only people who are content with NVQ's are unscrupulous training providers*  
(HE, 85)

c) Training Providers.

Only one comment was received from the two training providers who completed the e-questionnaire. In contrast to the comments received from some HE respondents (i.e. HE, 88), the TP was cautiously supportive of the implementation issues surrounding portfolio development for recording NVQ assessments:

"*Portfolios are an ongoing resource for the learner if put together carefully.*"  
(TP, 72)

### 6.5.5 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE NVQ SYSTEM

The final section of the e-questionnaire, section 5, comprised several questions which encouraged respondents to make both qualitative and quantitative answers which
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focussed on how they perceived the strengths and weaknesses of the NVQ system, and the actions they would introduce to improve or replace these qualifications. As with the above sections I have considered the responses against the three main sectors targeted with the e-questionnaire; FE, HE & TP.

Q5. Please identify TWO key strengths of the NVQ system and explain why you think these are strengths.

A total of 64 respondents provided me with qualitative data for this question from the 73 who completed and submitted the e-questionnaire. I decided to initially identify the key themes that the respondents perceived as strengths of the NVQ system across the sectors. I will then analyse the responses against these themes under the sector headings.

The key themes emerging are:

- Flexibility,
- Allows learners to progress at their own pace,
- Qualification best suits employees working full-time in the industry,
- No exams,
- Suits learners with special learning needs,
- Reflects current industry practices and the needs of industry, and
- Encourages progression.

Other themes emerged which are specific to individual sectors, and I will consider these comments when reviewing the sector responses.
a) Further Education.

The FE sector provided a wide range of comments which recognise the strengths of the NVQ system. The most common perceived strength is the flexibility which NVQs afford learners. Issues such as “roll-on, roll-off” programmes and “assessment on demand” make NVQs very different to traditional FE vocational courses. Several lecturers considered this flexibility to be attractive to industry:

*Not being time constrained and increased flexibility makes them (NVQs) attractive to industry.*

(FE, 37)

Others argued that flexibility is useful for both the learner and the FE college as there is no official date at the end of the academic year when all work must be completed. Course completion dates were always a problem in FE where many students are part-time or attend only on a day-release basis when work pressures permit:

*The NVQ system is very flexible ..........it can be useful for staff teaching in FE colleges when students are not regular attendees.*

(FE, 60)

Many respondents also regarded this flexibility as a feature that encourages learners to progress at their own pace. This “candidate driven” approach suggested by Jessop (1991), and discussed in Chapter 3, is a key feature of NVQ programmes:
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The system allows each individual to work at their own pace and ability which gives candidates ownership for their own learning.

(FE, 35)

and:

NVQ are right for the work place to enable staff to get recognition for work they do. They allow candidates to progress at their own rate.

(FE, 74)

It was also argued that allowing learners to progress at their own pace encourages the better motivated learners to progress quickly, and allows slower learners to receive additional support:

All can work at their own pace which allows the motivated to move on.

(FE, 53)

and:

Assessment on demand means that “able” candidates can be fast-tracked and others can receive support in more specialised areas as required.

(FE, 95)

This argument was extended by some respondents who suggested that NVQs, being competence-based qualifications, encourage progression to the next level and better suit individual learning needs:

NVQ are based on competency - the candidate should prove that he is able to perform the task unaided over a period of time. They suit individual needs - candidates can progress from Level 1 to 3 in an area that is most suited for them.

(FE, 54)

Another lecturer developed this theme by explaining:

The system allows for excellent progression for a capable and competent candidate through to higher levels. Non stipulation of entry requirements enables students who may not have entered FE to gain experience and a qualification and possibly their vocation in life.

(FE, 79)
Other respondents suggested that a key strength of the NVQ system is that it provides formal qualifications for people at all levels, recognising even low level practical skills which previously would not have been accredited:

*The NVQ system provides appropriate, different levels of achievement for learners with individual needs and levels of ability. This provides potential employers with an accurate view of a potential employee’s ability and aptitude. NVQ’s provide access to qualifications for learners who may otherwise find it difficult to achieve qualifications.*

(FE, 67)

This is certainly the intent of the government who, as explained in Chapter 3, are keen to develop within the UK are more qualified workforce. As another lecturer explained:

*There are certain jobs that can be accredited at Level 1 (e.g. a kitchen porter) that otherwise would not carry accreditation. Some learners on these programmes have been very proud of their achievement.*

(FE, 96)

Some FE lecturers, albeit a minority, argued that the lack of formal written assessments, including examinations, was a positive feature. They claimed that such an assessment process discriminated against less able students, who now, as a result of NVQs, were able to gain formal recognition of their practical skills:

*Students who struggle with written English and exams can succeed with NVQs..they like being assessed in a practical way.*

(FE, 69)

Other lecturers suggested that NVQs are inclusive qualifications, unlike qualifications that feature examinations as part of the assessment process:

*Candidates tend to fear formal exams........therefore these candidates are not excluded from NVQ opportunities.*

(FE, 95)

and:
NVQs mean that students are not phased by the exam culture which features in more traditional courses.......they (NVQs) are about recognising success.

(FE, 50)

However it was the issue of reflecting current industry practices and responding to the needs of industry which promoted the most comments from the FE lecturers when considering the strengths of the NVQ system. One lecturer described NVQs as:

*versatile qualifications that are geared towards today's hospitality and catering industry needs.*

(FE, 51)

and:

*they (NVQs) are modern and reflect industry trends.*

(FE, 107)

Others recognised the benefits of NVQs, but argued that that the qualification is best delivered and assessed in the workplace:

*Industry assessments show the real world and keep ahead of requirements in the workplace.*

(FE, 57)

This argument was progressed by another FE lecturer who claimed that NVQs delivered in industry more specifically suit the needs of individual employers:

*Employers can train & 'qualify' employees in specific topic areas via the correct selection of appropriate units, this helps to ensure that the employee has the required skills to do the job required. In general NVQs are better suited to delivery in the work place.*

(FE, 106)

Indeed one of the key positive features of the NVQ process is that it encourages full-time employees within the hospitality industry to seek accreditation and qualification
for their skills, rather than having to go to college to undertake more traditional “academic qualifications”. As one FE lecturer explained:

The system allows for people working in the industry to be quickly accredited for practical thus allowing them to see their experience as a positive aspect rather than always thinking academic qualifications are the best.

(Fe, 35)

There were, of course, cynical and negative responses to this question asking respondents to identify two strengths. “None” (Fe, 103), and:

Qualifications for all. - nobody fails (is this a strength?). (Fe, 86)

b) Higher Education.

The HE lecturers also regarded the flexibility offered by NVQs as a key positive feature. As in the FE sector, HE respondents could see the benefits of a less rigid approach to programme delivery:

The flexibility of the qualification with no time constraints enables achievement over time, and is perhaps a less daunting prospect for many people embarking on NVQs.

(HE, 94)

This theme was developed by a HE lecturer who identified two positive features of NVQs by arguing that not only do these vocational qualifications provide learners at low levels of academic ability with feelings of “worth”, but the flexibility of the NVQ system allows such learners to develop their skills “at their own pace”:

1. NVQs are available and accessible to anybody and people of poorer learning abilities can achieve some vocational training to help integrate them into the workplace and be a valued contribution and given a feeling of 'worth' 2. That these qualifications are not restricting the candidate to a one or two year fixed period of study. Perseverance and effort is
eventually rewarded and the candidate can achieve something at their own pace especially on a one to one basis with a mentor or trainer.

(HE, 98)

Another HE lecturer combined the benefits of flexibility with the “positive” features of the NVQ assessment mechanism, which he/she argues more clearly reflect the needs of the learner and industry rather than traditional examinations:

(A positive feature is) flexibility, - meeting student and employer workloads. No written exams, - it’s about being able to cook not being able to sit an academic paper.

(HE, 43)

It was argued by other respondents that these “positives” not only encourage progression, but also provide benchmarks for people wishing to make careers and progress in the hospitality industry: One respondent combined both these arguments when presenting two key strengths of the NVQ system:

1. They offer a clear vocational/craft route for those who wish to follow an operational career in the industry. This is a strength because it places value upon these skills for the learner and the employer. 2. NVQs provide structure and standards - a benchmark level of skills for those entering or progressing through the industry.

(HE, 91)

However, it was the progression offered to learners with special learning needs which was considered to be the most positive feature of NVQs according to HE lecturers. A typical response suggested that NVQs:

enable those with learning difficulties to demonstrate their ability to learn basic and repetitive, but useful skills.

(HE, 89)
Another respondent developed this theme arguing that NVQs succeed in making qualifications accessible to all by offering an assessment mechanism that suits learners who have difficulties with formal examinations:

*They can be delivered in all work places, giving all employees the opportunity to gain qualifications. They do enable employees who have difficulties with written informal tests to demonstrate their skills and they deserve success in the industry and qualifications.*

(HE, 101)

Inevitably, there were negative responses to the question. Two HE lecturer when asked to identify two strengths simply replied, "No strengths" (HE, 58), and "In my view the system has no strengths." (HE, 93). Another respondent with a similar opinion explained more fully:

*No strengths compared to previous craft qualifications.*

(HE, 71)

Although the responses from FE and HE were similar, with each sector covering most of the key themes identified in the introduction to this question, it is noticeable from the responses that HE is less concerned about NVQs reflecting the needs of industry. Instead there is a greater emphasis in the HE “positive” responses concerning NVQs responding to, and satisfying, the educational and personal achievement needs of learners.

c) Training Providers.

Both training providers who participated in the e-questionnaire provided replies to this question. Although both sets of comments were supportive, they provided two sets of responses covering different positive aspects. I was surprised, and pleased, that the
training providers focussed on broader issues relating to NVQs, rather than just the practical delivery and accreditation concerns that influence the funding:

1. A national uniform system which should not vary wherever it is delivered. 2. Can be included into another qualification giving additionally (e.g. Food and beverage service in the National Diploma/Certificate course).

(TP, 36)

and:

1. Good for the demonstration of individual strengths even though moderated to the same level. 2. A portfolio of evidence can be a useful resource for the learner if built as an ongoing document to manage ones career, and achievements."

(TP, 72)

Q6. Please identify TWO key weaknesses of the NVQ system and explain why you think these are weaknesses.

From the 73 respondents who completed the e-questionnaire, 65 lecturers/training providers made qualitative responses to Q6 (89.0% response rate). As for the previous question I decided to categorise the responses against key themes, thus assisting the analysis under the sector headings (FE, HE, TP).

The key themes emerging as weaknesses of the NVQ system are:

- Paperwork/bureaucratic documentation,
- Lack of learner knowledge,
- Lack of external assessment,
- Funding based on success/achievement rates,
- Fake/fraud evidence used for assessment,
- Subjective relationship of assessor and learner,
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- No grading used in the NVQ process,
- Lack of national standards (different interpretations of “competence”)
- NVQ jargon/complex language,
- Assessment in industry interferes with day-to-day business,
- Non-suitability for full-time FE delivery,
- Specifications/curriculum content “out-of-date”, and
- Poor reputation/image of the qualification.

Other themes also emerged which are specific to particular sectors, and again I will analyse these when reviewing the individual sectors.

a) Further Education.

The FE sector provided very detailed responses to this question. This was not surprising based on the responses received to the quantitative questions earlier in the e-questionnaire. As the main deliverers of NVQs, it was evident that many lecturers in the FE sector were keen to record their concerns about this qualification.

The most common concern related to the NVQ form-filling and the perceived bureaucratic systems required for the assessment and recording processes. There were many respondents who despaired at the “futile paperwork” (FE, 35) that both lecturers and learners have to complete:

We are trying to train/teach practical skills not form filling. It is usually quite obvious when someone is competent or not.

(FE, 38)

and:

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Students get fed up filling out the logbooks, they get tick happy. They want staff to do the work for them.

(FE, 39)

Another lecturer claimed that:

The system is time-consuming in its paperwork leaving staff and students grappling with portfolios.

(FE, 50)

This administration problem is further exacerbated by the “jargon” used to explain the NVQ processes:

Ridiculous NVQ language used in the portfolios.

(FE, 45)

and:

Jargon used in the paperwork makes it difficult for some to understand what is required.

(FE, 70)

One lecturer summed-up the frustration with the “complex administration” (FE, 70) by explaining that the:

amount of paperwork and the whole QA system is extremely time consuming to administer and resource. Staff can spend more time with students on ensuring the right boxes are ticked rather than on delivering training and knowledge.

(FE, 75)

Indeed, such comments are a common problem of the NVQ system as identified by Foote (1999) and explained in the Literature Review (Chapter 3).

Another major concern of the FE respondents related to the role of knowledge in the NVQ process. Several lecturers suggested that learners do not have any real knowledge or understanding of the processes that they undertake:
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It does not assess enough underpinning knowledge. - students are not given enough in-depth knowledge about individual units.

(FE, 35)

One lecturer was more direct in this criticism, claiming that a significant negative feature of NVQs is the lack of emphasis on knowledge retention:

Tick boxes once ticked the student thinks that is all they need to know and they do not retain the knowledge required for any length of time.

(FE, 49)

Some lecturers argued that this problem of knowledge development and retention could be solved if a formal examination were introduced:

There is no recollection of the knowledge by the student as no final tests are set.

(FE, 73)

and:

There is a lack of knowledge retention, this could be done with end of year exams.

(FE, 53)

Indeed, several lecturers argued that the introduction of formal written examinations would not only address the issue of learner knowledge, but would also assist in ensuring a national standard:

Some form of external test would help to develop the learners' knowledge and ensure that standards are the same in centres delivering NVQs.

(FE, 63)

The achievement of vocational national standards was one of the key reasons why NVQs were introduced, and the quality systems (discussed in Chapter 3) which support the qualification are intended to ensure consistency in interpretation, delivery and assessment. However, as has been evident in the primary research processes throughout
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this study, the attainment of a consistent national standard is questioned by many involved in the delivery of NVQs. As one FE lecturer suggested:

*The rigour of the qualification can always be questioned with local quality assurance being at the core of the consistency of the NVQ award.*

(FE, 67)

Another FE respondent argued that:

*They (the NVQ specifications) are wide open for interpretation by different chefs/lecturers, and therefore standards can vary greatly establishments. The place where the NVQ was undertaken is more important than the level they have achieved.*

(FE, 74)

This claim was supported by other lecturers who claimed that a national standard has not been achieved, and that variations in competence at the same level are common:

*Standards are open to interpretation and the whole delivery system can vary between training providers and FE institutions thereby leaving inconsistencies in the actual competence of the candidate at the end of the day.*

(FE, 75)

and:

*Some form of external examining should take place to maintain an equal standard amongst all training establishments.*

(FE, 79)

An alternative reason suggested for using external testing is as solution to the “subjective” relationship that currently exists between the assessor and the learner. One lecturer described the relationship as “too incestuous” (FE, 41), and another argued that the closeness of the assessor/learner relationship made the whole system “open to abuse” (FE, 37). It was also suggested that external tests should be introduced because:

*........evidence can be faked. An external examination would test their knowledge and could also be practical.*

(FE, 39)
However, it was the issue concerning the non-grading of NVQs that caused many FE lecturers to make negative comments about the qualification. As one lecturer argued it is very difficult to motivate learners to achieve a high standard in their work if there is only a “competent/not yet competent” boundary:

_There is no opportunity for students to achieve anything other than a pass. Some students could be motivated if they could achieve higher grades....._  
(FE, 44)

Another lecturer reiterated this argument by stating:

_There is no grading system to allow an excellent candidate receive a higher mark than one who is only just competent._  
(FE, 79)

Such comments were confirmed by other lecturers who linked this issue with concerns about funding based on success and achievement rates. As discussed in the literature many lecturers are uncomfortable that the public funding mechanism for NVQs is based on a model whereby a final payment is made only when the learner is successful and achieves the qualification. As one lecturer stated:

_Payment based on success and achievement levels is open to abuse._  
(FE, 37)

Another lecturer explained that this system puts pressure on the assessor to “pass” the learner so that the funding payment is released to the college or training provider:

_The assessor is under pressure to pass because of the funding mechanisms applied to colleges._  
(FE, 103)

Other negative issues identified by FE lecturers included a criticism of the suitability of the qualification for delivery to full-time students in a college environment. Several lecturers considered this qualification to be suitable only for delivery in industry:
Colleges need to deliver NVQs in the industry where they belong and use the full range of units available, rather than the ones that the college thinks the industry needs. They (the colleges) are still trying to push a round qualification through a square hole.

(FE, 51)

However a minority of lecturers thought that the assessment process was problematic to industry because it impedes day-to-day operational issues:

*Assessment in the workplace, - quite often this is interfering with the running of the department, especially during busy times which can be distracting.*

(FE, 46)

Others argued that the NVQ curriculum itself is dated and does not reflect contemporary working practices:

*Some of the units are out of date and do not reflect current practice.*

(FE, 69)

and:

*Sometimes some of the tasks seem quite dated.*

(FE, 60)

A final criticism, almost inevitably, concerned the perception and image of NVQs as a suitable vocational qualification for developing catering and hospitality skills. As one lecturer concluded;

*They (NVQs) have a very poor reputation amongst some senior industry members.*

(FE, 76)

### b) Higher Education.

The HE respondents were also concerned about several of the key themes identified as weaknesses in the introduction to this question (Q6). However their focus was more
specific on particular themes, and the attitudes of the HE respondents were more entrenched than those evidenced from their FE counterparts.

The HE lecturers were very critical of the paperwork and "bureaucratic documentation" (HE, 34) that surrounds the NVQ assessment process. This was certainly the theme that promoted the largest response from HE. One HE lecturer argued that the whole "bureaucratic" assessment process is excessive, and does little to prepare the learner for the world of work:

_The NVQ process is far too bureaucratic – particularly assessment, internal verification and external verification. The portfolio (unit record book) offers little incentive for learners to study. Considerable time is spent explaining the philosophy of NVQ’s and how to complete the paperwork. The unit record book does no more than record what has been done. It is not evidence of competence, it offers nothing in the way of validity and it certainly isn’t something that caterer’s do as a normal part of their job. Several features within the QCA - NVQ Code of Practice are way out of step with what can be reasonably expected of workers training in the catering and hospitality sector._

(HE, 85)

Other HE respondents confirmed this opinion:

_Too much paperwork for staff. Too much talking about things rather than doing the work, - the value of portfolio building is doubtful._

(HE, 90)

Several lecturers were concerned about the excessive paperwork and its effect on the students. One HE lecturer argued that the whole NVQ system is flawed because of:

_.....the amount of paperwork and form filling, which the candidates detest as much as the staff._

(HE, 71)
This was considered to be a particular problem to less-able students, who might deterred from completing NVQs because of the complex tracking and assessment recording systems:

_The paperwork may be perceived as too much and a bit daunting, especially if these are aimed at the less academic person._  
(HE, 98)

Another key criticism from HE lecturers concerned the perceived inconsistency of standards applied by different colleges and training providers:

_Standards are not consistent across organisations._  
(HE, 42)

and:

_By making them fit all scenarios they (NVQs) lack uniformity in standards. Is an NVQ Level 2 in Food Preparation earned in the Savoy kitchen equivalent to a chef doing the same NVQ in a sandwich bar?_  
(HE, 101)

This theme was developed when one HE respondent argued:

_There is no national standard and the level of achievement upon completion is very variable. Because of the variability of level of achievement upon completion just writing an NVQ qualification on a CV does not help potential employers know what the student is competent to do._  
(HE, 89)

Other lecturers suggested that these inconsistencies have resulted in a general fall in standards in the hospitality industry since the introduction of NVQs:

_There are no real standards (with NVQs), - certainly standards in hospitality and catering have fallen since their introduction._  
(HE, 83)
Several HE respondents suggested that a combination of the above factors, with a focus on the inconsistencies in standards, were responsible for the poor image of NVQs among many employers:

The poor image of the qualification amongst employers, affects the credibility of the qualification. Many employers do not see NVQs as transferable, as the abilities of people with the same level NVQ are so variable.

(H.E, 94)

Such suggestions inevitably resulted in requests from some HE lecturers for formal external assessment to be introduced for NVQs:

There is no external assessment and as a result the whole system is open to abuse by individual assessors............should go back to practical exams.

(H.E, 43)

A final common criticism from HE concerned the funding attached to NVQs. As was evident from the FE responses, colleagues in HE also shared concerns that the funding mechanism was flawed and was affecting the quality and integrity of the qualification:

If funding is based on results, results will be excellent.

(H.E, 101)

As one HE lecturer concluded:

I do agree that the system is open to abuse and that an external examination would stop this.............A major problem with the qualification is fraud due to commercial training providers being motivated by money, thus pushing candidates through the system.

(H.E, 55)
c) Training Providers.

The two training providers who participated in the e-questionnaire again provided replies to this question. Interestingly both TPs identified issues concerning quality standards and funding as being weaknesses of the NVQ system. As one TP argued:

*The system relies on the strength of the deliverer and this brings the quality factor into play.*

(TP, 36)

This view was supported by the other TP who suggested that the perceived lack of quality may be due to inadequate national standards of External Verification.

However it was the issue of funding that provided surprising responses. Rather than being supportive of a funding methodology that has benefited independent training providers, the two TPs in this survey recognised the problems with the current system:

*The pressure is placed on establishments to achieve NVQ's and so achieve funding.*

(TP, 36)

and:

*The current system is open to abuse from parties only interested in the making of a fast buck.*

(TP, 72)

Q7. Are you GENERALLY satisfied with the current catering and hospitality NVQs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No reply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14 (31.1%)</td>
<td>26 (57.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3 (13.0%)</td>
<td>17 (74.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 (66.6%)</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17 (23.3%)</td>
<td>46 (63.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 7: Are you GENERALLY satisfied with the current catering and hospitality NVQs?

From the 63 respondents who made either a positive or negative reply to this question, 54 developed their yes/no answer by providing a more detailed qualitative response. The following is an analysis of their comments presented under the sector titles:

a) Further Education.

A minority of FE lecturers made positive statements about their satisfaction with NVQs. However, many of these positive statements can be attributed to individual college/training provider delivery mechanisms rather than general satisfaction with the qualification overall. As one FE lecturer explained:

_This college is fortunate to have been able to modify the paperwork and practices to make things easier for all._

(FE, 70)

Other lecturers were positive because new NVQ standards were introduced in September 2006, and many lecturers were hopeful (when the e-questionnaire was
completed, Summer 2005) that these new standards would eradicate many of the
delivery weaknesses that they had experienced to date with NVQs:

Looking forward to the revamped versions. Hopefully these will sort out
many of the current problems.

(FE, 74)

The majority of statements however explained reasons for dissatisfaction with NVQs.
Many of the themes in this section repeat the weaknesses identified in Q6. Key themes include:

- **External testing.**

  We need to re-introduce some form of external testing for underpinning knowledge.

  (FE, 35)

  I would like to see externally set MCQ (multiple choice questions) for
target setting and motivation. This would further build a sense of
achievement when passed and could improve retention rates.

  (FE, 56)

- **Erosion of standards/Lack of national standards.**

  They (NVQs) have lowered standards and do not develop the students' full potential.

  (FE, 69)

  I think that there is too much variation in standards between
establishments.

  (FE, 79)

- **Funding.**

  The system is flawed by the funding mechanism, - payment based on
results.

  (FE, 86)
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

- **Assessor/Learner relationship.**

  *The assessor is too close to the candidate, - an exam/test would provide an independent testing mechanism.*

  (FE, 103)

- **Portfolio/practical skills development.**

  *Too much emphasis on the portfolio which can detract from the acquisition of practical skills.*

  (FE, 106)

- **Non-suitability for colleges/full-time students.**

  *NVQs may work in industry, but they are certainly not student friendly in colleges.*

  (FE, 44)

b) **Higher Education.**

The majority of HE lecturers were dissatisfied with the current catering and hospitality NVQs and many provided qualitative responses to support their answers to Q7. As in the FE sector many of the emerging themes repeated those identified as weaknesses in Q6.

A recurring criticism in HE is that NVQs are a inadequate substitute for the previous C&G craft qualifications. As one lecturer explained:

  *NVQs are a very poor replacement for C&G qualifications, - (they are) a rubber stamping exercise driven by funding.*

  (HE, 34)

An analysis of the key dissatisfaction themes amongst HE lecturers includes the following:
- Poor content.

They are weak and achieved too easily, and are open to dilution by the private sector.

(HE, 40)

They are weak and have no substance.

(HE, 43)

- Poor structure.

They do not provide a suitable structure for the delivery of appropriate teaching and learning activities within the current FE sector.

(HE, 59)

- Lack of academic rigour.

They lack academic rigour and do not develop individuals who strive to achieve knowledge and not just competence.

(HE, 71)

- External testing/funding.

External assessment (time constrained muti-choice exam) is needed to achieve a national standard where funding pressure can't influence outcomes.

(HE, 83)

- Paperwork/practical skills development.

Too much emphasis is based on the paperwork aspect of the qualification and not enough on the practical development of the candidates involved.

(HE, 88)

I think that areas of study can be more in-depth and paperwork condensed.

(HE, 99)

- Erosion of standards.

They (NVQs) have not maintained or progressed standards. They were proposed by employers as a cheaper and less troublesome form of training.

(HE, 92)

City and Guilds 706/3 was a supreme achievement worthy of merit. NVQ Level 3 means little to me. Each year the standards decline further.

(HE, 101)
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c) Training Providers.

Only one TP responded to this question. The TP indicated general satisfaction with NVQs, but suggested that the range of underpinning knowledge that supports a candidate’s overall skills development is currently too repetitive:

Within the underpinning knowledge questions there is a high degree of repetition of questions.

(TP, 36)

Q8. Are you familiar with the proposed revisions to catering and hospitality NVQs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>45 28 (62.2%)</td>
<td>17 (37.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>23 10 (43.5%)</td>
<td>13 (56.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73 40 (54.8%)</td>
<td>33 (45.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Graph 8: Are you familiar with the proposed revisions to catering and hospitality NVQs?

This question was used to measure how well informed participants were of the recent revisions to the catering and hospitality NVQ specifications. These revisions were introduced in September 2006 following an extensive consultation exercise involving industry, training providers, FE colleges and HE.

Results varied between the sectors with the majority of FE lecturers (62.2%) indicating that they were familiar with the new specifications. However in HE the majority (56.5%) were not aware of the revisions, and the two training providers who responded to the e-questionnaire also claimed to be unaware of the proposed changes to the curriculum.

Only respondents who made a positive response to this question were asked to answer the following question, Q9.
Q9. Do you think the proposed revisions will improve these qualifications?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>28 (21.4%)</td>
<td>12 (42.9%)</td>
<td>10 (35.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>10 (70.0%)</td>
<td>7 (29.0%)</td>
<td>3 (30.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (100.0%)</td>
<td>2 (100.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40 (15.0%)</td>
<td>21 (52.5%)</td>
<td>13 (32.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 9: Do you think the proposed revisions will Improve these qualifications?

The response to this question was overwhelmingly negative, with the majority of respondents (52.5%) indicating that they thought the proposed revisions to NVQs (implemented in September 2006) would not improve the overall quality of these qualifications. A large number of respondents (32.5%) replied “don’t know”, while only 15% (all from the FE sector) indicated that they thought that the qualifications would be improved by the revisions.
If these figures are further analysed against specific sectors, a large majority of FE lecturers (78.6%) indicate little confidence in the NVQ revisions (“no” 42.9%, “don’t know” 35.7%). This compares with 100% who answered “no” (70.0%) or “don’t know” (30.0%) in HE.

It is therefore interesting and significant that no respondents from HE or from “others” (including training and education consultants) thought that the revisions would be beneficial. The two training providers did not respond to this question as they had replied in the negative to the preceding question, Q8.

Q10. Would you like to see an alternative to the NVQ system made available?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>37 (82.2%)</td>
<td>8 (17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>22 (95.7%)</td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Provider</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (100.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72 (86.1%)</td>
<td>10 (13.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One “other” did not respond to this statement.
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

The majority of respondents from all sectors (86.1%) indicated that they would like to see an alternative to NVQs made available for the delivery and accreditation of catering and hospitality practical skills. An analysis of responses across the sectors indicates similar attitudes in both FE (82.2%) and HE (95.7%). Application of the Kruskal-Wallis test [KW, P = 0.115] confirms that there is no significant variation in attitudes between the sectors.

Although these results are interesting because they suggest widespread dissatisfaction with NVQs, nevertheless it was necessary to attach some qualitative research to this question in an attempt to learn what alternative to the NVQ system respondents would like to be made available. A total of 52 respondents (71.2% of the sample size) made qualitative responses. In order to assess the specific responses it is necessary to consider the comments under the sector titles.
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a) Further Education.

There were several common suggestions that emerged from the additional comments received from the FE lecturers in response to this question. These suggestions included:

- **Re-introduce the City & Guilds craft qualifications.**

Many respondents from FE favour a return to updated versions of the previous City and Guilds craft qualifications (706/1/2/3, 707/1/2/3, 708, 720, etc.) which were withdrawn following the introduction of NVQs. Ironically some respondents argued that this is what industry would like, despite the fact (as discussed in the Literature Review) that prior to NVQs industry had complained for many years about the quality of the C&G qualifications. As one FE lecturer suggested:

*Most employers would prefer a “re-vamp” of the old 706 series, with more flexibility built in to allow for different organisations and types of unit. This would give students more confidence in their work, a broader understanding of the industry, and better progression opportunities.*

(FE, 96)

Another lecturer argued:

*Revert back to the C&G craft courses which had a more varied and interesting content and were externally examined.*

(FE, 106)

- **Introduce external testing.**

Interestingly it was the issue of external testing, and the lack of such an assessment mechanism with the NVQ system, that many lecturers argue is a key weakness of competence based qualifications. Several lecturers suggested that the introduction of external tests would add credibility to a new style qualification:
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

A system that provides independent tests, both practical and written, that the candidate needs to learn and practice for........an assessment that gives credibility to the qualification.

(FE, 103)

Others argued for time-constrained formal assessments:

There needs to be formal written and practical assessment within time constraints. The open-ended approach doesn’t work.

(FE, 86)

Some lecturers suggested that a combination of the old style C&G qualifications combined with external testing would be the ideal replacement qualification:

The old craft diplomas, in my case the C&G 720 (Hotel Front Office), which allowed students to do some general study of the industry and were assessed by an external exam with some kind of competence for practical skills, would be ideal.

(FE, 69)

and:

A return to a style similar to the written tests for the C&G 706/1 and 706/2, but with observations following the same format as NVQs.

(FE, 35)

- New style qualification.

An interesting comment from several FE lecturers was an acceptance that NVQs are successful when delivered in industry, but that they are an unsuitable qualification for delivery within a college environment. As such there were several suggestions for a new style qualification that combines some of the strengths of NVQs, but is more suitable for a full-time student:

Ideally a system which provides the flexibility of NVQ assessment and the notion of assessment on demand by candidates, but meets the needs of full-time students by providing them with higher levels of underpinning knowledge.

(FE, 67)
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Such suggestions also often repeated the request for the re-introduction of formal external assessment in a new style qualification:

A similar scheme to NVQs, but with a formal way of testing knowledge and understanding. A new qualification should include practical ability tests to industry standards.

(FE, 56)

However one lecturer, perhaps cynically, suggested that such a new style qualification may not satisfy the government’s aim to create a better qualified workforce:

A new qualification should be introduced which is a hybrid between an NVQ and an examination. However too many people would probably fail and the government would not meet its targets.

(FE, 39)

Some FE lecturers argued that a new style qualification should “educate” as well as developing practical skills:

A professional certificate type qualification should be available for full-time youngsters which educates them rather than just put the emphasis on production can/can’t do.

(FE, 74)

Another lecturer suggested that a more “rounded” qualification should introduce learners to more general hospitality and catering issues, rather than just focusing on issues specific to the development of craft skills:

An alternative qualification should include other aspects such as knowledge of the industry, reception, housekeeping, etc., so that students are at least aware of the other areas and get a more rounded view.

(FE, 75)

This notion of alternative qualification which provides an “education” was developed further by another lecturer who was concerned about the effects of NVQ style qualifications on young students and those students with special learning needs:
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I still believe that NVQs have to be modified in order to cope with the younger students... particularly they do not meet the needs of the special needs candidates.

(FE, 81)

- Grading.

A common criticism of NVQs is that they are not graded. As explained in the Literature Review (Chapter 3) a candidate is considered to be either competent or not yet competent following an assessment (Jessup, 1991). Many FE lecturers suggested that a revision to the NVQ system, or the development of an alternative qualification, should include provision for grading. A typical and generally representative comment from one lecturer suggested that a qualification should be developed:

...which contains some theory testing and knowledge beyond competence to award more capable students with higher grades.

(FE, 48)

Another FE lecturer continued this theme by arguing that there is a need for:

...some assessment type where the more competent student is rewarded with a higher qualification.

(FE, 79)

From the qualitative responses received from FE lecturers it is therefore evident that an alternative qualification would be very welcome in this sector, particularly if that qualification included both external testing and grading.

b) Higher Education.

The qualitative responses from HE lecturers repeated many of the themes and ideas for an alternative to the NVQ system proposed by FE staff. Some of the suggestions are exactly the same. However other ideas present and develop new dimensions to the FE
proposals. It is therefore necessary to consider the HE proposals against several headings.

- **Re-introduce the City & Guilds craft qualifications.**

As in the FE sector, several HE lecturers argued that the only alternative solution to the NVQ system is to re-introduce the C&G craft qualifications. Responses ranged from the very direct:

  *Return of the C&G system.*

  (HE, 93)

to more objective suggestions:

  *A return to traditional qualifications where candidates achieved within a practical environment and were assessed by an external assessor. Formal examinations made the qualifications that candidates were proud to achieve.*

  (HE, 71)

There was a suggestion that the old-style qualifications should be simply be updated:

  *I would like to see non unit based qualifications such as an updated version of the C&G 706 series.*

  (HE, 85)

Another HE lecturer argued that while it “would be nice” to have an alternative to replace the NVQ system, this replacement qualification may serve only to add further confusion for employers who are still reluctant to acknowledge NVQs:

  *It would be nice for an alternative, but I’m not sure what that would be and whether it would just cause more confusion amongst employers, - who still refer to the old City and Guilds qualifications anyway.*

  (HE, 94)
• **Introduce external testing.**

A common theme identified in many of the HE comments was for the introduction of external assessment. Several HE lecturers argued that the external assessment of both written and practical skills had been a key strength of the C&G craft qualifications:

*A method of delivery and assessment similar to the old C&G qualifications. These were real qualifications with educational value.*

(HE, 58)

Others suggested that the NVQ system had certain strengths, but needs to be adapted and made “more rigorous” (HE, 34) by the introduction of an externally set test:

*Some amendments are necessary (to NVQs). They should have a nationally set written test.*

(HE, 89)

The need for “academic rigour” (HE, 101) in vocational qualifications was referred to by several HE lecturers. In pursuing this theme some respondents were concerned that the lack of formal written assessments in NVQs is interpreted by the students as a weakness. They argued that when the informal assessment process (“assessment on demand”) is combined with the flexibility of the NVQ system, many students find it difficult to focus and successfully complete their qualification:

*A more rigorous approach to learning is needed. Young people need a focus and direction to follow. NVQs are so flexible that learners have no clear focus and no deadlines to work to, so they lose interest.*

(HE, 34)

This “lack of focus” was perceived to be a particular problem with young, full-time students who enrol on NVQ courses when they leave school aged 16. One HE lecturer concluded that the solution is straight-forward:

*An alternative approach is needed using formal qualifications with exams for full-time students.*

(HE, 40)
• New style qualification.

A recurring theme in the analysis of qualitative responses from HE is a request that a new style qualification is introduced to replace NVQs. Several lecturers argued that the current NVQ qualifications are too focused on specific job roles, and as such do not develop a student’s overall awareness of the hospitality and catering industry. In developing this idea one lecturer suggested:

_A broader syllabus of vocational skills leading to a college based qualification preparing learners for a wide range of job roles in hospitality and catering. The assessment should include end testing and records of competence over time with a big focus on workplace evidence gained through RWE’s (Realistic Work Environments) and work placement._

(HE, 42)

Another argued for:

_A combination of work-based assessments for part-time students, and in-house assessment with three months work experience per year for full-time students. All students to take an annual practical exam._

(HE, 43)

This is clearly a request for a less flexible approach to delivery, and a more formal approach to assessment.

A clear concern was the perceived lack of structure and focus on current NVQ programmes delivered to full-time students in FE colleges. One HE lecturer argued for:

_More structured learning with a variety of assessment methods and delivery, - a qualification designed specifically for delivery in the FE sector._

(HE, 59)

Others thought that funding issues were affecting the quality and outcomes of NVQs, and as such another HE lecturer suggested an alternative system:
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

.....where funding did not influence achievement. The current system is open to all types of abuse, particularly by commercial training providers.

(HE, 83)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, a key criticism of NVQs is the bureaucratic paper systems that need to be completed by both the assessor and the student. In suggesting an alternative qualification several HE lecturers argued for a qualification that is easier and less complex to administer:

We need courses and qualifications that are easier administratively and fit into an educational and work context Not back to C&G in full, but along those lines.

(HE, 97)

Another lecturer completed the discussion by returning to a recurring theme and suggesting that such a new style qualification should:

..........encourage the most able students to demonstrate skills and academic rigour, perhaps with a written examination and end of unit practical assessments by an external examiner.

(HE, 101)

- **Refine the current NVQ model.**

A final suggestion from several HE respondents concerned the possibility of “building-on” the current NVQ system, making improvements based on the feedback received. As one lecturer suggested:

The underlying principles are fine, but they need more integration and resources to enable colleges and employers to work together.

(HE, 100)
Another HE lecturer argued that the current suite of catering and hospitality NVQs needs to be reviewed and revised against the other types of H&C qualifications available. He suggested that currently there is no interface and clear progression routes between vocational qualifications. As such different qualifications compete with each other for a diminishing market, with NVQs suffering because of their poor image:

It's not necessarily a replacement that is needed, but the current set of NVQ qualifications need to be repositioned against the Foundation Degree (Fd) and HE provision in order to clearly define it's market. At present NVQs don't project a positive image.

(HE, 91)

A final statement from a HE lecturer developed this theme by suggesting that industry and education should work together to improve the NVQ model, developing practical skills and knowledge to create:

a more fully developed process of catering education that ensures our future workforce not only meets the needs of employers, but equips the learner with the appropriate background knowledge.

(HE, 104)

c) Training Providers.

Only one training provider made a qualitative response to Q10. The TP suggested that an alternative to the NVQ system should include a formal practical examination as part of the final assessment process:

I would like to see the re-introduction of some form of practical examination at the end of the qualification.

(TP, 36)
Q11. What funding arrangements do you think should be made available for vocational qualifications in hospitality and catering?

The final question that required a qualitative response concerned the funding arrangements for NVQs. Specifically I was interested to learn whether respondents to the e-questionnaire believed that the funding methodology used for NVQs influenced the judgements made by assessors. If respondents thought that the current funding methodology was flawed, I was interested in learning what alternative funding arrangements could be employed.

A total of 47 respondents (64.4% of the sample size) provided comments. As in the analysis of the previous qualitative responses it is necessary to consider these comments under the sector titles.

a) Further Education.

Unfortunately most respondents in FE did not answer this question with the focus that I had intended. Most respondents assumed that I was concerned with how hospitality and catering courses are banded in colleges for funding purposes, and how this banding compares with other courses delivered within an FE environment. A typical response from an FE lecturer argued that:

Funding should be based on success, but the expense of wasted consumables during training should be given due consideration and compensation. It costs more to train a chef than a secretary.

(FE, 62)
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Other respondents similarly argued for increased funding for catering courses due to the equipment and consumable costs that are a necessary part of such a practical skills development course:

*Funding should take into account the amount of money needed to provide expensive ingredients and equipment for students.*

(FE, 49)

*Sufficient funding should be awarded to allow colleges to re-invest and bring facilities up to industry standards.*

(FE, 50)

and:

*Catering as a career needs to be encouraged by encouraging colleges to retain and develop their catering departments. Fund bandings for catering education should reflect the expense of practical kitchen delivery.*

(FE, 86)

However several FE lecturers did interpret and answer the question with the focus intended. One lecturer argued that funding is being wasted by financing training providers to deliver NVQs when colleges are better able to deliver these qualifications:

*Untangle the problem, - there is a skills shortage nationwide. So why isn’t the LSC (Learning and Skills Council) responding to this by putting their finances into the best providers of catering and hospitality training, - the FE colleges. Instead they waste money giving it to training companies just to provide assessment.*

(FE, 38)

Others argued against the outcome based funding model where colleges and training providers get an allocation of their funding based on successful completions:

*Payment based on successful outcomes should be scrapped.*

(FE, 103)

and:
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Outcome based funding does not help quality with NVQs. Those who complete the course pass in many cases.

(FE, 107)

One FE lecturer suggested that many SMEs in hospitality and catering are reluctant to enrol their staff onto NVQ programmes at the local college because of the process used for charging for NVQ programmes. He suggested that it should be possible for an employer to buy training in unit-sized portions, rather than having to pay up-front for the full NVQ:

The industry is notorious for turnover of staff, particularly unqualified staff. If units were offered in short training periods for all age groups then more small to medium size employers may be willing to participate. No small employer is going to pay in excess of £400 for a full NVQ and then lose that member of staff to a competitor.

(FE, 45)

An interesting final comment from an FE lecturer bemoaned the lack of a suitable funding methodology, but argued that it was more important to have the “right” qualifications in place before the other issues can be resolved:

If the government wants a trained work-force then it (training) should be fully funded, but get the qualifications right first.

(FE, 106)

b) Higher Education.

In reviewing the qualitative responses received for Q11, it was pleasing to note that the majority of HE respondents provided comments which applied the required focus to the question. Many HE lecturers were concerned by the outcome-based funding methodology applied to NVQ delivery and assessment. Several comments made the same criticism:
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Payment should be based on recruitment rather than payment based on successful outcomes.  
(HE, 34)

Funding should not be linked to achievement.  
(HE, 71)

One HE lecturer argued that the government needs to provide more funding if there is a real desire to create a “better trained” (HE, 57) workforce who are trained appropriately by the colleges and training providers:

Employers say that they need people with these vocational skills, so they need to be funded and colleges/training providers need to deliver them (the NVQ qualifications) appropriately.  
(HE, 94)

Several lecturers claimed that the government was trying to offer training and develop skills “on the cheap” (HE, 97). This theme was continued by another HE respondent who suggested that:

Additional learning time should be made available to progress the skills of the more able students who are insufficiently challenged by the NVQ system. Teaching and training salaries should also reflect expertise.  
(HE, 104)

Others suggested that both the government and employers should pay more if they want a quality training provision:

Increased funding from government and make employers pay more  
(HE, 43)

and:

If they (the government) want a fully trained workforce in any meaningful way, then the government should set aside the funds to support it.  
(HE, 89)
However the discussion from HE lecturers went “full circle” and the concluding statement again re-states the initial concerns, but also offers a solution to the funding problem:

\[\text{Funding should be based on enrolment, retention and achievement in equal quantities, - not an emphasis of funding based on achievement.}\]

(HE, 58)

c) Training Providers.

Only one training provider made a comment about the funding arrangements for NVQs. Perhaps not surprisingly the TP supported outcome-based funding which rewards a training organisation for successful completions:

\[\text{I feel that funding should be aimed at success and completion of qualifications.}\]

(TP, 36)

6.6 Chapter review

In this chapter I have presented the results of the primary data collection process for the fourth research objective of this study.

4. To explore and review the suitability of the NVQ approach to skills development as a model for hospitality education/training.

This primary research process has produced both quantitative and qualitative data against each of the key themes presented in the e-questionnaire:

- the image of catering and hospitality NVQs,
- the suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry,
Chapter Six. NVQs: A blessing or a curse? E-questionnaire results

- issues associated with the implementation of catering and hospitality NVQs, and
- strengths and weaknesses of NVQs.

I am satisfied that the research process has been thorough and provides a representative cross-section of responses on which to progress towards a conclusion. The study will therefore continue with a discussion of the emerging attitudes of education and training providers towards catering and hospitality NVQs, making recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training in the UK.
Chapter 7.

NVQs in Hospitality & Catering – A blessing or a curse?

Discussion.
Chapter 7.

NVQs in Hospitality & Catering – A blessing or a curse?

Discussion.

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Interpretation, Analysis and Discussion of the E-Questionnaire Results

7.2.1 Image of catering and hospitality NVQs
  7.2.1.1 Values and brands
  7.2.1.2 Attitudes

7.2.2 Suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the industry
  7.2.2.1 Purpose of vocational qualifications
  7.2.2.2 Requirements of vocational qualifications
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Discussion.

7.1 Introduction.

In this chapter I will review and consolidate the findings from the primary research undertaken via the e-questionnaire for Phase 3 of the study. The previous chapter (Chapter 6) presented the results from the e-questionnaire using a series of tables, graphs and statistical analysis of the data by application of the Kruskal-Wallis test. In this chapter I will therefore seek to conclude the final research objectives of this study by interpreting the results and reviewing the suitability of the NVQ approach to skills development as a model for hospitality education/training. The findings from this process should assist in informing and enabling me to make recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training.

This chapter is therefore divided into the following section headings which follows the same sequence as the e-questionnaire layout:

7.2 Interpretation, analysis and discussion of the e-questionnaire results
7.3 Assessment and review of the NVQ model for skills development
7.4 Recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training
7.2 Interpretation, analysis and discussion of the e-questionnaire results.

In this section I will review the key issues and themes emerging from the e-questionnaire. I will interpret, analyse and discuss the e-questionnaire results to consolidate the overall findings from this data collection process.

7.2.1 Image of catering and hospitality NVQs

7.2.1.1 Values and brands

The marketplace image of any qualification is important if that qualification is to be recognised and valued by the stakeholders. Indeed in today’s competitive economy the image associated with any product is a strong determinant of success. In marketing we discuss the importance of brand image, and the effect that this has on how the product is regarded by the market. Gabay (2003, p153) explains the “brand egg”:

_Imaginative marketers may like to think of brands in terms of an egg. The yolk represents the brand’s core strengths, whilst the white represents its supporting values and the shell the external, thereby ‘first sight’, contemporary perceptions._

The problem for NVQs, confirmed by the e-questionnaire results, is that while the underlying philosophies of the qualification are well-argued (as discussed in Chapter 3), the perceptions of the NVQ “brand egg” are that it is cracked. Indeed, across the sectors (HE, FE & TP) the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that catering and hospitality NVQs suffer from a poor image.

This issue of poor brand image is compounded when the issue of “value” is attached to the qualification. A Collins English Dictionary (1998) definition of value is _“the desirability of a thing, often in respect of some property such as usefulness or_
exchangeability: worth, merit or importance.” The e-questionnaire results indicate that the majority of education and training providers do not value NVQs. This is a particularly worrying finding because it reveals that the key people involved in the implementation and delivery of NVQs place little worth or importance against them. It might also have been expected that younger lecturers in the FE sector with “no baggage” from previous qualifications would have been more strongly supportive. However no respondents surveyed replied that they “strongly agreed” that NVQs are valued by catering and hospitality lecturers.

It was interesting that when the education and training providers were asked about the value placed on NVQs by the catering and hospitality industry, the results were not as negatively skewed. Although the majority still thought that the industry did not value NVQs as a training mechanism, a minority recognised that some industrialists are supportive of a competence-based approach to skills development. This certainly confirms the results from the NEAT project (discussed in Chapter 4) where managers from divisions within the catering services sector indicated that they were particularly supportive of on-going training including the achievement of NVQs.

A regular on-going debate in the hospitality industry trade press concerns whether NVQs are a good successor for the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications. This issue has been discussed earlier in the study, and is further evidenced by a recent letter in the Caterer and Hotelkeeper (10th May, 2007, p24) from an industrialist bemoaning the lack of skills presented by recently qualified college students when they enter employment:
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I've seen many a young chef come out of college not able to make an omelette or turn vegetables, and they have got NVQ Levels 2 and 3.

Although the research finding from the NEAT project suggest that the industrialists are divided about the merits or otherwise of the NVQ framework, the education and training providers are very decisive in their negative response to NVQs. Only a small minority of FE lecturers indicated that they agreed that NVQs are a good successor, whereas the vast majority would prefer to see a return to the former craft qualifications. This confirms my earlier research outcomes in Chapter 5, when conducting the face-to-face interviews with education and training providers, which revealed that NVQs are regarded as a poor replacement for the City & Guilds craft qualifications that preceded them.

7.2.1.2 Attitudes

It is interesting in reviewing the image of NVQs to consider how the education and training providers perceive young people's attitudes towards these qualifications. My expectation was that the predominately negative responses to the other image related questions would also influence the responses to this issue. However, the analysis indicates that the attitudes of young people, in the opinions of the education and training providers across the three sectors (HE, FE and TP), are fairly evenly distributed. It can therefore be suggested that some of the education and training providers have acknowledged that because young people have no knowledge or experience of the preceding craft qualifications (unlike themselves), they are more likely to be satisfied with the qualifications currently available. It would be useful in a further study to
consider the attitudes of the young people themselves towards NVQs, and the image projected by these qualifications amongst their peer groups.

Other issues emerging from the analysis of the image of NVQs suggest that many FE lecturers are concerned by how the qualification is viewed by the hospitality industry. Again this is a recurring theme in this study which had been considered earlier. There is concern that the qualifications do not adequately prepare people for employment, and that employers have now lost trust in the qualifications. As a result this has also caused the image of NVQs to become tarnished. However my research findings from the NEAT project and interviews with employers (Chapter 4) do not necessarily confirm this concern. Certainly some employers have become wary of the quality of employees holding NVQs, but many of the large operators in the commercial sector and in the catering services sector actively encourage employees to develop their skills by pursuing NVQs.

Some FE lecturers claim that the assessment mechanism for NVQs is too bureaucratic, and that the complex portfolio processes and form-filling have dented the image of the qualification. These issues have been comprehensively discussed in this study, with the mechanics of the NVQ assessment process explained in Chapter 3. Certainly the paper systems employed for NVQ assessments, and the supporting IV (Internal Verifier) and EV (External Verifier) quality procedures, are intense compared to previous more traditional qualifications. However emerging concerns about implementation issues will be reviewed in a later section (7.2.3).
An issue affecting the image of NVQs identified by several HE lecturers concerns the perceived lack of national standards. As explained in Chapter 3, a main purpose in establishing NVQs was to ensure that standards achieved by competent candidates should be the same across the UK, - that is why they are titled National Vocational Qualifications. However the reality according to some HE lecturers does not match the intent. There was much anecdotal evidence presented in the e-questionnaire which suggested that the standards achieved by learners on the same NVQ programme but attending different centres (e.g. FE colleges, other training providers) were not consistent. As such this presents a poor image to employers about the reliability of the qualifications when making job appointments and employment decisions.

Other HE lecturers suggested that the image of NVQs is poor because the qualifications have resulted in craft skills being de-valued in the catering industry. Again my research does not suggest that this premise is necessarily true. A Motorway Service Station manager in Chapter 4 described NVQs as “a modern qualification (that are) trusted and regarded as a suitable benchmark to assess ability.” Certainly catering craft skills have changed in the last twenty years. The introduction of convenience and pre-prepared foods which can be easily re-heated using microwave ovens (“snip and ping” cookery) has had a dramatic effect on the necessity to learn many of the “traditional” catering craft skills.

However to suggest that all changes to craft skills resulting from technological advancements are negative, is to take a very narrow view of the broader benefits that such new cooking methods offer. The NVQ curriculum has responded effectively to
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these changes by including units that focus on microwave cookery and modern cooking techniques. My own observation is that industry catering craft skills have changed in recent years in order to respond effectively to technological developments, - but that this would have happened with or without the influence of NVQs.

Following on from the above discussion of craft skills, it is appropriate to conclude this section by considering the attitude of a training provider in relation to the image of NVQs. The TP suggested that there was no reason why NVQs should suffer from a poor image. Significantly the TP suggested that NVQs are doing what they were designed to achieve: “NVQs are work-based hence relevant to the needs of the learner and the industry” (TP, 72). My findings in relation to the NEAT project (Chapter 4) suggest that some of the larger hospitality operators share this positive image of NVQs.

7.2.2 Suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the industry.

7.2.2.1 Purpose of vocational qualifications.

Arguably the primary purpose of any vocational qualification is to equip students with the skills and knowledge which reflect the needs of a particular industry, enabling those students to make an immediate and valued contribution when they join that particular industry. It is therefore concerning that the majority of FE and HE lecturers replying to the e-questionnaire regard catering and hospitality NVQs as not reflecting the current needs of this industry. As these competence-based qualifications were written specifically to reflect current industry practices, this outcome is a major concern. It also, again, identifies major differences in attitudes towards NVQs between educationalists and the large hospitality employers. As explained above, and in Chapter 4 ("The NEAT
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Project”), many large hospitality operators display confidence in NVQs by investing heavily in terms of time and money, encouraging their employees to pursue NVQs to improve both their skills and career development opportunities.

This issue links clearly with the attitudes of the education and training providers towards the suitability of NVQs for providing opportunities for career progression. Interestingly there are some disparities between the educationists in their responses. The clear majority of HE lecturers either have no opinion or take a negative view about NVQs providing gateways for career development. Conversely the majority of FE lecturers regard the achievement of NVQs as a means of progression within the industry. It can be argued that FE lecturers have an interest in “selling” NVQs to potential students as a qualification which will enhance their career prospects. This may account for the differences in opinions between the two sectors. HE lecturers do not deliver NVQs as their core business, and therefore they are not involved in having to promote and sell these qualifications. Arguably therefore the HE lecturers can be more objective in their responses. The training providers also reveal attitudes similar to FE, but again their businesses are concerned with selling NVQs as a basis for career progression.

7.2.2.2 Requirements of vocational qualifications.

As explained above, a key requirement of any vocational qualification is to prepare the student for employment in that chosen industry. It can therefore be argued that any vocational qualification should develop the learner’s overall knowledge of that industry. It is therefore disappointing to learn from the e-questionnaire responses that the majority
of educationists, in both FE and HE, don’t believe that NVQs achieve this objective. Only the training providers indicate confidence in the ability of NVQs to promote this knowledge.

This issue is clearly critical in the NVQ debate. As discussed in Chapter 3 (Literature Review) the role of pure knowledge in the NVQ process has been the subject of much discussion. The original NVQ prototypes were solely concerned with competence (i.e. the ability to do the job). As explained by Wolf (1995, p32) when explaining these prototypes:

*The fact that current competence-based awards are now being criticised so heavily for their neglect of “knowledge” makes it important to emphasise the well-founded position from which they began. It is that theoretical knowledge - “book learning” – stands in very uncertain relationship to practical expertise.*

However this position was relaxed as the early NVQs evolved to respond to market feedback. These later developments included the acceptance that “underpinning knowledge” (which has been described as “need-to-know” rather than “nice-to-know” knowledge) is necessary to support the practical expertise which the learner is developing.

However despite the development and inclusion of such underpinning knowledge into NVQs, it is concerning that the majority of FE and HE lecturers still believe that there is insufficient knowledge within the qualifications to provide learners with an overall appreciation of the catering and hospitality industry. This probably explains why many lecturers wish to see the re-introduction of externally set written tests as part of the
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NVQ assessment mechanism. Development issues associated with the implementation of NVQs will be discussed in the next section (7.2.3).

7.2.2.3 Standards and NVQs.

A well-practiced argument regarding education and training at all levels in today’s society is that standards have fallen. For example, almost every year after the publication of the latest “A” level results, the government announces that more candidates have passed with improved grades, while the media argues that comparisons suggest that the qualifications are “easier” than they used to be (Clark, 2007). I was therefore not surprised that during the interviews with the education and training providers which informed the design of the e-questionnaire (Chapter 5), many respondents lamented the perceived decline in standards since NVQs were introduced. Significantly however the e-questionnaire results confirm the preliminary findings.

It is clear that across both educational sectors the majority of respondents believe that NVQs have not improved overall standards in the catering and hospitality industry. The extreme opinions are more pronounced within HE, but also in FE a significant majority expressed concern. Although it is true that other factors may also have contributed to static or falling standards (i.e. low levels of unemployment resulting in employers competing to retain employees, the increasing use of convenience and pre-prepared foods discussed earlier), nevertheless the clear message from the educationalists is that NVQs have not succeeded in developing practical skills and competence in the way that was originally envisaged. Interestingly only the training providers are more positive.
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Perhaps, as suggested earlier, this is because they have a survival interest in promoting the success of NVQs in order to continue to generate future business and the associated funding income.

Despite the negative press and publicity surrounding NVQs, I was keen to discover whether the achievement of this qualification encouraged learners to become more motivated and confident in the workplace. It was therefore interesting to discover a fairly even distribution of responses across the education and training providers targeted. Although it would have been pleasing to reveal a skew towards more positive responses, nevertheless considering the negative responses towards NVQs in earlier questions, I was generally satisfied that many respondents recognised the psychological benefits accrued to employees by achieving NVQs.

The above issue clearly links with concerns about career prospects, and whether achieving a catering and hospitality NVQ increases the marketability of the learner. Interestingly, despite the many negative issues surrounding NVQs already identified in my research, an analysis of sector responses indicates that the majority of respondents across all sectors (HE, FE, TP) either have no opinion or agree that learners do have better career prospects if they possess appropriate NVQs. This finding is clearly significant because it suggests that NVQs do have recognition and "value" in the marketplace, - key requirements for any professional qualification. This confirms the findings discussed earlier regarding the value attached to NVQs by the larger catering and hospitality operators (7.2.1).
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However when the education and training providers were asked whether they thought that catering and hospitality NVQs meet employer needs, the responses again reveal the concerns that the educationalists predominately have about this qualification. The majority of lecturers in FE and HE either expressed no opinion or indicated that they consider that NVQs do not meet the current needs of hospitality employers. The training providers, not surprisingly, were again more positive in their support. The responses also confirm the results from the earlier question which considered whether NVQs reflect the needs of today’s catering and hospitality industry.

A key requirement of any practical vocational qualification is that it helps to improve the level of practical/craft skills in a particular industry. It was therefore disappointing to learn that the educationalists predominately took a negative view in their assessment as to whether practical skills have improved since the introduction of NVQs. The HE lecturers were more extreme in their negative attitudes, but even in FE a high majority of lecturers agreed that craft skills have not improved as a result of competence-based qualifications. A recent letter published in the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* (19th October, 2006, p20) confirms this finding:

*I’ve had commis chefs who, after two years at college, can’t even make a simple soup and have no idea how to hold a piping bag or make a soufflé. I thought I would gain my teaching qualifications and try and make a difference, but then when you’ve gone to all that trouble you realise that it’s not the teachers and lecturers who are at fault but the whole system. It’s a money-oriented, bureaucratic system with no real regard for standards.*

Overall therefore most educationists believe that NVQs have not helped to improve standards and even the training providers and others (who are usually more supportive) provide a broad spectrum of responses with the majority in the negative.
7.2.2.4 Value of Level 1 qualifications.

A final issue that concerns many people involved in the delivery of catering and hospitality NVQs, is the worth or value of Level 1 qualifications. The government argues that it is keen to encourage and create a better qualified workforce, formally recognising skills achievement at all level. However many people question the policy, arguing that it is a ploy to artificially raise the number of “qualified” people by awarding certificates for the achievement of the most basic skills. To conclude this section of the e-questionnaire concerned with the suitability of NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry, I therefore chose to question the education and training providers about their attitudes towards this most basic NVQ award.

Not surprisingly there was a spread of opinions on this issue. The HE respondents were skewed towards agreeing that these qualifications are of no real value, whereas the FE lecturers provided a more even distribution of responses. As I suggested when presenting the results (Chapter 6), many FE lecturers will work with NVQ Level 1 learners and will therefore have greater empathy with their personal circumstances and what they are trying to achieve. Conversely most HE lecturers will have no contact with such basic level learners, and as such they are less supportive of their needs. The training providers and others took a fairly neutral stance of this issue with only one TP strongly arguing that Level 1 NVQs are valued. This was perhaps surprising as training providers receive additional funding for delivering basic level skills, and therefore I anticipated a more positive reaction towards the achievement of these qualifications.
7.2.2.5 Other emerging issues.

Other issues emerging from the analysis of the suitability of NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry suggest that many FE lecturers are concerned by what they perceive is the de-valuation of standards in order to ensure that more learners successfully complete these qualifications. There is a clear belief that the government had an agenda, when introducing competence-based qualifications, to eliminate failure. There is no differential grading of achievement with these qualifications, and as discussed in Chapter 3 (Literature Review) the word “fail” is not part of the NVQ vocabulary. Instead a learner who has not achieved the required standard is deemed to be “not yet competent”. Many FE lecturers are uncomfortable that they are not able to reward “better” candidates with higher grades, and the argument continues that this lack of grading actually de-motivates more able learners.

Comparisons with the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications abound, with many FE lecturers bemoaning the decline in practical craft skills since the introduction of NVQs. As illustrated throughout this study, there are many examples of letters in the trade press that support this view. A significant proportion of FE lecturers (both in the face-to-face interviews and when responding to the e-questionnaire) also suggest that the NVQ process is not a suitable process for measuring achievement because there are no reliable national standards. Obviously this is a key requirement for a nationally based industry such as catering and hospitality. Although quality checks are built into the NVQ process, including internal and external verification processes, the lecturers argue that the subjective nature of the assessor/candidate relationship impairs objective and impartial assessment decision-making.
The HE lecturers also make some interesting comments regarding the suitability of NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry. As they are more detached from the core product, and not usually involved in the delivery of NVQs, their comments in this study are often more forthright and extreme than their FE colleagues. A typical attitude amongst HE lecturers is that the industry has been de-skilled in recent years, and that this de-skilling process is directly linked to the introduction and implementation of NVQs. Other HE lecturers believe that industry has lost confidence in NVQ, a view confirmed by an SME industry representative in a recent article by Druce (2007) in the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* (1st March, 2007, p12):

> an NVQ says nothing about a person’s ability.

However, as explained earlier, my study has revealed that this opinion is not held by the larger hospitality organisations who are investing heavily in staff development programmes which include NVQ provision.

The HE lecturers also lament the demise of the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications. They argue that the perceived poor standards of NVQs compared to the previous C&G qualifications have been a big disappointment to all the stakeholders. Their rather pessimistic conclusion is that there are no winners with NVQs in the long term, - just declining standards in all aspects of catering and hospitality operations.
7.2.3 Issues associated with the implementation of catering and hospitality NVQs.

7.2.3.1 Assessment processes.

Many of the issues and concerns relating to NVQs that are identified in this study are based on the assessment processes employed. Indeed it is probably because the NVQ assessment process is so different to the models used for more traditional qualifications that many people have chosen to criticise this "alternative" approach. The background to NVQ development in the UK was explained in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), and was based on the 1986 government’s Review of Vocational Qualifications. The review argued that "assessment methods tend to be biased towards the testing either of knowledge or of skill rather than of competence", and that there are "many barriers to access arising from attendance and entry requirements" (Manpower Services Commission and Department of Education and Science 1986).

Clearly this was a controversial review as it questioned many of the basic assessment practices that were well established and used by education and training providers. During the interviews which informed the design of the e-questionnaire (discussed in Chapter 5), a recurring concern of the interviewees was the assessment methodology used in the NVQ process. It was therefore appropriate in the e-questionnaire to further investigate this issue, encouraging the education and training providers to focus on their concerns.

In order for any NVQ practical assessment to be undertaken effectively it is a requirement that the organisation carrying-out the assessment is adequately resourced and equipped. Indeed the intention during the early design stages of NVQs was that they
would be delivered and assessed in industry. However, as explained in Chapter 3, Foote (1999) identified that most catering and hospitality NVQs have been delivered by colleges since the qualification was launched, and this has remained the situation to date. Colleges therefore have had to ensure that their facilities and equipment equate with the premises and plant found within an industrial environment, - such facilities are known as RWEs (Realistic Work Environments).

7.2.3.2 Resource issues.
A key implementation issue therefore is whether colleges are sufficiently resourced for the effective delivery of catering and hospitality NVQs. The results from the e-questionnaire reveal a fairly even distribution of responses in the FE sector. As explained in Chapter 6 (presentation of results from the e-questionnaire), hospitality and catering is regarded as an expensive vocational sector to resource within a college, and therefore many FE institutions took the decision in the late 1990’s to either “downsize” or close their catering provision. Other colleges however opted to invest in hospitality courses, and created units (schools, departments, etc) that combined service sector courses such as leisure & sport, tourism, and hospitality & catering. The e-questionnaire responses from this sector therefore confirm that resource allocations for the delivery of catering and hospitality NVQs vary considerably in different colleges.

The HElecturers are more skewed towards agreeing that catering and hospitality NVQs are not well resourced in colleges. Most HE lecturers will probably base this view on the attitudes of their own institutions towards the resourcing of hospitality courses, or they may have been influenced by their own experiences earlier in their careers when
working within the FE sector. In terms of accuracy the FE response is therefore the best indicator as to how well/badly catering and hospitality NVQs are resourced within colleges.

7.2.3.3 Delivery issues.

The issue as to how NVQs should be delivered is very contentious. As explained in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), the qualifications were originally designed for industry, by industry, for delivery in industry. However, as indicated above, most catering and hospitality NVQs are delivered within an FE college environment. It was therefore necessary to assess the reaction of the education and training providers to the premise that catering and hospitality NVQs are only suitable for delivery in the workplace. Many FE colleges now employ NVQ assessors who visit part-time students in the workplace and complete the assessments in the industrial environment. However the majority of full-time FE lecturers still deliver and assess NVQs within the college.

Interestingly the responses from all the sectors (FE, HE & TP), indicates a fairly even distribution of responses. Clearly some respondents believe that the whole ethos of NVQs has been lost by delivering and assessing these qualifications in an “artificial” college environment. Others argue that industry is unwilling to invest time and money in the qualifications, and that the qualifications would not have survived if they were not delivered by colleges. The truth again is probably somewhere between these two extremes. My discussions with the employers for the NEAT project (Chapter 4) suggest that smaller and medium-size employers (SMEs) do not have the time, money or strategic intent to focus on delivering NVQs in the workplace. Their primary objective
for survival and growth is bottom-line profitability. The larger employers however, as previously discussed, wish to train as many staff as possible using NVQs in the workplace, - applying the qualification as part of a long term growth and competitive strategy. This issue therefore clearly divides opinions not only among the education and training providers, but also amongst the employers themselves.

Many people regard NVQs as paper-driven qualifications which are difficult for the both the assessor and the candidate to manage. This view was confirmed on several occasions throughout this study in conversations with both employers and educators, and was discussed in Chapter 3 (Literature Review). As the issue was again referred to during the interviews prior to the design of the e-questionnaire, it was therefore necessary to include a question to the education and training providers about the administration attached to the delivery and assessment of an NVQ. The results were wholly decisive. Across all sectors the results were skewed towards the opinion that NVQs are administratively burdensome. There is clearly a message here if the qualification is to survive into the future, - the assessment process must be simplified and the paperwork systems attached to NVQs revised. As Tolley et al (2000, p20) identify in their research:

NVQs need to be less bureaucratic with less cross-checking. They are unattractive to small businesses who don't have dedicated personnel to deal with this.................they need to be more user friendly.

The findings above clearly link with another controversial aspect of NVQ delivery and assessment, - the NVQ portfolio. A common statement during my interviews with the education and training providers was that portfolio-building was just a “paper exercise”
despised by both learners and assessors. I therefore decided to use this wording directly in the e-questionnaire to test the response from a broader cross-section of people involved in the delivery of NVQs. The results again were conclusive and evenly distributed across the sectors. The vast majority of respondents indicated that portfolio building was a major concern, - a fundamental weakness with the NVQ process. As discussed in Chapter 3, Foot (1999) claims that producing a portfolio detracts from developing the "real" practical skills that are necessary in the work environment. Clearly more work will need to be undertaken to simply the portfolio or introduce an alternative process for recording and storing NVQ assessment decisions.

7.2.3.4 National standards.

The introduction of NVQs was intended to produce skills standards that were equal across England and Wales, i.e. national standards for national qualifications. It was envisaged that an NVQ II in Food Production that was delivered and assessed in Cardiff would equate exactly with the standards for that same NVQ if it was delivered and assessed in Carlisle. However this study has identified that very often there are concerns about the lack of national standards. The Awarding Bodies who sell these qualifications argue that the internal and external verification (IV & EV) systems ensure the parity of standards between different centres. As explained in Chapter 3, they describe this process as a "rigorous quality assurance verification system”.

However my research indicates that many NVQ assessors do not share this confidence in the quality assurance system. As a result it was necessary to question the education and training providers in the e-questionnaire as to whether they believed that NVQs
have succeeded in creating national standards of competence. Interestingly this issue creates a disparity of opinions confirmed by the application of the Kruskal-Wallis test (K,W,P = 0.0005). Indeed the overall results from the FE lecturers are more moderate than the opinions offered from the HE lecturers and training providers. A significant minority within the FE sector accept that national standards have been achieved, whereas only one HE lecturer (from 23 HE respondents) and no training providers consider there to be parity of standards between centres. It can be argued that the FE lecturers are responsible for making the quality assurance system work, and therefore it is in their interest to be positive and upbeat about its implementation. However the same argument could be used for the training providers and others who conclusively indicate that they don’t agree that NVQs have resulted in the achievement of national standards.

In order to try and resolve this disparity it is useful to review the attitudes of the education and training providers to the issue of including external written tests as part of the NVQ assessment process. Throughout my research a regular criticism of the NVQ system has been lack of externally-set “independent” final tests, which were considered by many to be a positive feature of the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications. Many of the interviewees, in the data collection process prior to the e-questionnaire, claimed that the introduction of external written testing would provide “rigour” and “credibility” to the NVQ assessment process. Indeed this issue of external testing regularly features in the trade press (Caterer and Hotelkeeper), as reviewed in Chapter 3.
My research results from the e-questionnaire indicate general agreement across the sectors, - the majority of education and training providers would like to see written external testing introduced into NVQs. Indeed, the results were heavily skewed towards the proposition. Whether these tests should be in the form of final exams or as on-going assessments throughout the NVQ programme is for further debate, but clearly the majority of the respondents believe that the current assessment mechanism is not sufficiently rigorous.

This issue of external assessment clearly also links to practical competence. Previously the City & Guilds craft qualifications assessed practical skills by employing teams of external assessors who visited centres to observe students undertake specific practical tasks. The students were only informed of the specific tasks they would have to complete when the external assessor arrived. Clearly this was a demanding process for both the students and the lecturers employed in the centres. However it was evident when conducting the interviews for this study that many people, both in industry and education, regarded this as an effective, albeit demanding, process for assessing practical skills.

It was therefore appropriate to include this implementation issue on the e-questionnaire. As with the question about external written testing, a majority of respondents across the sectors (FE, HE, TP) indicated that they would also welcome the introduction of external practical assessments. However a minority of FE lecturers were more cautious about using independent external assessors compared to HE and TP respondents. This can probably be explained by examining the close assessor/learner relationship that
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currently exists during the NVQ practical skills assessment process. Some FE lecturers believe that this relationship benefits the learner, and makes learning and skills development more personal and effective. Other FE lecturers argue that this closeness makes assessment decisions too subjective, and this obviously impacts on the achievement of national standards. The majority opinion is to make the assessment of practical skills more objective. However, it is also necessary to consider the needs of low level learners, particularly at NVQ Level 1, who may find such a formalised assessment mechanism very intimidating.

7.2.3.5 Flexibility.

One of the key innovative features of NVQs is their flexibility in terms of delivery and assessment. There are no nationally set dates for assessments as is the case with more conventional qualifications. Instead as Hyde (1998) explains, and was discussed in Chapter 3, the ethos of NVQs is that they are responsive to the learner’s individual needs. There are no time limits for completion, or specific times of the year when a learner must enrol on an NVQ programme. This flexibility emerged as a discussion issue during the interviews, and therefore it was appropriate to explore attitudes to a flexible approach qualification more fully in the e-questionnaire.

Most FE lecturers and training providers responded that they regard a flexible approach to training with no time constraints as a key strength of the NVQ system. Although the HE lecturers were more cautious, and their responses were more evenly distributed, nevertheless I was surprised that only a minority of HE colleagues opposed a qualification that has flexible delivery and assessment processes. Indeed my experiences
in HE, both as a lecturer and an external examiner in other HE institutions, is that the sector is very traditional in terms of delivery patterns (terms, semesters, etc.) and attitudes towards fixed dates for assessments.

It was therefore interesting to review attitudes across the sectors when the above implementation issue was developed further, and respondents were asked in the e-questionnaire whether assessment on demand is a positive feature of the NVQ system. Again the majority of FE lecturers and training providers agreed with Jessop (1991), discussed in Chapter 3, that open access to assessment that responds to the demands of the learner rather than the assessor is significant development which NVQs have promoted and progressed. The HE respondents however were more guarded in their reaction with only a minority supporting this assessment methodology. As discussed in Chapter 6 (e-questionnaire results), the concept of assessment on demand is embedded in the NVQ philosophy which is practiced in FE and by training providers. However in HE, which generally uses more traditional assessment mechanisms, this practice is very unusual and thus explains the response from the HE lecturers. The Kruskal-Wallis test result \( (K,W,P = 0.034) \) confirms the sector differences in attitudes concerning this issue.

### 7.2.3.6 Funding

Probably the most controversial aspect of NVQ implementation has been the funding methodology used. This process of "outcome-related funding" has been berated by Smithers (2000) and was discussed in Chapter 3 (Literature Review). Certainly when it was introduced many colleges and training providers were fearful that their revenue sources would be diminished if learners did not successfully complete qualifications.
following enrolment. During the interviews many education and training providers raised this issue as a major concern, usually in “off-the-record” comments at the conclusion of the interviews. They suggested that standards have been “driven-down” due to pressure to “pass” candidates, thus releasing the outcome based funding. It was therefore appropriate and necessary to focus on this issue in the e-questionnaire.

The responses from FE and HE were very skewed towards agreeing that paying deliverers of NVQs based on successful outcomes opens the assessment system to risk of abuse. Indeed there was no clear distinction between the FE and HE responses. Some respondents made additional comments relating to this issue in which they lamented the fact that elements of overall funding are withheld to encourage the retention and achievement of the learners. The notion that education is a business and learners are consumers who expect to achieve and be awarded an end product is a marketing concept that many educationalists have difficulty accepting. Interestingly the distribution curve for the training providers and others is more even, suggesting that these organisations are more business-oriented and therefore more cautious to criticise a funding methodology which provides many of them with their only source of income.

7.2.3.7 Other implementation issues.

Other issues emerging from the analysis of the issues associated with the implementation of catering and hospitality industry suggest that some FE lecturers are concerned by what they perceive is the non-suitability of NVQs for delivery in a college environment. This has been discussed earlier in this chapter when reviewing the assessment methodology. However, as also identified earlier in this study, an alternative
qualification (the new VRQ – Vocationally Related Qualification) is currently being piloted in 15 FE colleges. This alternative vocational qualification will be reviewed in more detail later in this chapter.

Another implementation concern from the FE lecturers relates to the authenticity and plagiarism of evidence presented by learners. This was an issue identified in the interviews preceding the e-questionnaire, but some lecturers also chose to make additional comments on the e-questionnaire. There are clearly concerns about the authenticity and reliability of some of the assessment evidence provided by learners. However this issue is not confined and focused only on NVQs. Many educationalists are concerned about the impact of technology, and how information systems are making it easier for students to plagiarise assessment evidence to supplement their own.

Several HE lecturers used the additional comments within the e-questionnaire to bemoan the perceived “commercialisation of education/training”. The argument is that such commercialisation, where the learner is regarded as a customer and qualifications are regarded as products that are bought rather than earned, has resulted in falling standards. Interestingly a response from an HE lecturer identifies only one group who have emerged as winners with the NVQ system, - “the unscrupulous training providers” (HE, 85). Perhaps not surprisingly therefore the training providers indicated that they were generally supportive of the implementation issues surrounding NVQ assessment.

In this section (7.2) I have interpreted, analysed and discussed the emerging issues from the quantitative results contained in the e-questionnaire. The chapter will now continue
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by assessing and reviewing the qualitative data regarding the NVQ process as a suitable model for skills development.

7.3 Assessment and review of the NVQ model for skills development.

7.3.1 Strengths of the NVQ system.

As discussed in Chapter 6 (e-questionnaire results) there are several key themes that have emerged in this study as strengths with the NVQ model for skills delivery. In this section however, as I attempt to consolidate the findings in this study, I will focus on those themes where there was little, if any, disparity of opinions within and across the sectors.

1. Flexibility.

A criterion in the early stages of NVQ development was to produce a flexible qualification that responded to industry needs, rather than a qualification where delivery was restricted to fit around the traditional academic year. As Hyde (1998) argues, discussed in Chapter 3, the concept of open-ended courses with no official start and finish points was a new concept for educationists when NVQs were first introduced. Other features previously discussed such as a “candidate driven” approach (Jessop, 1991) which allows learners to progress at their own pace and “assessment on demand” were innovative and challenging initiatives for the traditional FE colleges. However as these features have embedded so they are now regarded as strengths by many FE lecturers. Even some HE respondents accept that a strength of the NVQ system is the
flexibility of the assessment processes to respond to the needs of the learner rather than the needs of the institution delivering the NVQ programme.

2. Allows learners to progress at their own pace.
The concept of allowing learners to progress at their own pace through a qualification was a new idea when NVQs were introduced. However this idea has become quickly established and my study reveals general support for this process of individual learning. The FE lecturers argue, and the HE lecturers agree, that by allowing learners to progress at their own pace it encourages the better motivated learners to progress quickly, and allows slower learners to receive more individual specialist support. As discussed in Chapter 3, Jessop (1991) considers this process of learning which focuses on the individual rather than the group to be a key strength of the NVQ model when compared with more traditional teaching/learning approaches.

3. Suits learners with special learning needs.
The issue of the progression routes offered to learners with special learning needs was identified as a very positive feature of the NVQ system from all the targeted groups. The FE and training provider respondents agree that the NVQ system provides formal qualifications for people at all levels, recognising even low level practical skills which previously would not have been accredited. As discussed earlier in this study, a key government objective when introducing NVQs was to create better qualified workforce across the UK. Although the HE respondents question this fundamental objective, nevertheless they accept that the progression offered to learners with special learning
needs is a positive feature of the NVQ model enabling them to “demonstrate their ability to learn basic and repetitive, but useful skills” (HE, 89).

4. Reflects current industry practices and the needs of industry.

Most FE lecturers and training providers accept that NVQs were designed by industry to suit industry practices. As discussed earlier in this study a criticism of the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications were that they were elitist, focusing on traditional skills that were no longer featured in the modern hospitality and catering industry. As such the results in this study reveal that many FE lecturers and training providers consider NVQs to equate with and reflect current industry practices. As one FE lecturer concluded “they are versatile qualifications geared towards today’s hospitality and catering industry needs” (FE, 51). This issue however did reveal an interesting disparity between the sectors. As discussed in Chapter 6 (e-questionnaire results), the HE sector made no comments about NVQs reflecting the needs of industry. Instead this sector focused its responses concerning the positive features of NVQs around the educational and personal achievement needs of the learners.

7.3.2 Weaknesses of the NVQ system.

Importantly there are also several key themes that have emerged in this study as perceived weaknesses with the NVQ model for skills delivery. As in the section above (7.3.1), I will consolidate the findings in this study by focusing on those themes where there was little, if any, disparity of opinions within and across the sectors.
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1. Paperwork and bureaucratic documentation.

One of the most common criticisms of the NVQ process concerns the “paper-trail” that both assessors and learners have to complete when recording assessments decisions. This issue was discussed in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), where research by Hunter-Powell & Watson (2006) identifies how NVQ documentation (including the processes for recording achievement) discourages room attendants in hospitality outlets from undertaking NVQ programmes. Many FE lecturers regard this process as unnecessarily bureaucratic and also difficult for learners to comprehend. Indeed the e-questionnaire responses reveal that some assessors despair of the “futile paperwork........we are trying to train/teach practical skills not form filling” (FE, 38). The HE lecturers were also critical of the “bureaucratic documentation” (HE, 34) that surrounds the qualification. Their concerns also focus on the needs of less-able learners who may be deterred from completing NVQs because of the complex tracking and assessment recording documentation. Clearly this is an issue that needs to be addressed if the government’s intention to make NVQs more accessible to more people is to be achieved.

2. Lack of learner knowledge.

The role of knowledge in the NVQ process is contentious and was discussed in Chapter 3. The original argument put forward by Jessop (1991) during the development stages of the prototype NVQs was that if a person is competent then there is no need to be concerned with what that person knows. However, this argument satisfied few respondents to the e-questionnaire. Several respondents suggested that learners on NVQ programmes have no real knowledge or understanding of the processes that they are
undertaking. A FE lecturer claimed that a significant flaw with the NVQ methodology is the lack of emphasis on knowledge retention due to the omission of any formal end tests. It is interesting that the role of “underpinning knowledge” was introduced when revisions were made in the later stages of NVQ development, and that this “underpinning knowledge” has been further revised and developed further as the qualifications have been updated.

3. Lack of external assessment.

The issue of external assessment includes both written and practical examinations which were a distinguishing feature of the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications. The role of external assessment is reviewed in Chapter 3, and the argument is presented that NVQs are realistic vocational qualifications concerned with the ability to perform a task in a real-life environment. The argument concludes that there is nothing realistic about the artificial environment in which an examination is conducted. However, although the NVQ assessment model has now been applied for more than fifteen years, there is still widespread concern from the educationalists about its suitability. Indeed the majority response in the e-questionnaire confirms that many people are dissatisfied with the current “informal” NVQ assessment process and wish to see the re-introduction of more “rigorous” assessment mechanisms.

4. Funding based on success/achievement rates.

The funding methodology is not specific to NVQs, - instead the originally named “outcome-related funding” mechanism applies to most qualifications delivered in post-16 further education colleges. Smithers (2000) argues strongly against this
methodology, as discussed in Chapter 3. His argument is that "outcome-related funding" puts pressure on the colleges to ensure that learners achieve. This issue was identified as a major concern during the interviews with the education and training providers and in the subsequent e-questionnaires. Many lecturers believe that the funding methodology encourages the colleges to pressurise staff to "pass" learners even when those learners may not yet have achieved the required level of competence. Both the FE and HE lecturers argue that this inevitably results in a decline in standards, with a subsequent lack of public confidence in those qualifications. Although re-titled as "achievement-based funding" by the Learning and Skills Council (2006), nevertheless the principles of this contentious funding mechanism remain the same.

5. Fake/fraud evidence used for assessment.

The issue of plagiarism or non-authentic evidence is regarded as a growing problem within many education sectors (as identified earlier in this chapter). The NVQ process involves learners collecting evidence in a variety of formats. Greatorex (2005) identifies several types of NVQ evidence including assessor observations, witness testimonies, personal statements, written underpinning knowledge questions and answers, photographs, and records of professional discussions. According to the responses from the education and training providers there is a widespread belief that many candidates swap or "create" evidence in order to complete NVQ units. As technology makes even bigger impacts into the NVQ evidence collection process, so the lecturers expect this problem to increase. There is currently no specific research into the use of fake and fraud evidence in the NVQ assessment process, but this study identifies it is a key
weakness. Certainly, beyond this study, it would be interesting to investigate more precisely the extent of this perceived problem.

6. Subjective relationship of the assessor and learner.

Another weakness identified in the interviews and e-questionnaire concerns the subjective relationship of the assessor and learner in the NVQ assessment process. This issue was considered fully earlier in this chapter (7.2.3), and some FE lecturers argue that this is the most significant weakness of the NVQ system because the closeness of the assessor/learner relationship significantly affects objective and impartial assessment decision-making. One of the arguments used by the proponents of external testing (practical and written) is that such testing eliminates any hints of bias that may be inferred from an assessor who has worked, and continues to work, closely with the candidate.

7. No grading used in the NVQ process.

The development of NVQs was based upon the notion of “competence” (i.e. the ability of candidate to perform a specific task). As explained in Chapter 3, Jessop (1991) therefore argues that a candidate cannot be 60% competent, or 85% competent, - the person is either 100% competent or not yet competent. As a result the concept of grading was not considered appropriate when assessing NVQs. This however has proved to be contentious since its introduction, and the results from the interviews and e-questionnaires confirm that many educationalists and training providers would prefer to undertake assessments in which the assessor was able to discriminate between more-able and less-able candidates. The argument was also used by an FE lecturer that the
current assessment process encourages mediocrity, as there is no incentive for candidates to strive to achieve a higher level of competence when performing a specific task. This argument has also been used to explain why many within the industry believe that overall standards have fallen since the introduction of NVQs.

8. Lack of national standards.

The purpose of creating NVQs was to achieve national standards of competence across England and Wales. In order to achieve these national standards and ensure parity of assessments between centres delivering the same NVQs, a quality assurance system was established. This system, explained in Chapter 3, uses both internal and external verifiers to check the consistency of assessment decisions. However the results from the interviews and e-questionnaire reveal that many education and training providers pay "lip-service" to what the Awarding Bodies describe as a "rigorous quality assurance verification system".

An analysis of the responses suggests that across the sectors targeted (FE, HE & TP) most respondents believe that there is a widespread disparity of standards, and that the quality of both internal and external verifiers is variable. As revealed in Chapter 6 (e-questionnaire results) several FE lecturers admitted that they applied their own standards when deciding whether a candidate was competent or not. An FE lecturer admitted that "standards are open to interpretation and the whole delivery system can vary between training providers and FE institutions thereby leaving inconsistencies in the actual competence of the candidate" (FE, 75). A HE lecturer identified differences in standards within industry by asking "Is an NVQ Level 2 in Food Preparation earned
in the Savoy Kitchen equivalent to a chef doing the same NVQ in a sandwich bar?" (HE, 101).

The achievement of a national standard is critical to the credibility of NVQs. Indeed, the government's aim to create a better qualified workforce by encouraging NVQs in the workplace system relies on the achievement of consistent and equitable standards which accurately measure and reward performance. However, the results in this study explain why many people are cautious in their acceptance of NVQs as a quality national standard benchmark qualification.

9. NVQ jargon and complex terminology.

Throughout this study many of the people interviewed have complained about the complex terminology and jargon language used to explain the NVQ processes in the unit specifications and guidance. The structure of the NVQ qualification is explained in Chapter 3, which includes examples of the language, terminology, and phraseology approved by the QCA and used by the Awarding Bodies. The education and training providers agree that much of this language used is unnecessarily difficult, not only for the staff delivering the qualification but also for the learners. One lecturer referred to the “ridiculous NVQ language used in the portfolios” (FE, 45). Others agreed and blamed the complex language for discouraging many low-level achievers, particularly at Level 1. Certainly this issue, when combined with the earlier weakness identified by the education and training providers concerning the complicated paperwork and documentation, does little to encourage learners and arguably contributes further to the negative images of NVQs discussed earlier in this Chapter.(7.2.1).
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10. **Assessment in industry interferes with day-to-day business operations.**

As explained earlier in this study NVQs were designed by industry, for industry, for delivery in industry. It was therefore surprising that one of the criticisms of NVQs concerned how they were assessed in an industrial context. An FE lecturer who visits industry, delivering and assessing NVQs in the workplace, claimed that *“quite often this (delivery and assessment) is interfering with the running of the department, especially during busy times which can be distracting”* (FE, 46). Interestingly this was not identified as a problem earlier in the study during the interviews with employers (Chapter 4). Hospitality and catering is a pressurised industry with steep peaks and troughs during the working day. However, those employers delivering NVQs (identified in Chapter 4) did not reply in the interviews that they regarded NVQs as impacting detrimentally on the working environment in their hospitality units. This issue therefore may be one of perception rather than reality and requires more detailed analysis to reach a firm conclusion.

11. **Non-suitability for full-time FE delivery.**

Some educationists argue that NVQs are not suitable for delivery to full-time students within a college environment. This criticism contrasts with the above perceived weakness, but is an opinion that was encountered several times during the data collection processes for this study, and questions the suitability of the qualification for one of its main target markets. Some HE lecturers in the e-questionnaire regard NVQs as too narrow in focus, ignoring the broader “life skills” that are part of the traditional FE curriculum. These life skills (including working with others, problem-solving, taking part in discussions, etc.) have had many titles, including Common Skills, Core Skills,
and, most recently, Key Skills. However what this argument from the HE lecturers fails to recognise is that within an FE environment the appropriate level Key Skills can now be delivered alongside the chosen NVQ, and that there is additional funding available for Key Skills delivery and achievement. This explains why many FE colleges now choose to deliver NVQs along with Key Skills to their full-time students.

A better informed argument that emerged from the interviews and e-questionnaire responses from educationalists and training providers is that NVQs are only suitable for delivery in industry. One FE lecturer suggested that “colleges need to deliver NVQs in industry where they belong and use the full range of units available, rather than the ones the college thinks the industry needs........they (the colleges) are still trying to push a round qualification through a square hole” (FE, 51). A HE lecturer agreed and developed the discussion by claiming that “NVQs should only be available for part-time students. Another more traditional course should be in place for full-time students such as the old 706/1 and 706/2” (HE, 40). This debate has raged amongst educationalists and in the trade press since NVQs were first introduced. The introduction of the new Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs), discussed later in this chapter (7.4.6), which are intended primarily for delivery to full-time students in a college environment, may help to conclude this debate.

12. Specifications and curriculum content is out of date.

This issue was regarded as a weakness by a minority of respondents to the e-questionnaire, and only from the FE sector. Indeed it is a difficult weakness to acknowledge as the NVQ specifications have been updated regularly since they were
first introduced, and were fully revised with new specifications published in September 2005. The e-questionnaire was conducted during the summer of 2005 when the new specifications were available to the colleges as both hard copies and on the relevant Awarding Body websites. Therefore, whilst formally acknowledging this criticism, I do not believe it to be valid and worthy of further discussion and analysis in this study.

13. Poor reputation and image of the qualification.

This issue concerning the image and reputation of catering and hospitality NVQ has already been fully discussed in 7.2.1. Some respondents across the sectors (FE, HE & TP) chose to make additional comments about the perceived poor image of the qualification in this section of the e-questionnaire, concerned with the weaknesses of the NVQ system. For example a HE lecturer simply stated that “NVQs aren’t sexy” (HE, 91). However most of the comments received simply reiterated the findings from the quantitative and qualitative date in Section 2 of the e-questionnaire (The image of catering and hospitality NVQs) which were analysed earlier.

7.3.3 Satisfaction with the current catering and hospitality NVQ model

A critical issue in the e-questionnaire was to assess overall satisfaction levels with catering and hospitality NVQs. The previous section (7.3.2) identifies the key issues that many of the education and training providers perceive as weaknesses with the NVQs. However, it was important to measure whether these weaknesses were so significant to cause the respondents to be fundamentally dissatisfied with NVQs, rather than merely irritated by aspects of the NVQ process.
The overwhelming response from a clear majority of the education and training providers (63%) was dissatisfaction with the current catering and hospitality NVQ model. Only a minority of respondents (23%) indicated that they were generally satisfied. Significantly when analysing the qualitative responses to this question on a sector basis, the reasons for dissatisfaction align closely with the weaknesses identified in the previous section. The FE lecturers identified the following issues:

- Lack of external testing,
- Erosion of standards,
- Lack of national standards,
- Funding issues (achievement based funding, “payment on results”),
- Subjective nature of the assessor/learner relationship,
- Problems with the portfolio and practical skills development, and
- Non-suitability of NVQs for full-time students in a college environment.

The HE sector agreed that many of the above factors caused them to be dissatisfied with NVQs, and added other issues including:

- Poor content (“they are weak and achieved too easily.” HE, 40),
- Poor structure (“they do not provide a suitable structure for the delivery of appropriate teaching and learning activities within the current FE sector.” HE, 59), and
- Lack of academic rigour (“they do not develop individuals who strive to achieve knowledge and not just competence.” HE, 71)
In agreeing with FE colleagues that NVQs have eroded standards, one HE lecturer expressed dissatisfaction by blaming the employers:

They (NVQs) have not maintained or progressed standards. They were proposed by employers as a cheaper and less troublesome form of training.

(HE, 92)

This however is not a fair criticism. As identified in Chapter 4, the evidence from the larger hospitality employers is that they invest heavily in training in terms of time and money and do not look for easy “quick-fix” solutions for their identified training needs. Indeed the study findings suggest that the training vision of many of the larger hospitality employers is strategic and carefully considered with detailed planning prior to implementation. Therefore, this HE response does not equate with the earlier findings in this study.

Based on the above majority dissatisfaction with catering and hospitality NVQs, it was appropriate to ask the respondents whether they were familiar with the revisions which were proposed for the qualifications and implemented in September 2005. These revisions were made based on feedback received by the Awarding Bodies and QCA. Feedback was received from industry, colleges and training providers following a lengthy consultation exercise. The revisions clearly were intended to improve the qualifications.

Interestingly the analysis of this question reveals that while the majority of FE lecturers (62%) were familiar with the proposed revisions, the majority of HE lecturers (57%) were not, and none of the training providers in my survey were aware of any proposed changes. Of those respondents who were familiar with the planned changes to the
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curriculum a majority in FE (43%) and HE (70%) thought that the revisions would not improve the qualifications. Significantly none of the HE lecturers thought that the revisions would lead to improvements as the remainder (30%) opted for the "don’t know" response. Overall this is a disappointing response, which indicates again of a lack of confidence in NVQs from many within education and training.

In this section (7.3) I have assessed and reviewed the emerging issues from the quantitative and qualitative results contained in the e-questionnaire relating to the suitability of the NVQ model for skills development. The chapter will now continue by consolidating these themes and making recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training.

7.4 Recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training.
The final part of this chapter consolidates the research findings obtained from the education and training providers, thus assisting me to make recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training. The recommendations also incorporate the views of the employers in relation to NVQs (reviewed in Chapter 4).

The analysis of the e-questionnaire responses suggests that many education and training providers are sufficiently dissatisfied with the current NVQ model to welcome an alternative approach for skills development. It was therefore appropriate to ask the question directly: "Would you like to see an alternative to the NVQ system made
available?” The response from the educationalists was overwhelmingly positive: FE (82%) and HE (96%). Even a majority of the training providers and others (75%) replied in the affirmative. Application of the Kruskal-Wallis test (K,W,P = 0.115) confirms that there is no significant variation in attitudes between the sectors.

This is a significant and fundamental result in relation to the study title. It reveals that attitudes towards a specific training and assessment process used in the hospitality industry are worryingly negative, and that these key practitioners are actively seeking an alternative training model. In offering recommendations for alternative approaches I will therefore incorporate as appropriate the suggestions and comments presented and analysed throughout this study from the key stakeholders; including industry representatives, educationalists, and training providers.

7.4.1 Re-introduce the City & Guilds craft qualifications.

Throughout this study it has been evident that in both industry and education many people look back fondly at the qualifications that preceded NVQs. As discussed in Chapter 3, David Nicholls (executive head chef at London’s Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park hotel) stated in the Caterer and Hotelkeeper (October 27th 2005) that “the City and Guilds (706 series) wasn’t perfect, - it was sick and needed medication, not euthanasia”. This view was repeated in the qualitative responses received from both FE and HE lecturers. There are several reasons offered by the educationists for wanting a return to the C&G craft qualifications. As identified in Chapter 6 several FE lecturers commented that the content in the C&G series was more substantial and demanding than in the current NVQs. They argued that the more varied and interesting content better
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stimulated the students, and challenged them to achieve higher standards. As discussed in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), such comments are ironic as many employers prior to the introduction of NVQs bemoaned the C&G craft series, regarding them as artificial, college-based qualifications which were detached from the realities of industrial practice.

The HE responses to this issue were more objective, probably because lecturers in this sector are more detached from NVQs than their FE colleagues. Several HE staff indicated that they would like a return of the C&G system, but they usually qualified such a statement by explaining why such a return would be beneficial. The main reason offered was because formal assessments (both written and practical) were part of the assessment process. Other HE lecturers accepted that to revert back would simply cause more confusion amongst many employers who are still struggling to accept and understand the NVQ system.

Based on the literature and the interviews with both employers and industrialists for this study, I do not believe that the problems with NVQs will be resolved simply by reverting back to the predecessor qualifications. As is often the case, people look backwards with “rose-tinted glasses”, ignoring and forgetting the problems and concerns that existed in the late 1980's that resulted in the introduction of NVQs. These problems and concerns were identified in Chapter 3, and were highlighted in the De Ville Report (1986). Such issues included:

- many barriers to accessing vocational qualifications and inadequate arrangements for progression and transfer of credit,
insufficient recognition of learning gained outside formal education and training, and
limited take-up of vocational qualifications.

For the most part the above issues have been addressed since the introduction of NVQs. Barriers to entry have been removed, progression and transfer routes have been clarified, formal recognition of achievement outside formal education and training is available (APL & APEL), and the government’s objective of creating a better qualified workforce is progressing. The findings of this study therefore indicate that to re-introduce the previous City & Guilds craft qualifications would be a wholly negative measure, and would impact on many of the achievements that have made to date in response to the De Ville Report.

7.4.2 Introduce external testing to the assessment process.

Many respondents in both the interviews and the e-questionnaire argued that their main criticism of the NVQ process was the lack of external assessment. The findings in this study confirm that many people in education and training have confidence in qualifications that include elements of external assessment, - a confidence that is lacking in qualifications which are wholly internally assessed. Again, as identified above (7.4.1) the external assessment of both theoretical and practical skills was regarded by many lecturers as a key strength of the City & Guilds craft qualifications. Several FE lecturers suggested that if a new style qualification is developed then external testing would be a critical element that would distinguish it from NVQs and give it credibility in the education and training marketplace.
The HE lecturers were even more forthright in their support of external assessments. As identified earlier, one lecturer described the need for "academic rigour" (HE, 101) in vocational qualifications, explaining that the external assessment of both practical skills and theoretical knowledge is an ideal mechanism to use in order to achieve such rigour. Indeed several HE lecturers agreed and suggested that the lack of formal external assessments in NVQs is regarded by many students as a weakness. Interestingly the flexible assessment mechanism employed in the NVQ process was also regarded as a weakness, whereas something more fixed and immovable such as an exam was regarded as a strength by many HE respondents. Even the training providers suggested that a formal practical exam such be included as part of the final assessment process.

In consolidating the findings it is evident that the majority of education and training providers regard external assessments as the most objective mechanism which accurately measures ability. Although this is a very contentious issue in the education and training world, my overall recommendation is that the external assessment of written and practical skills does give validity and credibility to a qualification. The Awarding Bodies argue that the processes of internal and external verification operate to ensure the achievement of national standards. Nevertheless the evidence from this study indicates that the focus of undertaking a non-flexible external assessment gives "worth" and "value" to a qualification not only among the learners, but also in the broader marketplace.

The only exception, where an argument against external assessment has emerged during this study, is for learners at Level 1. Such learners would probably view a formalised
external assessment process, particularly for practical skills, as very intimidating and would therefore not engage with the qualification from the outset. However I recommend that for Level 2 learners and above, a revised training model should be introduced that includes both written and practical external assessments.

7.4.3 Introduce grading into the assessment process.

The issue of grading has been a much repeated criticism of NVQs since they were introduced. The notion that a learner is deemed to be either “competent” or “not yet competent” is a difficult assessment outcome for many education and training providers to accept. The results from the e-questionnaire confirmed that many respondents would welcome a qualification which allowed grading that distinguished between different levels of competence. The rationale for the current assessment practice was explained in Chapter 3, and reviewed again earlier in this chapter. However the educationists in my survey argue that the current assessment outcomes serve only to encourage mediocrity, as excellence is not officially rewarded.

I would therefore suggest that any new style qualification does allow learners to be graded. Competition between learners often encourages better overall and individual performance standards. This serves to benefit the learner initially and the industry ultimately. As such I reject Jessop’s (1991) argument, discussed earlier, concerning the non-suitability of grading in the NVQ process. I believe that it is possible to measure different levels of product and service quality, and that such a process of differential grading will be welcomed by many both within and outside the hospitality industry.
7.4.4. Introduce a less bureaucratic assessment process. - an alternative model.

Many educationists and some of the SMEs representing the restaurant sector (discussed in Chapter 4) commented on the “paper-chase” process that is involved when implementing and assessing NVQs. This is a clear criticism of the assessment documentation that is attached to NVQs and the portfolio-building process that has to be undertaken by the learners. Some of the respondents to the e-questionnaire suggested that many learners are discouraged from completing NVQs because of the excessive paperwork involved. This is particularly concerning when reviewing the motivations and attitudes of Level 1 learners who, understandably, are even more easily dissuaded when faced with a qualification that requires the completion of many different forms and the compilation of a portfolio of evidence.

In recommending an alternative approach I acknowledge that any assessment process needs to be transparent, and that all assessment decisions should be recorded effectively. Clearly, the overall objective is that the learner is able to track his/her own progress and has an up-to-date record of achievements awarded. However my research findings confirm that the current system is unnecessarily complex and bureaucratic. More significantly the amount of paper-work is daunting not only for the learners, but also for the deliverers.

The findings also reveal that a majority of respondents would prefer a more formal assessment model that includes elements of externally assessed written and practical testing. Such objective assessments would help to ensure the achievement of a more consistent national standard, - a key issue of concern identified in this study.
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I therefore suggest a model that incorporates on-going internal practical assessments (weighted at 50%) and concludes with a final externally assessed practical assessment (weighted at 25%) and externally-set theory exam (weighted at 25%). The learners would record their on-going practical assessments in a “record of achievement” log book. The weightings reflect the practical focus of these courses, whilst ensuring that learners achieve the necessary knowledge to support and develop their practical skills.

The model also balances internal assessments (50%) against external assessments (50%), which responds to a major criticism of the NVQ model in the e-questionnaire responses. Significantly this model would reduce the paper-work necessary to record assessment decisions, putting a greater emphasis on the development of vocational practical skills rather than the skills necessary to complete an NVQ portfolio.

![Diagram of assessment proportions]

Figure 27: Revised Vocational Training Model.

I decided to invite comments on this proposed model using ten respondents from industry and education who had been involved in other components of the research process for this study. During this consultation stage the model was refined to produce the assessment proportions indicated in Figure 27. I am confident that the agreed training model is now acceptable to both industrialists and those colleagues involved in
training delivery within FE colleges. One industrialist commented that the model was “sensible.....realistic and could be used effectively to improve standards of staff training.” An FE lecturer supported this statement by arguing that:

the revised model is a lot more user friendly than NVQs and would be more easily understood by both students and lecturers......if implemented it would help to more effectively develop staff and standards to the benefit of the (hospitality) industry.

A criticism of the revised model, which was identified in the consultation exercise, is likely to be the implementation costs which would probably be more expensive than current NVQs because of the greater emphasis on external assessments in the process. However the counter-argument, based on the research findings, is that confidence in the new model will encourage recruitment, and that the predicted growth of the qualification will negate the initial development costs and the on-going external examiner expenses.

The revised model will clearly have to be adapted for learners at Level 1, who were revealed by the research as requiring more structured but less formal practical assessment mechanisms. For this group I suggest that it would be appropriate to put a heavier emphasis on internally assessed practical assessments (75%), using a series of externally-set and externally-marked multiple-choice papers to assess the necessary theoretical knowledge (25%). Beyond the parameters of this study it is necessary to undertake a further consultation exercise to test reaction to the adapted model suggested specifically for learners at Level 1.
7.4.5 Revise the funding methodology.

The funding methodology implemented by the LSC (Learning & Skills Council), discussed in Chapter 3 and examined again in this chapter when reviewing the e-questionnaire results, is a cause of general dissatisfaction among the educationalists in the e-questionnaire. There are two key issues which cause concern; achievement-based funding and the programme weightings for catering and hospitality NVQs. Several respondents argued that changing these elements of funding would assist the development of hospitality skills training.

The achievement element of funding was introduced in 1995 and rose from 7% to 10% of the total funding allocated against a learner in 2002. It has remained at this level to date. In their latest funding document “Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2006/07”, the LSC (2006, p28) re-affirmed that this funding can only be claimed against learners for “successful certificated completion of qualifications”. Many respondents in both FE and HE regard this funding mechanism as fundamentally flawed, arguing in the e-questionnaire that standards are compromised in order to ensure that the learners achieve their qualifications. I accept this argument. As a former lecturer in an FE college I am aware of the indirect pressure applied to staff to encourage them to “pass” learners who are border-line at best, and clearly “not yet competent” at worst. This element of funding does nothing to improve staff morale, it results in the lowering of standards, and my research evidence indicates that it has certainly not assisted the development of hospitality skills training. It therefore needs to be withdrawn and replaced with a higher level of funding paid “up-front” for improved levels of recruitment onto vocational skills programmes.
Programme weighting factors (PWFs) are intended to compensate providers (FE colleges or TPs) for the extra costs involved in delivering certain programmes. The PWFs are based on learner numbers, the guided learning hours necessary, and programme specific costs (such as the plant, equipment and food materials necessary in a training kitchen). In theory these factors take into account and make allowances for courses that are more expensive to deliver and assess, such as practical catering. Many respondents however argue that the additional PWFs available for hospitality and catering courses are insufficient to compensate for the high costs involved in delivering and assessing these programmes. As discussed in Chapter 3, People 1st (2006) identified from the funding methodology that “it’s cheaper to run a hairdressing course than a chef’s course. Result: there are now more hairdressers than chefs.”

This clearly is an unsatisfactory situation. As one FE lecturer explained the lack of appropriate funding issue has resulted in colleges not buying certain food items for learners to practice with because they are too expensive. From my experience as an external examiner in FE, DVDs and computer programmes are now used to explain and illustrate how to cook expensive dishes such as lobster thermidor. As discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 6, other colleges simply closed their catering departments or took the decision in the late 1990’s to either “downsize” or created units (schools, departments, etc.) that combined service sector courses such as hospitality & catering with more cost-effective and funding-efficient courses such as tourism, and leisure & sport.
In order to improve hospitality skills training it will be necessary to adjust the PWFs to ensure that catering courses are sufficiently well funded to encourage colleges not only to offer these courses, but also to enable the colleges to purchase the necessary food materials. It is essential that all skills training in colleges is learnt by “doing” (working with real food materials), rather than watching DVDs which is currently considered by some college managers to be a more cost-effective “learning” mechanism.

7.4.6 Vocationally Related Qualifications (VROs)

Throughout the study I have referred to a new style of qualification, - the Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQ). VRQs were piloted in several catering colleges during 2006/07. The VRQ in Professional Cookery (Level 2) is intended for those candidates who are looking for a career in the catering and hospitality industry. They are related to employment, but unlike NVQs, they do not necessarily require a work placement or RWE (Realistic Work Environment) facilities for delivery. Interestingly they are assessed by portfolio development, on-going practical and theory assessments, and formal examinations. They are intended for delivery with a college environment rather than in industry, - another key difference with the NVQ process. Generally a VRQ will take between 12 and 24 months to complete.

On one of the college websites (www.ndevon.ac.uk) promoting these new qualifications it states that these qualifications “are designed to improve the knowledge, skills and understanding of the vocational sector or specific areas within it. VRQs do not measure competence at a particular job as this is done by National vocational Qualifications (NVQs).” This is a significant statement as clearly the college wants to emphasis the
main difference between a VRQ and an NVQ. It is anticipated that the target audience for these qualifications will be the traditional 16 year-old+ market who previously would have pursued the City & Guilds craft qualifications.

Despite coverage in the trade media when they were first launched, and several letters in the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* during the past 12-months, overall response to this new qualification has been surprisingly muted. In conversations with colleagues in FE colleges delivering the pilot-versions of the VRQs there is a sense that although this revised qualification is better than the NVQs, it still not quite right:

> We’ve moved forward with the VRQ, it is an improvement on the NVQ, but the assessment process, which still includes a portfolio, is problematic. I think the overall assessment process with VRQs still needs to be refined.

*(FE Lecturer, June 2007)*

My recommendation with this new qualification is that the portfolio in its current format is removed from the assessment process. The issue of personal development portfolios has been contentious since NVQs were launched, and it is unfortunate that feedback on this assessment process has not been listened to during the development stages for the VRQs. However, the introduction of formal examinations into the VRQ is a positive feature that is clearly meant to further distinguish the new qualification from the NVQ model. Significantly the inclusion of external testing further supports the findings within this study.
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7.5. Chapter review
In this chapter I have interpreted, analysed and discussed the results for the e-questionnaires. I then used the results from this process and the earlier interviews with employers, educationalists and training providers to fully assess and review the NVQ model, and its suitability, for skills development. Finally I have consolidated the findings within this study to make recommendations for the future development of hospitality skills training.

The study will now conclude with Chapter 8, in which I will review the major findings and assess the overall contributions of this thesis. I will also reflect on my personal research journey as I have progressed through the various stages of this study.
Chapter 8.

Conclusions & Recommendations.
# Chapter 8.

## Conclusions & Recommendations.

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Attitudes towards training within the hospitality industry in Southeast Wales.

Chapter 8.

Conclusions and Recommendations.

8.1 Introduction
In this chapter I will conclude the research project by reviewing the major findings in my study against the initial objectives, identifying the contributions of this thesis to the on-going hospitality training debate, and reviewing the opportunities for future research. I will also reflect upon the personal research journey that I have completed during this project, recognising my learning during the several stages of this study.

8.2 Review of the major findings against the research objectives.
In order to achieve the stated aim of my research project, the following objectives have been satisfied within this study:

1. To critically review the literature relating to training models and training processes, focussing on the use and application of competence-based NVQs as a training mechanism.

As identified in the Literature Review (Chapter 3) the debates surrounding education and training are on-going, and change is an accepted part of this process. The hospitality industry in the UK has always employed a variety of training approaches (systematic and non-systematic), and as this study identifies there are varying levels of enthusiasm and commitment to training in the different sectors. A range of systematic models were presented in the Literature Review and were considered against the training approaches used in different sectors of the hospitality industry. Factors that influence the setting of
training objectives in organisations, including the measurement and evaluation of the training process were considered. As Bramley (1999) argues the main purpose of evaluating training is to ensure that the intended benefits of training are being realised by all the stakeholders.

However the introduction of NVQs was a radical attempt to “shake-up” the system of vocational training in the UK, and the impacts of this training revolution are still evident in the attitudes of the industrialists, educators and training providers who contributed to this study. Wolf (1995) argued that competence-based qualifications were considered to be the major tool in securing “the government’s aims of increased participation and higher attainment in further and higher education, and hence an improved skills base”; they have “a key role to play in building a world-class workforce”. (HMSO, 1993). Indeed, this statement is as true today in terms of the intentions of the current Labour government as it was when NVQs were first proposed in 1986 under the previous Conservative administration.

The literature identifies that for any training to be successful there must be commitment from both the provider and the trainee. This was a key theme during phase 1 and phase 2 of the research process. However as Fletcher (1994) explains the basic assumption that underpins the NVQ system is that training and performance in the workplace can only be improved if people know exactly what is expected of them within the working role, and if they can be assessed reliably against those standards. This is a contentious issue as my study reveals that there is concern that the interpretation and application of
the NVQ national standards vary depending upon which assessor or verifier (internal or external) is applying the standards.

As some of the literature suggests (and as many companies have discovered) the key benefits of NVQs include increased flexibility of training, an improvement in the identification of training needs, and the involvement of staff at different levels in a hospitality organisation in the overall performance (and profitability) of that company. However, as this study reveals there are also many critics of this approach to training. The role of knowledge, or rather the lack of the role of knowledge, in NVQs has proved to be particularly contentious. Many respondents in this study bemoaned what they perceive to be a decline in standards since NVQs replaced the City & Guilds craft qualifications. Jessop’s statement (1991, p121) that “if a person performs competently we need not be concerned with what he or she knows” incensed many in the industry who, as evidenced in their regular letters to the Caterer and Hotelkeeper, often blame the colleges for their on-going staffing problems.

Other problems with NVQs identified in the literature that have been explored using the primary data obtained within this research project, include the portfolio development process. Respondents in this study indicated that they found the portfolio system of evidence collection “burdensome”, and it was argued that this process is a key negative feature which discourages many learners from completing their NVQs. Previous research confirms that the NVQ portfolio process for recording achievement discourages room attendants in hospitality outlets from undertaking NVQs (Hunter-Powell & Watson, 2006).
The pressure to “pass” candidates on NVQ programmes, because of the funding methodology applied in FE colleges was also reviewed in the literature. This study confirms Smithers’ (2000) argument that outcome-based funding puts pressure on the deliverers of NVQ programmes to ensure that as many candidates as possible achieve the NVQs on which they have enrolled. Other features of NVQs discussed in the literature and tested in this study include the principles of “assessment on demand”, and the flexibility offered by NVQs as they have no time limits or special entry conditions (Hyde, 1998). These characteristics are unique to NVQs, and much has been written about the educational merits (or demerits) of these approaches. If NVQs are to survive into the future and retain the necessary government and public confidence, the effectiveness and suitability of some of the processes that underpin NVQ delivery discussed in the literature may need to be challenged.

2. To develop a typology of vocational training models used in the hospitality industry, considering their effectiveness and acceptability to user groups.

As discussed earlier in this study (Chapter 2) the primary research process included a case-study methodology based on two contrasting case-studies; i) employers, and ii) education and training providers. To achieve objective 2 it was necessary to focus on a sample of hospitality employers based in Southeast Wales. The interviews with the employers enabled me to produce a typology of training models used in the Southeast Wales hospitality industry. Biswas & Cassell (1996) claim that features of employment in the hospitality industry such as unskilled labour, the transferability of skills between
different hospitality units, and low pay impact on the types of training undertaken in the industry.

The study reveals that different types of training are undertaken in different sectors of the industry. Large branded hotels (more than 20 rooms) generally have official company policies which include proactive and formalised approaches to training. They regard on-going training with all staff as necessary if they are to win competitive edge over their rivals in an increasingly competitive market. This positive approach contrasts sharply with the attitudes evident in smaller hotels (less than 20 rooms). In these hotels the training model employed is traditional and non-systematic. The “sitting-with-Nellie” approach is still commonly used, and is regarded in this sector as an efficient and cost-effective training mechanism. The study findings indicate that in this sector there is little evidence of formal induction training, on-going training, or any form of career enhancing strategies to encourage staff to develop their skills or study for job-related vocational qualifications. However, the lack of any formal training model is not perceived as an issue in terms of business success in this sector. Interviewees insisted that they operated successful and profitable businesses which would be hindered if they focussed on more systematic and structured approaches to training.

The most diverse sector to research for this study was the restaurant sector which ranges from branded national restaurants to specialist independent local restaurants. Not surprisingly therefore the research findings indicate that a variety of training models are employed in this sector. In the branded high-street restaurants there is a more articulated approach to training, and participants indicated that they understood the NVQ
framework and the qualifications available. However, disappointingly, this awareness is not generally translated into actions, and there is little evidence of formal training beyond induction and coverage of the necessary food hygiene and health & safety legislation. Operators and unit-based restaurant managers blame the transient nature of the workforce for not adhering to the systematic training manuals that are produced by the ("detached and isolated") training departments in the head-offices of their companies. Operational managers in this sector clearly have a different perspective and attitude towards training that their more strategically focussed senior managers who work in the head-office environments.

The smaller privately owned, non-branded restaurants have similar views and attitudes to the smaller independent hotels, i.e. training is regarded as a low priority because "it doesn't generate revenue". The evidence in this study indicates that no formal training of any kind is undertaken other than a non-structured "introductory session". However this lack of a systematic approach to training is partly compensated by the more caring and compassionate attitude towards staff in this sector. Many of the smaller restaurants and hotels included in this study are family owned, and as a result their staff are more permanent and much less transient. This notion of working as part of the "family" who look after each other ("If someone needs help doing their job we all help.") was a repeated argument used to excuse the lack of a formal and structured training model in this sector.

The international brand fast-food operators have a disciplined and "regimented" approach to training that is embedded in their operating philosophies. The study
identifies that the fast-food sector has the most structured and systematic training model evidenced in any of the hospitality sectors included in this research. Certainly this sector has built its success based on the ethos of training and promoting staff as quickly as possible. They are proud to boast of the significant resources made available for staff training (financial, physical, and time), and that training manuals are used to cover all aspects of their operations. Despite this heavy investment in training, the biggest problem for this sector is the transient nature of many of their predominately young employees. As such many unit managers resent having to invest time and money in training staff who have a “here today, gone tomorrow” attitude.

The public house sector mirrors the training model used in the small hotels and the independent, non-branded restaurants. Many staff in this sector are employed on a part-time basis, and this along with the extended opening hours for public houses were used as excuses by operators and pub managers for the low priority of training in their units. Even managers in the national branded pubs admitted that training has been neglected for too long, and that there has been too much reliance on the “sitting-with-Nellie” approach. There is evidence that some operators (e.g. Whetherspoons) are beginning to apply more systematic training models, but staff training in this sector is traditionally weak and will need heavy investment of both time and money if change is to be enacted.

Motorway service stations emerged as an exemplar sector for their positive attitudes and pro-active approaches to training. They present a well-planned, systematic training model that extends from induction programmes to on-going training covering health &
safety, customer care, interpersonal and selling skills. The key feature of the model employed in this sector is that training for all staff is a continual process, and consequently staff are encouraged to pursue further qualifications and review their skills needs as part of the regular staff appraisal process. Although motorway service stations are 24/7 operations they do not use the long operating hours as an excuse for not training, rather they use the quieter periods to beneficial effect by focusing their training during these times. Clearly there are lessons here for other sectors included in this study.

The catering services sector includes catering provision within education, hospitals, industry, etc. Much of this provision is now provided by large contract catering companies rather than the traditional “in-house” unit. This development has resulted in a much more systematic approach to training with key benefits for both staff and management. Significantly, as my research revealed, the large contract catering companies need to ensure that all their staff are trained to a similar standard so that these staff can be deployed in different units as and when necessary. Even in smaller independent units within the catering services sector, the companies are very proactive in terms of staff training. The research indicates that all staff from operative to senior management regularly attend refresher and development workshops. The companies within this sector are also concerned about their external image, and believe that being regarded as a “caring employer who invests in its employees” is important for their future business development. A formalised, systematic training model (which encourages the achievement of NVQ qualifications) is therefore a key feature of this growing hospitality sector, where staff retention levels are high.
3. To analyse the range of training paradigms employed, evaluating those internal and external factors which influence attitudes towards training in the hospitality industry.

In order to develop an overall training pictogram which illustrates the impact of labour supply, training and labour turnover on hospitality SMEs and larger hospitality businesses in Southeast Wales, it was necessary to further examine the interview responses and training typology from phase 1 and phase 2 of the research project. Previous research (HtF, 2001) has shown that many employers are unwilling to invest money in training beyond induction as employers are unlikely to recoup any benefits. I was therefore keen to analyse the effectiveness, suitability and acceptability of the training paradigms identified when considered against those internal and external factors that influence attitudes towards training.

Two recurring factors in the research which clearly influence the types of training paradigms used by employers are time and the resources available for training. Despite the research findings by HtF, most employers in this study identified the benefits of training for the strategic improvement of their businesses. However, daily operational business pressures in the hospitality industry often result in training being re-prioritised during busy periods when the focus is to achieve revenue. In theory the larger organisations have more staff, and therefore can more easily provide cover for staff who are undertaking training on a particular day. However, this study reveals disparities in practice across the sectors included in the research. The catering services sector and the motorway services sector have regimented and very structured training paradigms, making the necessary time and resources available, and ensuring that all staff have
individual training plans which are rigorously adhered to. Operative and supervisory catering staff in these sectors regularly attend staff development and training sessions despite the operational pressures in their units. The large branded hotels also schedule regular staff training, although in this sector the operational pressures in a unit can impinge on staff availability for training. As a result training is often cancelled “at the last minute” to make staff available for an “operational crisis” that has occurred in the hotel. Other sectors reviewed in this study have far less structured training paradigms and the operational pressures in these sectors frequently take priority over staff development activities.

My study reveals that the financial resources available for training, and the supporting physical resources (such as specialist training rooms, training videos, etc.) also influence the effectiveness of the training paradigm employed. The larger hospitality organisations and the branded outlets (hotels with over 20 bedrooms, motorway service stations, and the catering services sector) were found to have the most satisfactory financial and physical resources made available for training. However, it was the large national brand fast-food operators who emerged as the best financially resourced sector for training in this study.

The impact of organisational size clearly influences both the commitment to training in a hospitality unit and the training paradigm employed. In the larger organisations the study identifies that there are either specialist training departments that determine the paradigm used, or staff training is embedded in the function of the personnel department. In these organisations staff training records are completed and kept up-to-
date, and regular staff appraisals are undertaken. Staff are also encouraged to attend in-house company training courses or to achieve external qualifications such as NVQs. The SMEs (i.e. the smaller organisations in the study) were found to be lacking in terms of vision and focus regarding training, and this resulted in the predominant use of informal and non-systematic training paradigms. Interestingly the increased demand for formal training within the licensed trade sector has resulted in the increased availability of licensed trade based courses in colleges and universities.

The importance of image and image projection was revealed in this study as having a powerful influence on the types of training that organisations choose to use. The licensed trade industry in particular was identified as a hospitality sector that has recently started to recognise the contribution that a trained workforce can make in selling a professional image to the public. There is a clear message here for SMEs who may not need the powerful brand image of a quality well-known hotel chain, but whose fate is sealed by the customer’s first impression when entering that SME. Formalised training programmes can create a positive image for both internal and external customers, and are therefore an important starting-point for SMEs in an increasingly image conscious hospitality industry.

A final factor that influences attitudes towards training in the hospitality industry, and the type of training paradigm employed, is the perceived formality of the training provided within that hospitality unit. This “formality” refers to several factors; the importance placed on training by the organisation, how this importance is conveyed to staff, the regularity of training and staff appraisals, and the effectiveness of the training
records used. My research reveals that in many non-branded restaurants and SMEs the training is very *ad hoc*, regarded by some staff and managers as an inconvenience rather than a benefit. However, in the fast-food sector the training paradigm is competence-based and progressive, and staff are not allowed to progress within that fast-food organisation until all their training at a particular level has been achieved and recorded. My primary research evidence indicates that within motorway service stations and the catering services sector the importance of training is emphasised to all new staff during induction, and this message is repeated during their time in-service. A pleasing finding was that in the branded large hotels there is an increasing recognition that all training needs to be formally documented, and that all new staff are informed that training is an on-going function that is recorded on their individual training files. This is certainly a positive development; the benefits of which I hope will continue to cascade and influence attitudes to training in other sectors of the hospitality industry.

At this point in the research project I was able to represent and develop my research findings into a pictogram (Figure 24). As explained earlier in the study (Chapter 4), this model illustrates the key features that influence training in hospitality SMEs and larger organisations in Southeast Wales.

4. **To explore and review the suitability of the NVQ approach to skills development as a model for hospitality education/training.**

A key consideration in exploring and reviewing the suitability of the NVQ approach for skills delivery was the perceived image of catering and hospitality NVQs by the various stakeholders involved in the process. Using a marketing analogy a product is only
considered to be useful if it is perceived to offer benefits to the customer (Brassington & Pettit, 2007). The problem for NVQs, as identified in the study, is that the NVQ brand is flawed and the research data confirms that the many stakeholders have a poor image of this qualification.

It is suggested in this study that the primary purpose of any vocational qualification is to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform a useful function in that vocational industry on completion of their qualification. A significant and discouraging finding in this study is that many education and training providers do not believe that the NVQs that they are delivering reflect the current needs of the hospitality industry. As such it can be argued that these qualifications are serving no useful purpose in preparing people for employment. However, this study does reveal a disparity in attitudes regarding the suitability of NVQs for providing opportunities for career progression. Whilst many lecturers, particularly in the FE sector, question the suitability of this qualification in terms of providing industry with people equipped with the necessary skills, nevertheless the FE lecturers do regard achievement of NVQs as a means of progression within the industry. As discussed earlier this disparity may be explained by the fact that many FE lecturers’ employment is based on the delivery of NVQs, - as such they are unlikely to be overly negative towards a qualification that they have to “sell” in order to retain their jobs.

The argument concerning perceived declining standards is a keen debate across many education and training sectors in the UK today. It is not surprising therefore that many respondents in this study believe that the NVQ model has not improved standards in the
hospitality industry. Significantly many educationalists and industrialists argue that NVQs have not developed the national standards of practical skills and competence as was envisaged when the qualifications were introduced, and instead have contributed to a decline in standards. As one industrialist argued in a recent letter to the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* (10th May, 2007):

*I've seen many a young chef come out of college not able to make an omelette or turn vegetables, - and they are at NVQ Levels 2 and 3.*

The achievement of common and equal national standards is embedded in the philosophy of the NVQ model. However, in both the qualitative and quantitative research undertaken in this study concern has been expressed by all stakeholders about the inequity and lack of national standards evidenced in the NVQ model. These comments were made despite the “rigorous quality assurance and verification systems” described and implemented by the Awarding Bodies.

This issue of standards links closely with the role of knowledge in NVQs which has been considered and researched carefully within this study. Whilst the NVQ model is essentially competence-driven, a significant finding is that many within industry and education/training continue to believe that there is an insufficient focus on knowledge *per se* in NVQs. This explains why many stakeholders, including regular contributors to the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*, wish to see the inclusion of externally set knowledge-based written tests as part of the NVQ assessment process.

A key and on-going criticism of the NVQ model as an approach to skills development is that there is no differential grading of achievement. Many respondents argue that this
implementation policy does little to encourage skills development and instead accepts mediocrity as the standard. Further it de-motivates the more able and enthusiastic students who quickly realise that their keen efforts will not be rewarded by possible higher grades. The study indicates that the notion of only being classified as “competent” at best does little to encourage improved standards in the industry.

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), NVQs were originally written as a skills development model to be delivered and assessed in industry. However, as explained in this study NVQs in catering and hospitality have, since their introduction, been predominantly delivered and assessed by FE colleges and other training providers. The responses from both the educationalists and the industrialists indicate that many colleges are not sufficiently resourced in terms of premises, plant and equipment to replicate industrial working environments. Therefore, although colleges in theory provide RWEs (Realistic Working Environments) for NVQ delivery, the huge disparity in resource allocations inevitably impacts on the skills that can be delivered and assessed effectively in different catering colleges.

A repeated criticism that emerged in this study, which significantly impacts on the suitability of the NVQ approach to skills development, is the portfolio building process which is an inherent part of the NVQ model. The portfolio and the associated paperwork that is necessary for recording student achievement is regarded by many respondents as a fundamental weakness with this type of qualification. As Tolley (2000) argued, if NVQs are to have a future as a skills development qualification they need to be less bureaucratic. Indeed, many of the industrialists and educationalists interviewed
in this study repeated this argument suggesting that portfolio-building is a "paper-exercise" which is despised by both learners and assessors.

5. To make recommendations for future developments in hospitality skills training.

The study findings reveal worryingly negative attitudes towards NVQs by the key stakeholders involved in the delivery and assessment of these qualifications. However, a series of suggestions and recommendations for future developments in hospitality skills training emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data analysis. I have represented these recommendations in the table below (Figure 28), indicating briefly the reasons why I support or reject the proposals. (A full discussion of these recommendations is made in Chapter 7).
### Figure 28: Recommendations for future hospitality skills training.

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<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Accept/reject</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Re-introduce the City &amp; Guilds craft qualifications.</td>
<td>Reject.</td>
<td>It would be a retrograde measure and would impact on many of the achievements made in response to the De Ville Report (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Introduce external testing to the NVQ assessment process.</td>
<td>Accept.</td>
<td>External testing is an independent and objective mechanism which the research indicates will give “worth” and “value” to the qualification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Introduce grading to the NVQ assessment process.</td>
<td>Accept.</td>
<td>The research suggests that learners respond more positively to a qualification which discriminates between levels of achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Introduce a less bureaucratic assessment process.</td>
<td>Accept.</td>
<td>A key criticism of NVQs is the portfolio and individual assessment recording mechanisms. An alternative training and assessment model (see 5) could eliminate the need for this complex recording process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Introduce an alternative vocational training and assessment model.</td>
<td>Accept.</td>
<td>The study indicates that many NVQ providers would welcome an alternative training model. The model proposed includes internal and external practical assessments, and an external theory exam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Revise the funding methodology for skills training funded by the LSC.</td>
<td>Accept.</td>
<td>Achievement-based funding and the programme weightings for catering courses are heavily criticised. These elements need to be re-appraised by the LSC.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During my research a new style of vocational qualification, the Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQ) which is intended for skills acquisition within colleges and non-industrial environments, has progressed through a pilot phase prior to intended launch in September 2008. Initial reaction to this new type of skills training has been muted. Although there are on-going practical and theory assessments in VRQs, which are features welcomed by respondents in this study, the immediate perceived weakness is the continued reliance on a portfolio of evidence as a main assessment tool. My research findings suggest that the portfolio system of assessment evidence generation has been exhausted, and that respondents in this study want an alternative approach to hospitality skills training which is not reliant on perceived bureaucratic portfolio documentation.

8.3 Contributions of the research.

This study makes a contribution to knowledge through the research in Southeast Wales on attitudes to training and the delivery of NVQs that inform the development of an alternative training model to replace the NVQ paradigm. The research has also made a contribution to practice through the proposal for a revised assessment model and consideration of the funding methodology. One side benefit of the study was that it caused many industrialists and practitioners involved in delivering hospitality training to reflect upon and question the suitability of the training models that they use. The study has identified that there is a wide divide between best and worst practices in hospitality training, and has addressed this deficiency with a Southeast Wales focus gathering data not just from employers but also from other stakeholders (educationalists and training providers) who have an interest in training for the hospitality industry. Ultimately the main contribution of this research is to encourage all participants involved in delivering...
hospitality training to re-assess the effectiveness of the models they use, reflecting on how these models could be improved or refined based on the findings in this study.

When embarking on this study I was keen to assess the attitudes of the key stakeholders involved in delivering hospitality training. Initially I was concerned to assess attitudes to the variety of training models employed, but as the study progressed the focus became sharper and the NVQ model emerged as a training paradigm which necessitated further research and analysis. The study therefore has emerged as the first research exercise that has measured attitudes towards training within the hospitality industry with a focus on Southeast Wales. I was concerned to learn whether attitudes in Southeast Wales reflect and replicate attitudes across the rest of Wales and England, or whether this economically prosperous corner of Wales has attitudes which contrast with the rest of Wales and England.

This study has filled a gap in terms of previous work in this area. Prior work has been limited in focus with a heavy emphasis on quantitative research methodologies (Foote 1999; Miller 2004; Stevens 1998, 2000). These previous studies considered only the NVQ debate (Foote, 1999), or had a Cardiff perspective (Miller, 2004), or compared tourism and hospitality training per se but lacked emphasis on contrasting the attitudes of stakeholders involved in hospitality training (Stevens 1998, 2000). This study is individual and unique because it applies a qualitative and quantitative research methodology obtaining data from employers, educators and training providers with a specific perspective on attitudes to hospitality training in Southeast Wales.
Chapter Eight. Conclusions & Recommendations

Certainly the knowledge that I obtained from the primary research data has added significantly to my understanding of the attitudes of the different stakeholders involved in hospitality training. This study reveals that the sectors are different in terms of attitudes to training, and that existing paradigms need to be challenged as to their value and suitability in different hospitality contexts. As such I hope that this study will contribute to the training debate, helping to refine and improve the types of training employed across the different sectors of the hospitality industry.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Research Approach) the purpose of a grounded approach is to "generate theory from data" (Punch 2005, p155). This is the approach I adopted in order to create and present a possible alternative systematic training model to replace the NVQ paradigm. Through my qualitative research and data collection I was able to build a new body of knowledge which informed and refined the design of the alternative vocational training and assessment model suggested in Chapter 7. This study demonstrates that an alternative approach is needed, and would be welcomed by many of the stakeholders involved in hospitality training.

8.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research.

It is appropriate to consider the limitations of this research alongside suggestions for possible future research which could develop and consider further some of the key emerging themes within this study.

It could be argued that a limitation of this research is the focus on Southeast Wales in Phases 1 and 2. Training within the hospitality industry is obviously a national issue
debated regularly in the national trade press and Phase 3 addresses this by consideration on a UK-wide basis. Certainly the types of training models and qualifications employed are consistent across the rest of Wales and England. (As explained earlier Scotland has its own qualification framework.) However I was concerned to add a unique focus to the debate to reveal whether attitudes to training in Southeast Wales replicate attitudes across the rest of Wales and England. Having achieved this focus I am confident that I can contribute to the national debate in the knowledge that the Southeast Wales hospitality industry does indeed reflect those attitudes in the broader arena.

A significant limitation of the study is that it does not test the proposed model or revise it in the context of relevant theory and feedback from key stakeholders, including trainees. This would clearly need to be undertaken prior to implementation and such a study obviously provides an opportunity for further research beyond this PhD which I would hope to be involved in as part of my ongoing work with Edexcel.

Another limitation may include the sampling frame and the number of respondents included in the qualitative phase of the research process. The qualitative research in this study included a focus group (the NEAT project group) and 29 individual interviews (16 employers, and 13 education & training providers). Although the education & training providers sampled for phase 3 of the study were representative of Southeast Wales, the rest of Wales, and England; all the employers sampled for phase 1 and phase 2 were Southeast Wales based. It is therefore appreciated that caution needs to be taken with regards to generalising the employer findings beyond Southeast Wales.
A further limitation is the result of the sharp learning curve that I have progressed through since commencing this study. As a “new” researcher I have been experimenting with research techniques and methods, and certainly as I conclude the study I am aware of my own self-development and increased confidence as a researcher. This study therefore has been an evolutionary process for me, and I have “learned by doing” as I have progressed through the several stages of the project. I will reflect further on my research journey later in this chapter.

The limitations that I have identified have also helped to inform my suggestions for possible future research beyond this study:

- A wider investigation into attitudes to training within the hospitality industry but with a UK focus from the outset. It would be interesting to learn whether attitudes in Scotland where the educational and qualification system is different to the rest of the UK (i.e. SVQs rather than NVQs) reveals individualities and disparities that contrast with the findings in this study.

- An investigation into the influence of age profiles when considering the attitudes of staff employed in education and training towards NVQs. As identified in Chapter 5, it was evident during the interviews with the lecturers and training providers that younger people, with recent experience of working in the hospitality industry, were more positive about NVQs than their colleagues who had been involved in the delivery of the previous C&G craft qualifications. As I stated earlier this may be attributed to the more experienced lecturers and
training providers reminiscing and looking-back through “rose-tinted glasses”. However it would be useful to confirm my observation using more precise research data collection and analysis techniques.

- An investigation into the attitudes of candidates and trainees enrolled on NVQ programmes towards these qualifications. It was interesting in Chapter 7 to review the image of NVQs amongst the education and training providers. An additional finding was how the education and training providers perceive learners’ attitudes towards these qualifications. However my study does not extend to consider the learners themselves and how they perceive NVQs, and the image projected by these qualifications amongst their peer group.

- A detailed analysis, involving a much larger sample size, of attitudes towards my proposed vocational training and assessment model presented in Chapter 7. Although I received comments from ten industry and education representatives which informed some refinement to the model, nevertheless I am aware that a larger sample size is necessary if this model is to be formally presented in a paper as a possible replacement for the NVQ approach to training and assessment.

- An analysis of how the proposed vocational training and assessment model could be adapted and refined to suit the specific needs of Level 1 learners. This would involve a separate research exercise which focuses specifically on the motivations and attitudes of Level 1 learners. This study reveals that learners at
this level require more structured but less formal practical assessment mechanisms. As much employment within the hospitality industry is at this level it is necessary to test my proposals more fully before a formal recommendation is presented in a paper.

- Testing of the proposed model and its revision in the light of relevant theory and feedback from key stakeholders, including trainees.

8.5 Personal reflections on the research journey.

This study is the result of an eight year long research effort. My original proposal was to research how training is undertaken in the Southeast Wales hospitality industry and to contrast the findings with how training should ideally be implemented. However, as my research proposals were considered and refined so the focus of the study changed to reflect the influence of attitudes towards training in this completed study. Certainly my background in FE and the work I undertake for Edexcel ultimately impacted on the direction of this research project, and I believe that the overall findings will help to progress the hospitality training debate beyond Southeast Wales.

The research process for this study has been a journey of discovery for myself. Certainly academic research at this level was a new venture for me when I started this thesis. I therefore agree with Ritchie (2006, p282), a hospitality lecturer and colleague at UWIC, who completed her PhD thesis by stating:

My lack of experience in research techniques, approaches and methodologies .............means this has been an evolutionary process.
My focus in education prior to undertaking this study was primarily within a learning and teaching context. I have always been comfortable as a classroom lecturer where the demands of undergraduates keep the most seasoned and experienced lecturer fully occupied. Undertaking a complex research project alongside a full teaching timetable therefore presented a series of additional challenges. Issues such as time-management and prioritising evolved to become key features of both my working and personal life during the duration of this study.

I am pleased however with my progress as a "new" researcher. In writing this personal reflection I am aware of my own self-development and increased confidence as an active researcher. Certainly I have learned enormously about different research approaches, and the appropriate techniques and research methods to apply to different types of research questions. Beyond this study I intend to publish several papers based on the key findings within this thesis, thus further developing and refining my research expertise. I also hope to become involved in the supervision of future research students. I believe that the research and learning processes that I have completed during this study have equipped me with many skills that will benefit future students as they embark upon their research journeys.

8.6 Conclusion.

It is appropriate to conclude and consolidate this study by reflecting on the current state of vocational training in the UK. Certainly it is true that education and training are constantly evolving and changing, responding to new government initiatives and curriculum innovations. However in the last twenty years there have been fundamental
changes in the provision and types of vocational training undertaken by FE colleges, training providers, and industry. As this study has revealed the NVQ process has been particularly contentious with far-reaching implications for all stakeholders. Many however argue that more “wholesale” change is necessary in order to further develop and progress training within the hospitality industry. I therefore hope that the issues presented, discussed and analysed in this study will help to inform this continuing debate within and beyond Southeast Wales.
References.
References


Anon (2006) “NVQs are failing the industry, warns People 1st”. *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*. 4th July.


References


References


London.


References


References


Smithers, A. (1993) *All our Futures: Britain’s Education Revolution.* Channel Four Television. 20-21


References


Appendices.
Appendices.

Appendix 1.

Questions for Hospitality & Catering Employers.

NEAT project. (Focus Group Questions): Phase 1.

1. Do you use IT web marketing to promote your business?
2. What are the benefits of using web marketing?
3. How do you use basic marketing skills (the 4 Ps)?
4. What marketing promotion techniques do you use?
5. Are you using the full package of Microsoft Office applications (word, excel, etc.)?
6. Are you using a software program for your accounting procedures? Which?
7. How do you use the internet to source potential business contacts?
8. Do you have a sufficient and up-to-date knowledge of employment legislation?
9. Are you able to prepare a business plan?
10. Have you attended a confidence building or assertiveness techniques course?
11. Would such a course be beneficial for you?
12. Do you have a sufficient and up-to-date knowledge of health and safety legislation?
13. How confident are you when speaking in public or making a presentation to a group?
14. Are you satisfied that your business is using appropriate customer care and interpersonal skills?
15. How do you rate the selling skills of your front-of-house staff? Could they be improved?
16. Are all your staff competent in basic first aid skills?
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study to assess the effectiveness and suitability of NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry.

I would be most grateful if you could spare about 5 - 10 minutes to complete the following questionnaire.

The information and data received will be treated in the strictest confidence and your response will help to inform decision-making about catering and hospitality training/education in the UK.

Completed submissions are anonymous. If, however, you require a summary of the overall findings you will need to provide me with your email or postal address at the end of the questionnaire.

Many thanks for your help with this project.

About you

Q1 Which of the following do you belong to?

Please tick ONE only

- Further Education Institution (FEI)
- Higher Education Institution (HEI)
- Training Provider
- Other, please specify:

The image of catering and hospitality NVQs

Please respond to the following statements by ticking the appropriate box, where:

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly Disagree

Please tick the appropriate box:

Catering and hospitality NVQs suffer from a poor image

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
**The suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs for the catering and hospitality industry**

Please tick the appropriate box:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
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<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
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<td>Catering and hospitality NVQs provide opportunities for career progression</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>NVQs develop a learner's overall knowledge of the catering and hospitality industry</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NVQ system has improved the overall standards achieved in the catering and hospitality industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement of an NVQ creates a more motivated and confident employee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achieving catering and hospitality NVQs provides better career prospects for learners</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Catering and hospitality NVQs meet employer needs</td>
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</table>
Catering and hospitality NVQs have improved practical/craft skills in the industry

Catering and hospitality NVQs at Level 1 are of little value

Please use this space to add any additional comments on the suitability of catering and hospitality NVQs

Please tick the appropriate box:

Colleges are well-resourced for the delivery of catering and hospitality NVQs

Catering and hospitality NVQs are only suitable for delivery in the workplace

NVQs are administratively burdensome

Portfolio building is a paper exercise

Catering and hospitality NVQs have succeeded in creating national standards of competence in practical skills

NVQs should have externally-set written tests as part of the assessment mechanism

Practical competence should be assessed by an independent external assessor

A strength of the NVQ system is the flexible approach to training with no time constraints

Assessment on demand is a positive feature of the NVQ system

Paying deliverers of NVQs based on successful outcomes opens the assessment system to risk of abuse
Please identify **TWO** key strengths of the NVQ system and explain why you think these are strengths:
Q6 Please identify **TWO** key weaknesses of the NVQ system and explain why you think these are weaknesses:

Q7 Are you **GENERALLY** satisfied with the current catering and hospitality NVQ qualifications?

Yes

No

Please use this space to explain your answer:

Q8 Are you familiar with the proposed revisions to catering and hospitality NVQs?

Yes

No

Click on next to go to Question 9

Click on next to go to Question 10

Q9 Do you think the proposed revisions will improve these qualifications?

Yes

No

Don't know
Q10 Would you like to see an alternative to the NVQ system made available?

Yes.................................................................................................................................
No .................................................................................................................................

Please use this space to say what alternative to the NVQ system you would like to see made available for vocational qualifications in hospitality and catering:

Q11 What funding arrangements do you think should be made available for vocational qualifications in hospitality and catering?

Please provide your email OR postal address if you would like to receive a copy of the research findings
Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire
Appendices

Appendix 5.

Kruskal-Wallis test calculations.

Q2a. Catering and hospitality NVOs suffer from a poor image.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

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Q2b. NVOs are valued by catering and hospitality lecturers.

Kruskal-Wallis test

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a Kruskal-Wallis Test
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Q2c. NVOs are valued by the catering and hospitality industry.

**Kruskal-Wallis test**

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Q2d. Catering and hospitality NVOs are a good successor for the craft qualifications they replaced.

**Kruskal-Wallis test**

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a Kruskal-Wallis Test  
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
O2e. NVOs have a positive image with young people seeking a career in the catering and hospitality industry.

**Kruskal-Wallis test**

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a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

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Q3a. Catering and hospitality NVOs reflect the needs of the industry today.

**Kruskal-Wallis test**

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Q3b. Catering and hospitality NVQs provide opportunities for career progression.

**Kruskal-Wallis test**

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Q3c. NVQs develop a learner’s overall knowledge of the catering and hospitality industry.

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Q3d. The NVQ system has improved the overall standards achieved in the catering and hospitality industry.

Kruskal-Wallis test

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>7.478</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

Q3e. Achievement of an NVQ creates a more motivated and confident employee.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Statistics(a,b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR000011</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.705</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
Q3f. Achieving catering and hospitality NVOs provides better career prospects for learners.

**Kruskal-Wallis test:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>32.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Statistics (a,b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

---

Q3g. Catering and hospitality NVOs meet employer needs.

**Kruskal-Wallis test:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>32.90</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Test Statistics (a,b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00013</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
Q3h. Catering and hospitality NVQs have improved practical/craft skills in the industry.

**Kruskal-Wallis test:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Statistics (a, b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR000014</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.647</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test  

b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

Q3i. Catering and hospitality NVQs at Level 1 are of little value.

**Kruskal-Wallis test:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR000015</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Statistics (a, b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00015</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.891</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test  

b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
Q4a. Colleges are well-resourced for the delivery of catering and hospitality NVQs.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Statistics(a,b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR000016</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

Q4b. Catering and hospitality NVQs are only suitable for delivery in the workplace.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>36.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Statistics(a,b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR000017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
O4c. NVOs are administratively burdensome.

**Kruskal-Wallis test:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>36.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Statistics(a,b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00018</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.682</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.431</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test  
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

---

O4d. Portfolio building is a paper exercise.

**Kruskal-Wallis test:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Statistics(a,b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00019</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.932</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test  
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
O4e. Catering and hospitality NVQs have succeeded in creating national standards of competence in practical skills.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Statistics (a, b):

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>10.407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

O4f. NVQs should have externally-set written tests as part of the assessment mechanism.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Test Statistics (a, b):

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>3.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
Q4g. Practical competence should be assessed by an independent external assessor.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Statistics (a,b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00022</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

Q4h. A strength of the NVQ system is the flexible approach to training with no time constraints.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Statistics (a,b)

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
O4i. Assessment on demand is a positive feature of the NVO system.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
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Test Statistics(a,b)

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<tr>
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<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>6.747</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test  
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

O4j. Paying deliverers of NVOs based on successful outcomes opens the assessment system to risk of abuse.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36.92</td>
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<tr>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Test Statistics(a,b)

<table>
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<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>5.356</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
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<td></td>
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a Kruskal-Wallis Test  
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
Q7. Are you GENERALLY satisfied with the current catering and hospitality NVQs.

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Test Statistics(a,b)

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>0.086</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001

Q8. Are you familiar with the proposed revisions to catering and hospitality NVQs?

Kruskal-Wallis test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VAR00001</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Test Statistics(a,b)

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<td>4.534</td>
<td>df</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Kruskal-Wallis Test
b Grouping Variable: VAR00001
Q9. Do you think the proposed revisions will improve these qualifications?

Kruskal-Wallis test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>28</td>
<td>19.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19.04</td>
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Test Statistics (a, b)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>VAR00028</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.223</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.637</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a: Kruskal-Wallis Test
b: Grouping Variable: VAR00001

Q10. Would you like to see an alternative to the NVQ system made available?

Kruskal-Wallis test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00029</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>45</td>
<td>36.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Statistics (a, b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR00029</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>4.324</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a: Kruskal-Wallis Test
b: Grouping Variable: VAR00001