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Occupational Decision-making and Career Choice among School-Leavers in Ireland 2002-2004 with Particular Reference to a Career in the Hotel and Catering Industry

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements for award of Masters (M.A.) in Third Level Learning and Teaching

By

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August 2004

Research Supervisor: Dr. Frank McMahon
Declaration

I certify that this dissertation which I now submit for examination for the award of Masters in Third Level Learning and Teaching is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work.

The dissertation has not been submitted in whole or in part for an award in any other institute or university.

Signature  
Date August 31st '04
Abstract

The Hotel and Catering Industry is enjoying great expansion in Ireland and as a result it will require additional staffing levels in the coming years. In parallel to this third level institutions are experiencing a shrinking market in terms of second level students and are experiencing severe challenges with student retention.

The industry suffers from a poor image and the status of employment within this sector is quite low. The numbers applying for Hotel and Catering Management courses are dropping each year in Ireland. The industry is also haemorrhaging employees at an alarming rate. This exodus and decreasing interest in the industry will result in chronic staff shortages if the expansion predicted materialises.

The author embarked on this study for several reasons. One, to establish the reasons for the poor image of the Hotel and Catering Industry among students. Two, to try and establish a model of occupational decision-making in order to assist students become more successful in their career choices. Three, try and ascertain the occupation decision making process in order for third level institutions to become more successful in their marketing efforts by understanding their market. It was anticipated that such information might serve useful in future efforts to improve the image of the sector and gain interest on behalf of students in the industry as a career path.

The results of this study indicated that the industry did suffer from a poor image among students. This poor image was due to long unsociable hours, poor pay, and poor working conditions. Perceptions were formed from work experience within the sector and parents and counsellors advice. A model of decision making was developed and presented in the concluding chapter.
Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the following persons and organisations whose help was essential in completion of this dissertation.

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Glossary of Terms

Ireland:
The Republic of Ireland

Hotel and Catering Management:
Hotels, restaurants and the catering facilities contained within them

CERT:
Council for Education, Recruitment and Training

ITIC:
Irish Tourism Industry Confederation

CAO:
Central Applications Office

IHF:
Irish Hotel Federation

SIPTU:
Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union
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Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 The Hotel and Catering Industry
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1.1 The Hotel and Catering Industry

The Irish Hotel and Catering Industry has enjoyed record growth over the last three to five years (CERT, 2000). Analysis of growth projections by McIver Consulting and Tansey Webster Stewart (2000) suggest that the hotel and catering sector could require at least an additional 105,000 staff over the period to 2007. With such high levels of investment and expansion ITIC (1998) expressed concern about the ability of the industry to meet its medium term training needs and whether training provides a sufficient range and mix of skills to promote sustainable employee development.

Observations that the Hotel and Catering Industry has a poor image are commonplace (Price, 1994). Iverson and Deery (1997) relates that the hospitality industry has been characterised by high turnover, low job security, low promotional opportunities and career development, low wages and low skill levels. MacHatton and Owens (1997) found that many students have little interest in any job within the sector. Barron and Maxwell (1993) conclude that graduate transfer and retention rates for students in hospitality programmes are low. Getz (1994) found attitudes towards a potential career in the industry have become more negative, especially among those with work experience within the sector.

In Ireland pupils perceptions of employment in the sector range from a strong ranking for hotels to the lowest prestige being given to the catering section (CERT, 1996). Of those pupils with work experience in the industry, 44 percent cited long hours, 22 percent cited the work as too pressurised and 15 percent cited poor pay as the reasons for not choosing a career within the sector (CERT, 1996). The Irish Marketing Survey (2000) found that 49 percent of employees viewed their earning potential, and 36 percent viewed overall quality of life, to be inferior to other industries.

Cronin et al (2000) documented the decline in applications among school leavers to hospitality courses throughout Ireland. The Central Applications Office (1999) in their annual report record increases in applications for some courses such as Engineering/Technology, and decreases in applications for other courses such as medicine.
Following on from this, third level institutions are experiencing severe problems with retention rates among first year students, Conway (2004) in research conducted in Dublin Institute of Technology on Diploma recorded a 32.4 percent withdrawal rate in year one of that course, and in the Irish Times Editorial (2002) statistics were presented indicating 42 percent of students failed to complete courses embarked upon in Institutes of Technology in Ireland. It is obvious students are making incorrect choices and only realising this having embarked upon a course. Career guidance counsellors and third level institutions need to address this problem and research must be carried out to ascertain the reasons for such poor career choices among present-day school leavers. If a model of occupational decision-making could be devised this would act as a guide for school leavers and possibly assist them in the process of choosing a career more successfully, and in turn help third level institutions address the high withdrawal rates which places a severe drain on financial budgets.

It is also becoming increasing important for third level institutions to become more market focused. Second level students are our market and we must endeavour to understand these students more if we are to successfully attract them in the future. Education is becoming increasingly competitive as the number of institutions grows; the number of courses becomes wider and more varied and exciting, and international institutions become accessible. The unlimited pool of second level students is getting smaller and each institute must become expert at providing for the needs of these adolescents and satisfying their requirements. Research into adolescents’ needs, wants and desires is urgently needed if we at third level are going to fill the courses available.

1.2 The Research Problem and Hypothesis

In view of the above estimates for increased labour supplies for the ever expanding Hotel and Catering Industry, and in light of the declining numbers applying to hotel and catering courses coupled with the poor perceptions of the industry and the low transfer and retention rates among graduates, the author undertook this study.
The main objectives can be established as:

(i) establish the influencing factors for choosing the listed career choices;
(ii) if Hotel and Catering Management is not listed, establish why;
(iii) identify the perceptions held by students towards a career within the Hotel and Catering Industry;
(iv) ascertain the perception of Hotel and Catering Management as a career choice among Career Guidance Counsellors;
(v) ascertain if present or previous work experience in the industry is an influential factor in choosing the industry.

Cothran and Combrick (1999) called for research on the perceptions of adolescents towards employment in the sector. In response to this and in light of the low image of the industry in general and falling interest in careers within the sector, the author embarked upon a study of Leaving Certificate students in Ireland.

The hypothesis sets out to test the image of the industry among school leavers today and to prove or disprove that it suffers from an inferior status.
In order to prove or disprove the hypothesis both primary and secondary research was completed. Secondary sources in order to review the current perspective on the research subject and primary in order to study the relevant views of students, counsellors, and employees within the sector. The primary research undertaken was both of qualitative and quantitative nature.

1.3 Chapter Outline

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters plus seven appendices.

Chapter One – Introduction

Chapter Two – Occupational Decision-making and Career Choices among School Leavers

This chapter reviews the process of occupational decision-making, the influential factors on that process, and the current trends in career choices among school leavers today.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

This chapter describes how the research was conducted as well as the methodological approach used to uncover and collect the relevant data.

Chapter Four – Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the primary research both quantitative and qualitative, undertaken by the author.
Chapter Five – Empirical Analysis

This chapter reviews the primary research findings in relation to the secondary research findings and engages in discussion pertaining to these findings.

Chapter Six – Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the authors conclusions and recommendations.
Chapter Two: Occupational Decision-Making and Career Choices among School Leavers

2.1 The Changing Nature of Careers
2.2 Occupational Decision-Making: A Definition
2.3 Occupational Decision-Making among School Leavers
2.4 Influential Factors on Occupational Decision-Making
This chapter will define occupational/vocational/career decision-making among adolescents/school-leavers/teenagers and review the process of occupational decision-making among such individuals and explore the influential factors on this process. It will also look at the concept of a career and the changing nature of careers today.

### 2.1 The Changing Nature of Careers

The way we view careers has dramatically changed from the traditional view of the career evolving within the context of one or two organisations where success was defined by the organisation and measured by promotions and increases in salary (Sullivan, 1999) to the new career where workers exchange performance for continuous learning and marketability (Altman and Post, 1996). According to Bereznicki and Lloyd (1998, p. 266) there are new challenges facing employers, such as: “lifetime learning; more flexible hours; and a greater emphasis on personnel development”. Unless such features are present employers will find it increasingly difficult to attract the future employee (Lloyd and Bereznicki, 1998).

Sullivan et al. (1998) suggest that career patterns implemented by individuals will be influenced by two major factors: 1. transferability of competencies, and 2. level of internal. Students are not just looking for financial remuneration but are placing greater emphasis on “self-development, self-actualisation and discovery” (Zeffane and Mayo, 1994, p. 32). Lloyd and Bereznicki (1998) put forward the idea that people need to be working for more than just money and the employer that provides the environment of self-reliance and temporaries, as opposed to mutual dependence and relative permanence will be the success stories of the future.

Sullivan (1999) writing on the changing nature of careers and the fact that workers with “boundaryless careers” (Sullivan, 1999, p. 458) are becoming the norm rather than the exception. The psychological employment contract between employers and workers has changed (Sullivan, 1998). Under the old contract, employees exchanged loyalty for job security while under the new contract employees exchange performance for training in order to remain more marketable (Hall 1996a; Hall and Mervis 1995).

Sullivan (1999, p. 458) cites the characteristics of the boundaryless career to include:
"portable skills, knowledge and abilities across multiple organisations; personal identification with meaningful work; on-the-job action learning; the development of multiple networks and peer learning relationships; and individual responsibility for career management”.

There are emerging great differences between the traditional career and that of the more contemporary career as we see it today. Table 2.1 summarises the difference between the traditional career model and the boundaryless career concept as seen by Sullivan (1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Boundaryless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Relationship</td>
<td>Job Security for Loyalty</td>
<td>Employability for Performance and Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>One or Two Firms</td>
<td>Multiple Firms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Firm Specific</td>
<td>Transferability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Measured By</td>
<td>Pay, Promotion, Status</td>
<td>Psychologically Meaningful Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility For Career</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Formal Programs</td>
<td>On-the-job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestones</td>
<td>Age Related</td>
<td>Learning-related</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1. Comparison of Traditional & Boundaryless Careers (Sullivan, 1999, p. 458).

Ireland has not been immune to this trend. Career choices are changing and the traditional third level courses of Arts, sciences and medicines to name but a few are certainly not as sought after while students tend to choose courses which offer them more flexibility.
Over the last five years in Ireland from Table 3.2 we can see the trends in applications for the different categories of courses available at the third level educational institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>13391</td>
<td>13116</td>
<td>14308</td>
<td>15949</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5559</td>
<td>5241</td>
<td>5262</td>
<td>5263</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Horticulture</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>387</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>4224</td>
<td>4414</td>
<td>4126</td>
<td>4427</td>
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<tr>
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<td>14053</td>
<td>13458</td>
<td>12561</td>
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<td>9515</td>
<td>9743</td>
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<td>663</td>
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<td>786</td>
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<td>370</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>371</td>
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<td>2483</td>
<td>2502</td>
<td>2674</td>
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<td>Human Medicine</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>1486</td>
<td>1602</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
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<td>240</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>204</td>
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<td>Pharmacy</td>
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<td>325</td>
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<td>608</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>1021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Health Care</td>
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<td>650</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>617</td>
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<td>55068</td>
<td>53757</td>
<td>53620</td>
<td>53786</td>
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Table 2.2. Central Applications Office, Annual Report 2002, p. 12 (ref. ASTATS).

From a review of the above statistics it is evident career/course preferences are changing. There is an obvious increase in applications for such courses as arts/social science; architecture; physiotherapy and law. Science and applied science, engineering/technology, human medicine and administration and business are all experiencing drop-offs, in some cases quite severe and worrying declines. Hotel and Catering Management courses are included in the administration and business category rendering it difficult to see if applications for such courses are increasing or decreasing. However on review of a publication on the points required for third level courses by the Irish Times (2000) a drop in point requirements for all hospitality courses in all the third level institutions across the country is documented, this drop continues today with some courses now advertising All Qualified Applicants (AQA). Cronin et al (2000)
documented the decline in one particular hospitality course at Dublin Institute of Technology showing a decrease in points for admission from 395 in 1996 to 350 in 1999; upon further examination these points have decreased to 305 in 2003. This serves as evidence as to the falling interest by students in Hotel and Catering Management as a career choice.

2.2 Occupational Decision-Making: A Definition

Occupational decision-making can be defined as:

"the complex cognitive process by which young people organise information about self and their vocational surroundings, deliberate among alternative perspectives about actions, and make public commitment to action" (Jepsen, 1983 p. 13).

The key word here, according to Jepsen (1983) is complex. It must not be overlooked that an individual never reaches the ultimate decision in a single moment of time, but through a series of decisions over a period of many years. The cumulative impact is the ‘determining factor’ (Ginzberg et al, 1951, p. 27).

According to Payne (1982) occupational decision-making occurs in many different contexts, and the information required is highly dependent on the demands of the particular situation.

Jepsen (1983, p. 16), lists the most important ways in which occupational decision situations differ from one-another as follows:

(i) "The number of stages involved. For example, applying for a waitress vacancy as opposed to applying for a catering course and then looking for such a vacancy.

(ii) Alternatives open to the individual. For many the choices may be small."
(iii) Time constraints under which the decision is made. Unemployed individuals will be operating under tighter time constraints than school leavers.

(iv) Information constraints under which the decision is made. Individuals in rural areas may have less access to certain kinds of information than those in city centres.

(v) The magnitude of the potential effect of the decision on the decision maker.”

Even a single decision taken at one point in an individual's career can be broken down into separate stages. For example, Tiedman and O'Hara (1963) identified the following stages:

(i) Exploration. Becoming aware of the field of occupational possibilities and gathering initial information.

(ii) Crystallisation. Becoming aware of specific alternatives.

(iii) Choice. The selection of an alternative.

(iv) Clarification. Identifying how the chosen alternative will be attained.

2.3 Occupational Decision-Making Among School Leavers

Parsons (1909), the godfather of occupational decision-making, wrote:

"In the wise choice of a vocation there are three broad factors - 1. a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations and their causes; - 2. a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; - 3. true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts (Parsons, 1909, p. 5).

Making a decision about post high school plans is a major problem-solving/decision-making process during adolescence (Picklesimer et al, 1998). An effective approach to deciding on careers and college majors is to provide adolescence with the opportunities to learn about themselves, their options, and decision-making strategies (Sampson et al,
Career choices are best made by integrating what one knows about one’s self and about different occupations and/or majors (Billups and Peterson, 1994).

In finding full-time work after high school, adolescents tended to feel successful by securing an adult role, financial independence, a purpose or identity, and social or career advancement (Sanford et al., 1994). In making college choices, however, students were inclined to feel successful by developing an interest in going to college, gathering information about different colleges, narrowing choices for applications, and making the final choice of one college or university as well as choosing a major (Slater, 1993).

Many troubled adolescents who are clients of mental health counsellors are struggling with establishing a life and career direction (Gold and Scanlon, 1993). Career exploration and decision-making involve change, which occurs by a complex psychological process and affects all aspects of a person’s life (Corbishley and Yost, 1989). Herr (1989) postulates that human development and career development are connected; positive or negative interactions in one area affect the other. Thus, work adjustment and personal adjustment form a symbiotic relationship; discord in one’s career decision can adversely affect one’s mental outlook.

“In fact, there are few things more personal than a career choice” (Niles and Pate, 1989, p.64).

Young peoples’ initial decision-making on careers, further education or training is a complex interactive process (Taylor, 1992). Despite the complexity of this issue there has been little research into how career decisions are made (Heskett, 1982; Hodkinson, 1995).

Two research papers (Boreham and Arthur, 1993; Taylor, 1992) focus on factors such as sources of advice and information, different types of guidance provisions, and the perceptions of young people toward different pathways. The decision-making process itself is not addressed in them.

Bennett et al (1992) in their writings maintain that knowing about oneself, through finding out about the labour market, to selecting a precise career and identifying the
specific training needs, is largely separate from the culture of the individual making the decision.

In an audit commission completed by the HMSO (1993) in London the concept that career education and guidance is essential to increase the chances of making a correct decision, mainly by providing better information and giving assistance on how to make a decision was documented. The report continues that if correct decisions are made, then there will be less wastage in post-16 education and training.

However Hodkinson (1995) completed an investigation and discovered some patterns of decision-making, some very different from the technically rational assumptions of much current policy. In this research it was found that decisions were arrived at with:

(i) the help of close relatives or neighbours working in the field of interest;
(ii) practical experience through part-time work during weekends and holidays;
(iii) the existence of childhood ambitions and particular interests;
(iv) the need for training and direction.

Hodkinson (1995) identified three main qualities in the process:

(i) that students were instrumental, to a greater or lesser extent, in determining what career they will eventually follow;
(ii) they had rational reasons for making their choices and for changing their minds; that is they choose jobs they knew a lot about or had experienced first hand themselves;
(iii) these rational decisions were pragmatic, although sometimes in a restricted and partly inadequate way.
According to Hodkinson (1995) there are several dimensions to this pragmatism.

(i) The decisions were based on partial information which was localised, being based on the familiar and the known.

(ii) The decision was context-related, and cannot be separated from the family background, culture and life histories of the pupils.

(iii) The decisions were opportunistic, being based on fortuitous contacts and experiences.

(iv) The timing of the decisions was sporadic, in that the decisions were made when the pupil felt able to do so and were reactions to opportunities as they were encountered.

(v) Decisions were also influenced by feelings and emotions.

(vi) Decisions were often partly intuitive.

Hodkinson (1995, p. 6-7) introduces the concept of “horizons for action”, this being the area within which actions can be taken and decisions made. Young people make decisions within horizons for action. Habitus, a term invented by Bourdieu (1984), according to Hodkinson (1995, p. 6) can be defined as:

"The ways in which a person's beliefs, ideas and preferences are individually subjective but also influenced by the objective social networks and cultural traditions in which that person's lives”,

and it is with this habitus and the opportunity structures of the labour market that influence horizons for action, they are interrelated, for perceptions of what might be available and what might be appropriate affect decisions.

Giddens (1984, p. 243) identifies that decisions are reached through “practical consciousness (tacit knowledge) and discursive consciousness (what we can articulate)”. According to Giddens (1984) both these concepts contribute to habitus. Both types of consciousness can be seen as developing through “schemata”, where schemata are
"conceptual structures, amassed from childhood, which serve as tools for understanding aspects of their experiences" (Giddens, 1984, p. 245).

A schema structures what a person knows of the world, by filtering out irrelevancies and allowing sense to be made of practical information. As new experiences are gained, schemata are modified and developed. As they change so does what is recognised in the surrounding world. In this interactive way the life history of the individual is shaped by his/her common sense experiences. In choosing any action or making a decision, the individual uses his/her own schematic repertoire (Giddens, 1984). Giddens (1984) goes on to maintain that no one can step outside such personal development and therefore decision-making can never be context free. From this we can see why some people vehemently reject career advice, what is being said to them just doesn’t fit with their existing schematic view of themselves or their perceptions of appropriate careers opportunities (Giddens, 1984).

Arroba (1977) in response to the lack of research in the area produced an empirically derived clarification of decision styles. Here style was defined as:

"a way of approaching, responding to, and acting in, a decision-making situation" (Arroba, 1977, p.150).

Six decision-styles were presented (Arroba, 1977, p.151):

(i) emotional;
(ii) hesitant;
(iii) intuitive;
(iv) no-thought;
(v) compliant;
(vi) logical.

Arroba (1977, p.152) suggested that the styles formed an “active passive” dimension with the logical and hesitant styles representing the active end, while the no-thought and compliant styles represented the passive end.
Jepsen (1974a, 1974b) analysed adolescent career decision-making behaviours in order to establish decision-making strategy types. Two of the main strategies to emerge from his cluster analysis were the "active planners" and the "singular fatalists" (Jepsen 1974b, p.21). These can be linked to Arroba's (1977) logical and no-thought or compliant styles, respectively. The singular fatalists were differentiated from the other strategy types by the limited amount and variety of career information they sought and the small number of action plans they listed. In keeping to Arroba's (1977) cluster analysis and in line with findings by Harvey-Beavis and Elsworth (1998), Jepsen (1974a) also found that the vocational decision-making behaviours tended to form clusters, even though each researcher was operating in different time segments in the vocational planning cycle.

Early in the history of vocational guidance theory Ginzberg et al (1951, p. 210) identified a similar "active-passive" dimension to that reported by Arroba (1977) and Herron et al (1978) and hinted by Jepsen (1974a). This dimension may well be related to Rotter's (1966, p.17) currently popular concept of "locus of control" or "internal versus external" control reinforcements. People with an internal locus of control perceive that outcomes are dependent upon their actions increasing the likelihood of them taking an active part in their career planning. Whereas people with external locus of control have not been afforded the opportunity to perceive a contingency between their actions and outcomes, increasing the likelihood of them taking a passive role in their career planning (Rotter, 1966).

Hesketh (1982) in her research found that the active styles are more popular than the passive styles. Hesketh (1982) then infers that the correlations found between the different variables within the two styles reflects the tendency for some individuals to take a more active stance toward their career decision-making, and having more holiday jobs and interests. Other individuals, the more passive, tend to cite fewer activities consult fewer literature sources and have less work experience with less involvement in their own vocational decision-making process.
Tuohy (1998) found in his research that occupation decision-making stemmed from interest, and sees their choices as an expression of vocational interest. This is in keeping with one of three main orientations put forward by Paulsen (1990), one of which was a psychological orientation, focusing on the characteristics of the applicant that is their interests. Harvey-Beavis and Elsworth (1998) also linked the patterns of occupational decision-making to different types of vocational interests, which were identified by Holland (1985) and recorded by Tuohy (1998, p. 4) as:

(i) "Realistic. Occupations involve activities such as building, repairing and making objects. These occupations foster technical competencies and mechanical ability.

(ii) Investigative. Occupations involve activities such as experimenting, analysing and enquiring. This type of occupation provides an environment which fosters scientific competence and scholarship.

(iii) Artistic. Occupations involve activities such as painting, writing, sculpting, dancing, acting and playing music. This type of occupation provides an environment which fosters artistic competencies and encourages people to be expressive, original and intuitive.

(iv) Social. Occupations involve activities directed towards helping others. These include teaching and nursing.

(v) Enterprising. Occupations involve activities such as organising and selling. Enterprising occupations provide an environment which encourages people to see the world in terms of power, status and responsibility.

(vi) Conventional. Occupations involve activities such as record keeping and filing”.

However Tuohy (1998) warns that vocational interests may be a relatively fluid concept for 18-19 year olds, and warns that school-leavers are still in a development stage, forming opinions in terms of relationships, work and life in general. Therefore an interest pattern is not necessarily fixed, in the face of no chance to develop a particular interest an individual may well abandon the interest and focus on a different area. This also emphasises what Hodkinson (1995) details, recording the need that changes of mind and of career direction are normal for many young people saying:
"we need to work out ways of dealing with the reality, rather than trying to avoid it" (Hodkinson 1995, p. 3).

Hodkinson (1995) concludes that in an effort to understand adolescent occupational decision-making policy makers and practitioners must recognise the complexity of the career decision-making process. Approaches which see guidance simply as providing more and better information plus professional advice in making a single choice, are naive and probably doomed to failure.

2.4 Influential Factors on Occupational Decision-Making

2.4.1 Knowledge of Self and Self Knowledge

Taylor (1992, p. 317) documents the need for adolescents to have a good knowledge of themselves as a "priori" need for effective career decision-making. It is essential for adolescents to have developed self-confidence and interpersonal relations in order to give them the confidence to seek out the most effective and efficient information required to make an occupational decision. Taylor (1992) found that 46 percent of students surveyed had considered their school and teachers as having given them the help and confidence to make occupational decisions.

Bareham and Arthur (1993) detail the self-knowledge utilised in occupational decision-making as comprising:

(i) **Values** – what individuals want to obtain from their work. These include such goals as income, status, a sense of belonging, independence and security;

(ii) **Preferred activities** – the work activities which individuals prefer as the means of obtaining what they value such as caring, selling, planning, or making;

(iii) **Abilities** – the personal qualities which fit individuals for different kinds of work, such as innate aptitudes, acquired skills and personality dispositions.
Chapman (1983) maintains that in order for the individuals’ self-knowledge to play a part in the occupational decision-making process two criteria must be satisfied. First, the knowledge of values, preferred activities and abilities must be relevant to the occupations under consideration. Second, the self-knowledge must be capable of being sufficiently externalised to enable preferences to be expressed about options in the world of employment.

2.4.2 Part-Time Work Experience

Barling et al (1995) in their research investigated the effect of the quality and the quantity of part-time work on teenagers and endeavoured to identify if there was a relationship between the quality of work engaged and the career choice of the teenager having experienced good quality work environments in their impressionable teenage years with regards to the quality of work. They discovered in their research that teenagers’ work is frequently portrayed as lacking in role clarity, autonomy, and skill variety (Garson, 1985), and teenagers employed part-time may well experience considerable time-based conflict between schoolwork and job demands (Shanahan et al., 1991; Sunter, 1992). Role ambiguity is a central role stressor, and meta-analysis demonstrates its negative effects on a variety of personal and organisational outcomes (Jackson and Schuler, 1985). Barling et al., (1995) focused on the associations of the quantity and the quality on two aspects of teenagers’ personal functioning, namely self-esteem and time structuring, where self-esteem is central to adolescents in general (Steitz and Owen, 1992). Barling et al., (1995) concluded from their research that the quantity of work engaged in had no effect on the teenagers self esteem, however the quality of work did. If the quality of work did not promote autonomy and role clarity it contributed to poor self-esteem.

In a study carried out by Counsell (1996) experiences of part-time work played an influential role on undergraduates surveyed. This work experience in the form of college placements, part-time jobs and summer work influenced the career-related thoughts of 26 percent of those surveyed. Hodkinson (1995) in her research found that work experience strongly influenced many pupils, some positively and some negatively, and cited one respondent comment as:
"Before I wanted to go into hotel work but I did my work experience and hated it" (Hodkinson 1995, p. 4).

Taylor (1992) also points to part-time work as a salient influence on the perceptions about the working world, and documents how many students felt that their personal experiences of work were instrumental in focusing and clarifying their occupational choices.

Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991) indicate that adolescents who engage in part-time work allocate less time to homework and study, thus impacting on their grades and in turn limiting the choices available to them at university level. Furthermore teachers then adjust grading practices and class requirements at university level, compromising on the quality of programmes delivered and graduates entering into the world of work.

Loughlin and Barling (1998) point out that part-time employment among students is a major socialisation agent in adolescent development. Attitudes are more impressionable in the teenage years and are more influenced by their work experience than adults, with any positive or negative influences likely to be exaggerated (Loughlin and Barling, 1998). Loughlin and Barling (1998) go on to say that employers need to be very cautious when employing students to ensure that the correct working conditions exist and the environment in which they work is conducive to learning and development.

2.4.3 Teachers and Counsellors Influence

Taylor (1992) states that it has been recognised as being notoriously difficult to evaluate the influence of career guidance counsellors input on individuals' actual career choices and the particular jobs entered. In this study Taylor (1992) found girls tended to react more positively to the guidance received, higher ability students valued it least. Taylor (1992) also discovered that young people sought out information and advice from staff that were perceived to be approachable, accessible and supportive, irrespective of whether they had specific responsibility for career education. One quarter of the
surveyed respondents, especially girls and middle attainers felt they were getting a lot of help and influence from their guidance teachers.

Courtney (1988) also found that 23 percent of respondents cited the careers teacher as some one who helped with school-leaving decisions.

In a study conducted by Ferris State University (2002) on career guidance and decision-making among American youth, students perceived a lack of career guidance in their schools, and often could not name anyone outside of their parents who had been helpful in career counselling, with just 10 percent saying school personnel had played the primate role in their career guidance, while 78 percent credited their parents as top adult influencer.

2.4.4 Family and Friends Influence

In Taylor’s (1992) study two-thirds of respondents considered that they had received a lot of help from their families when deciding on what career to choose, but only two-fifths deemed their families were the greatest influence.

Friends proved even more significant with 82 percent of surveyed respondents saying friends had some influence. 18 percent said they had a lot of influence and nine percent rated friends as having the greatest influence on their choices of occupation. Girls were particularly influenced by friends (Taylor, 1992).

Hodkinson (1995) found many respondents said they were influenced by close relatives who worked in the same field, some influenced positively and some negatively.

In a study by Bregman and Killen (1999) it was documented that adolescents valued parental influence and guidance in the area of career choice and vocational development. Middleton and Loughead (1993) talk of how in the world of work parents can be an important and positive influence in decisions affecting a young person’s vocational development. Though also warning that over-involvement in the decision-making process can undermine parental effects as a positive source of influence.
Young (1992) details involvement in career accomplishments may be a particularly compelling issue for some parents as they see such accomplishments as a reflection on themselves. However Nucci (1996) cautions that excessive parental control regarding adolescents’ occupational decision-making results in negative outcomes. Nucci (1996) maintains that it is important for parents to make clear demarcations between issues that are strictly a matter of personal choice and those that have moral, social-conventional and prudential consequences.

In keeping with Nucci’s (1996) findings, Smetana (1989) and Smetana and Asquith (1994) found that adolescents judged parents to have jurisdiction over moral and conventional issues, but viewed personal decisions as outside parental authority.

Bregman and Killen (1999) concluded their research by saying since adolescents perceive decisions related to one’s vocational development strictly as a matter of personal preference then any reason for making a decision would be considered legitimate and outside the boundaries of parental authority.

2.4.5 Social Class and Other Influences

Owens (1992) found that post-high school social context choice, like occupational choice generally, is a multidimensional phenomenon. His study identified characteristics correlated with postsecondary plans. He found that students who entered the workforce full time immediately after high school tended to be from lower socio-economic groups, were reared in rural sections of the country and came from larger families. Additionally, these students were raised in a familial environment that seemed to reduce student aspirations, grades and academic self-concept. He also concluded that students who enrolled in college tended to be from higher socio-economic groups and were often first-born children with families providing ample support and encouragement to relations to academics. These students were often high achieving students, with high self-esteem and confidence (Owens, 1992).
Hodkinson (1995, p. 6) defines culture as:

"the socially constructed and historically derived common base of knowledge, values and norms for action that people grow into and come to take as a natural way of life”,

and writes on habitus as being involved in the career aspirations of adolescents.

Lauder (1993) writes on how social class has a decisive influence on educational decision-making. Boudon (1974) maintains that educational ambition differs between classes; essentially that ambition itself is a function of class specific costs and benefits.

Gambetta (1987) in his interpretation of Boudon’s (1974) position writes that on the point of view of upward social mobility a working class child aiming at university would face both higher costs and lower benefits relative to his or her point of social departure. According to Boudon (1974) such costs borne by upwardly mobile students are those of leaving the family and peers for a new social stratum, one of breaking old habits and customs and creating new supportive networks. Costs that are sometimes considered too costly to incur.

Kroger’s (1993) findings show that when measures of scholastic ability were taken into account there were clear differences in credential success and subsequent occupational destination, determined by Fathers occupation, where Fathers occupation determined the social position of the family.

Kroger (1993) found that there were very clearly defined horizons, myths and expectations peculiar to different classes. He established that for those from professional/managerial backgrounds, the acceptable thing to do was to go to university and pursue occupations similar to those in their class. And those within the lower class structures, even though capable of going to university and becoming upwardly mobile, chose not to, viewing it too costly, not in terms of monetary cost but in terms of separateness from class. Kroger (1993) goes on to say for those who are upwardly mobile, money and status may not be the major incentive, it may be that their motivation is related to being role models for a group that has been traditionally underrepresented in some occupational fields.
Picklesimer et al. (1998) concludes in their research that the socio-economic background can have a significant impact on career choice, but also propose that life skills (interpersonal communication/human relations life skills; problem-solving/decision-making life skills; physical fitness/health maintenance life skills; and identity development/purpose in life skills) may also play a vital role and according to Ginter and Brown (1996) may have the potential to override other factors.

Tuohy (1998) in his study also details some contextual factors contributing to vocational development within Ireland. Firstly, the size of the secondary school may have an influence, in that the larger the school the more elective subjects offered, opening up a larger array of options. Secondly, the supply and demand dimension, where the number of places available on a particular course, the attainability of entry requirements for those courses and the investment cost for the student of selecting this course. Such factors can play a decisive role in the decision to choose a particular career path (Tuohy, 1998).

Cronin and Brennan (1999) in their study found that the college prospectus was the number one influential factor for student applicants when deciding on a course in pursuit of a career, followed by college location and students opinion of the status of a college.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has outlined the concept of a career and the changing nature of careers today. It has also presented the process involved in occupational decision-making and the factors influencing that process.

The literature reviewed has raised several interesting questions, which essentially provides the focus for the primary research carried out by the author. It is necessary to investigate these questions in the context of the Irish student making a career choice and the influential factors bearing down on that decision if third level institutions are going to be more effective in attracting the right student to the right course, thus addressing
the issue of attrition, which is proving to be a burning issue in third level education in Ireland today. It is also necessary to investigate these questions for the Hotel and Catering Industry, in order for the industry to attract students who understand the industry and attract students to this career path who will be most comfortable, productive and gain the most personal development. In doing so this will also assist in addressing the very high levels of turnover and low attrition rates the industry is experiencing today.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 The Research Hypothesis
3.2 Primary and Secondary Research
3.3 Attitude Measurement
3.4 Sample Design Process
3.5 The Survey Instrument - Questionnaire
3.6 Instrument Testing - Pilot
3.7 The Design of Cover Letter
3.8 Validity and Reliability
3.9 Focus Groups
3.10 Limitations of Methodology
The objective of this chapter is to outline in detail the research methodology employed in this study. For the purpose of this study the Hotel and Catering Industry is defined as hotels, restaurants and the catering facilities contained within them. The research question is to ascertain the perception of the hotel and catering industry as a career choice among school leavers and also endeavour to understand how school leavers arrive at a career choice.

5.1 The Research Hypothesis

5.1.1 Research – A Definition

Research is defined by Malhotra (2003, p. 6) as the:

"Systematic and objective identification, collection, analysis, dissemination and use of information from a sample of individuals or organisations relating to their characteristics, behaviour, attitudes, opinions or possessions".

5.1.2 The Research Hypothesis

A hypothesis is simply a statement concerning the universe (Brown, 1980) and according to Emory and Cooper (1991, p. 58) it is of a “tentative and conjectural nature”. In the case of this research the hypothesis is relational in nature as it is a statement that describes a “relationship between two variables in respect of some case” (Emory and Cooper, 1999, p. 58). In this instance the case is the Hotel and Catering Industry and the variables are the image of the Hotel and Catering Industry in Ireland.

In research a hypothesis serves several important functions, the most important being to guide the direction of the study (Brown, 1980). A frequent problem in research is the proliferation of interesting information. The purpose of the hypothesis is that, if taken seriously, it defines the parameters of the study and thereby reduces the volume of information to a level which is strictly relevant (Crimp, 1990).
5.2 Primary and Secondary Research

For the purpose of this study the author used both primary and secondary research.

5.2.1 Secondary Research

Secondary data can be defined as data “collected for some purpose other than the problem at hand” (Malhotra, 2003, p. 40).

The advantages of conducting secondary research can be identified as:

- Data is easily accessible;
- Relatively inexpensive to acquire;
- Quickly obtained;
- Can be collected rapidly and in a short period of time;
- Can help define and develop the problem in question;
- Answer certain research questions and test some hypothesis (Malhotra, 2003, p. 42).

The disadvantages of this type of research can be identified as:

- Since this research has been collected for other research topics it’s use may be limited;
- It may not be accurate;
- The objectives, nature and methods used to collect the secondary data may not be appropriate to the present situation;
- The information may not be current (Malhotra, 2003, p. 43).
All available sources of secondary data were examined to ensure confidence in the current research topic. A complete review of books, journals, industry and specialist reports, periodicals, CD-ROM’s and computer databases was completed. This involved visits to several libraries including:

- University College Dublin (U.C.D.) Library;
- Dublin Institute of Technology (D.I.T.), Faculty of Tourism and Food, Cathal Brugha Street Library;
- Dublin Institute of Technology (D.I.T.), Faculty of Business, Aungier Street Library;
- Bord Failte Library;
- CERT Library;
- Educational Research Centre, St. Patrick’s Training College, Drumcondra.

The secondary data gathered allowed the researcher to gain a greater insight into the topic under discussion and highlighted areas that needed to be taken into consideration, which may have otherwise been overlooked.

These sources yielded a great wealth of information relevant to the study. The secondary reviews formed the basis of the literature review for this thesis. The book and journal articles provided an insight into career choice, career development, and perceptions of the Hotel and Catering Industry while the Government and industry reports highlighted the importance of this sector to the Irish economy.

### 5.2.2 Primary Data

Primary data is “data collected or produced by the researcher specifically to address the research problem at hand” (Malhotra, 2003, p. 40).

The advantages of primary research can be identified as:

- It is collected specifically for the problem at hand;
• It can be designed and administered to the specific population in question;
• The information is complete as it is collected for the problem at hand.

The disadvantages of primary research can be identified as:

• It can be expensive to obtain;
• It can be time consuming to collect (Malhotra, 2003, p. 40).

The methodology chosen to conduct this primary research was that of two postal questionnaires (one for career guidance counsellors and one for final year second level students), these questionnaires were administered in March 2003. Three focus groups of 10-12 students per group were conducted in order to investigate some of the most pertinent findings from the questionnaires; these focus groups were conducted in April 2004. Students and counsellors were assured full confidentiality in any information supplied.

5.2.3 The Questionnaires

Questionnaires were utilised as the method of collection of information for the following reasons:

(i) it allowed a sample of the target population to be included in the research i.e. all secondary school students in their final year;
(ii) it gave all respondents enough time to consider their answers and seek additional information which might not have been available on the spot;
(iii) the results allow comparisons to be made between each respondent;
(iv) the relative ease of administration;
(v) the type of data that was sought was general in nature thus suitable for collection by postal survey.
Two questionnaires were designed (See appendix A and B), one for completion by career guidance counsellors within the schools surveyed, and one for completion by final year students. Both questionnaires were designed to test the assumptions presented in the literature about the typical contributing factors to career choice and to gain additional information about students’ perceptions of the Hotel and Catering Industry.

**Advantages of Postal Surveys**

The major advantage of the postal survey is the reduced costs in comparison to personal interviews. As the sample was geographically dispersed it is likely that the postal survey worked out cheaper than telephone interviewing. Postal surveys can also be useful in contacting respondents who are difficult to locate (Malhotra, 2003). The self-administered questionnaire avoids the problems associated with the use of interviewers (Gill and Johnson, 1991). According to Gill and Johnson (1991) there are several sources of interviewer errors, which may seriously undermine the reliability and validity of the survey results. When the survey requires reflection, a mail questionnaire is more advantageous. In a self-administered questionnaire respondents are more likely to answer more personal questions (Malhotra, 2003).

**Disadvantages of Postal Surveys**

However, there are a number of weaknesses in the use of postal surveys. The primary one being low response rate (Moser and Kalton, 1975). In addition, it is often the case that those who respond are those with strong feelings about the subject (Moser and Kalton, 1975). This is a potential source of bias. In order to overcome this, counsellors were requested to administer the survey ensuring a representative sample of those students who completed the CAO Forms for college admission. Postal questionnaires are also felt to be impersonal, and data collection is time consuming. One attempt at overcoming these disadvantages was in sending out the questionnaire well before the end of the school year to allow enough time for both teachers and students to answer questions or solicit further information.
5.3 Attitude Measurement

Since this study encompasses the attitudes of students and counsellors to the Hotel and Catering Industry it was necessary to understand the measurement of attitude.

An attitude has been defined as a "moderately intense emotion that prepares or predisposes an individual to respond consistently in a favourable or unfavourable manner when confronted with a particular object" (Anderson, 1988, p. 243).

Oppenheim (1966, p. 105) defines attitude as a "statement of readiness, a tendency to react in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli".

To measure an attitude requires an instrument such as a questionnaire, which is selected to reveal an underlying attitude or set of attitudes. The most crucial stage in this measurement is in the initial pilot stage (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 120). It is necessary to explore the origins and complexities of the areas under study so as to be clear about what has to be measured (Oppenheim, 1966).

5.3.1 The Likert Scale

The Likert Scale is one of the more popular attitude measuring instruments. It was chosen for this survey because it offers a "reliable, rough ordering of people with regard to a particular attitude" and because it can give some indication of the intensity of agreement or disagreement with a question (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 141). Oppenheim (1966) also agrees that a further advantage of the Likert Scale is that it can include items whose manifest content is not obviously related to the attitude in question, so that subtler and deeper ramifications of an attitude can be explored.
5.4 Sample Design Process

According to Malhotra (2003) this process involves five steps as follows:

(i) Define the population;
(ii) Determine the sampling frame;
(iii) Select sample techniques;
(iv) Determine the sample size;
(v) Execute the sample process.

5.4.1 Sample Population

For the purpose of this study the population was identified as final year students in the Leaving Certificate cycle within the Irish secondary school system.

5.4.2 Sample Frame

A sampling frame is a representation of the elements of the target population (Malhotra, 2003). In this study the sampling frame was identified as the list of all second level educational establishments as listed in a publication by the Irish Department of Education. A second list was acquired from the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (I.G.C.) in Ireland. The sample was selected using the combined lists of schools with career counsellors who were members of the association (see appendix C for list of surveyed schools).
5.4.3 Sampling Selection Technique

Moser and Kalton (1975) put forth two major principles in sample design. First is to avoid bias in the selection procedure, and second to achieve the maximum precision. According to Mosser and Kalton (1975, p. 145) bias in the selection can arise:

(i) if the sample frame (list, index or other population record) does not cover the population adequately, completely or accurately;
(ii) if the sample is done by a non-random method, which generally means that the selection is consciously or unconsciously influenced by human choice;
(iii) if some selection of the population are impossible to find or refuse to co-operate.

A random method of selection is one which gives each of the units in the population to be covered a calculable, non-zero probability of being selected (Moser and Kalton, 1975).

Stratified Sampling

Most populations can be segregated into a number of mutually exclusive subpopulations, or “strata” (Emory and Cooper, 1991, p. 266). A simple random sample is then taken from each stratum.

Simple Random Sampling

With simple random sampling each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected into the sample. To ensure true randomness the method of selection must be independent of human judgement. There are two basic procedures to ensure this, one of which is the lottery method, the method used in this study (Moser and Kalton, 1975). This system of sampling ensures that once a unit has been selected it is removed from the frame and cannot be selected again (Malhotra, 2003).
The above methods of sampling were used in the construction of the sample for the survey. Simple random sampling was used once the population of secondary schools in Ireland were identified, four strata were identified. These being the four classifications of secondary schools within the population (secondary, comprehensive, community and vocational). The element selection was unrestricted with sampling units being selected by chance (probability sampling) as outlined by Malhotra (2003).

5.4.4 Sample Size

This refers to the number of elements in the study (Malhotra, 2003). Much folklore surrounds the size of the sample with one false belief that a sample must be large or it is not representative (Emery and Cooper, 19991). The basic formula for calculating sample size in probability sampling assumes an infinite population; hence, the size of the sample under study is determined by the precision needed by the researcher (Emory and Cooper, 1991). For this study the author solicited the advice of the head of research at the Economic and Social Research Institute of Ireland, Mr. James Williams. Acting on his advice the author tried to achieve a sample size of 780 students surveyed in 65 schools. In order to try and achieve this target 80 schools were surveyed with 12 questionnaires per school. 45 schools returned 534 completed or partially completed questionnaires. The school selection process was based pro-rata on the number of schools in each strata. According to a calculating table provided by Malhotra (2003, p. 376) this gives a range of error for percentage estimates near five percent (or 95 percent accuracy) with a plus or minus (+/-) of two percent.

5.4.5 Sampling Process

Execution of the sample process requires a detailed specification of how the sampling design decisions with respect to the “population, sampling frame, sampling unit, sampling technique and sampling size” are to be implemented (Malhotra, 2003, p. 332). For this purpose the target element (the student) were defined as those who filled out the CAO Form for admission to third level education. A postal questionnaire was sent to the Career Guidance Counsellors with a covering letter (see appendix D) and an
instructional leaflet (see appendix E) explaining the objectives of the study and providing instructions on the administration of the questionnaires. A self-stamped addressed envelope was also included in an effort to increase response rate.

5.5 The Survey Instrument – Questionnaire

5.5.1 Information Determination (Youngman, 1982)

The first stage of the design process was to determine what type of information was sought by the questionnaire. It was divided into three sections:

(i) Demographic information;
(ii) Information on career choice and perceptions towards careers chosen with specific reference to a career within the Hotel and Catering Industry;
(iii) Information to ascertain the influential people and factors on the students’ career choices.

The second phase, once realising the type of information being sought, was to construct the questions. The questions constructed were all structured using multiple choice and dichotomous questions. The use of ordinary words was utilised with ambiguity avoided in order to deter confusion. The author paid particular attention to avoid leading or biased questions. Implicit alternatives and implicit assumptions along with generalisations and estimations were also avoided.

5.5.2 Design

The questionnaires were both structured and direct.

"Structure refers to the degree to which the questions and possibly responses are formal and standardised, while directness refers to the degree to which the
respondent is made aware of the purpose for which the questionnaire is being administered” (Weiers, 1988, p. 256).

Data collected by this type of questionnaire have the advantage of being relatively easy to record, tabulate and analyse, since the information is received in a form that readily lends itself to coding and cross tabulation. The strong degree of standardisation in this approach also tends to provide reliable survey results as the respondents receive exactly the same questions, in the same order and with the same possible answers (Youngman, 1982).

5.6 Instrument Testing – Pilot

The draft questionnaires were tested on a small sample of respondents, one group of 12 students in an all girls’ school and a similar group in an all boys’ school in February of 2003. This was done in order to get a concentrated view of difficulties either gender may experience. The author undertook this task personally in order to gain insights that might otherwise have been lost.

The objectives of this pilot study were to:

(i) determine the appropriateness of the test material;
(ii) assess the presentation format;
(iii) identify any test items which were a source of confusion or difficulty for the respondents;
(iv) examine the clarity and the comprehensiveness of the instructions;
(v) obtain a time estimate for the administration and completion of the questionnaires.

An outside opinion was sought from Dr. Marian Rabbitte, an experienced and well-respected Career Guidance Counsellor. Dr. Rabbitte provided valuable advice on the questionnaire design, drawing from her extensive experience with second level students and their comprehension and concentration abilities.
It was decided that a number of minor changes had to be made in the wording and design of some questions. It also appeared necessary to include a list of courses and course codes from the CAO booklet as students could not recall precisely the information needed. This pilot revealed that each questionnaire took an average of 20 minutes to complete. The outcome of the pilot study together with the opinion of Dr. Rabbitte led to the final draft (as in appendix A).

5.7 The Design of the Cover Letter

The primary objective of the cover letter was to give the respondents some background information on the survey. It identified the researcher and the aim and objectives of the survey. It included an assurance that all information given as part of the survey would be treated with the strictest confidence. It included a contact address and telephone number in case any extra information was required. The cover letter also included an incentive for the guidance counsellors who administered and returned the questionnaires. The purpose of including the incentive, a weekend for two in a Jurys Doyle hotel, was to increase the response rate. The letter also made reference to Dr. Marian Rabbitte's assistance with the survey in an effort to increase the response rate as Dr. Rabbitte is well know within the I.G.C. of Ireland. Last but not least it included a “thank you” to each person for completing the questionnaire.

5.8 Validity and Reliability

According to Gill and Johnson (1991, p. 435) the following evaluation criteria can be used in evaluation:

(i) “internal validity: this criterion refers to whether or not, what is identified as the course(s) or stimuli actually produce what have been interpreted as the effects or responses;
(ii) external validity: generally this refers to the extent to which any research findings can be generalised or extrapolated beyond the immediate research sample or setting in which the research took place;

(iii) reliability: this criterion basically refers to the consistency of results obtained in research. To satisfy this criterion it should be possible for another researcher to replicate the original research using the same subjects and the same research design under the same conditions”.

The qualities displayed in this research give it much strength in external validity and reliability. In the case of the author, the survey entailed the careful random selection of variables that enable results to be generalised to wider populations with a high degree of confidence. Concurrently, using a highly structured questionnaire to gather data in a form that is qualitatively analysable, survey based research is visually regarded as easily replicable and hence reliable (Gill and Johnson, 1991).

5.9 Focus Groups

Focus Groups are defined by Malhotra (2003, p. 160) as:

“A discussion conducted by a trained moderator in a non-structured and natural manner with a small group of respondents”.

The purpose of the focus groups was to provide a forum where insights could be gained by creating a relaxed atmosphere where respondents could reflect and portray their feelings and behaviour, at their own pace and using their own language and logic.

The key benefit of this is that the group members ‘feed’ off of one another and creatively reveal ideas that may not have been conveyed in the questionnaire. Numbers in this study were limited to between 10 and 12 students so as to allow for sufficient numbers to generate a group dynamic and response, but still allow for each member of the focus group to feel relaxed and interact with the other members. Focus groups work
best in a location where the respondents feel at ease, and to this end, the discussions took place within the school environment.

According to Malhotra, (2003 p162) there are both advantages and disadvantages to using focus groups over other data collection techniques.

**Advantages of Focus Groups**

- **Synergy** – Putting a group together will produce a wider range of information, insight and ideas that an individual response
- **Snowballing** – A bandwagon effect often operates in a group situation, where one comment triggers another.
- **Stimulation** – Respondents express more views as the general level of excitement rises
- **Security** – There is a feeling of ‘belonging’ within the group, due to their similar feeling on issues arising from the discussion
- **Spontaneity** – As there are no specific questions, responses can be spontaneous and unconventional.
- **Serendipity** – Ideas are more likely to arise spontaneously within a group than in an individual interview.
- **Specialisation** – As a number of respondents are involved simultaneously, the use, and associated cost, of an interviewer can be justified.
- **Scientific Scrutiny** – Group discussion allows for the close scrutiny of the data collected through the use of recording, which can be validated and interpreted by others if required.
- **Structure** – The group structure allow for flexibility in the topics covered and the depth in which they are explored.
- **Speed** – As a number of individuals are being interview together, data collection and analysis can proceed relatively quickly.

**Disadvantages of Focus Groups**

Misjudgement – The result from a focus group can be misjudged more easily, and can be susceptible to bias.
Moderation – Focus groups, can be difficult to moderate and much depends on the chemistry of the group

Messines – The unstructured nature of the responses makes coding and analysis more difficult.

Misrepresentation – Focus groups concentrate on distinct target groups, trying to generalise to wider groups can be misleading

Meeting – It can be difficult to get respondents together at the same time and place, which was not an issue in this study as respondents were all available during school hours in the school environment

5.10 Limitations of Methodology

During the course of conducting the research, the author has noted a number of potential research limitations, which could possibly undermine the quality and accuracy of the findings presented in this report.

(i) Time and Cost Limitations: the research process would have been expanded to incorporate a larger sample as well as offering the possibility of researching the experiences of more individuals within the industry, if additional time and resources were available to the researcher.

(ii) Sample versus Population: because a random sample was chosen over the entire population of Leaving Certificate students and this was narrowed to those who intended entering further education, the research may have suffered for non-response error i.e. the responses of those who did not participate in the questionnaire and interviews may have differed from those who did.

(iii) Choice of Primary Data Collection: the researcher acknowledges that the choice of a postal survey in preference to an in-depth interview may have weakened the opportunity to gain a richer insight of the qualitative data gathered.

(iv) Incomplete Questionnaires: not all the questionnaires were fully completed. This might be because respondents felt that some of the information was confidential and personal. Other possibilities are that the respondents might not have fully understood the question or have had some other reasoning e.g. lack of
time for filling in the questionnaire. However, the questions that were answered proved to be valid.

(v) Response Bias: another limitation might be respondent bias resulting from the fact that usually those who have the strongest opinions on issues answer surveys.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has described the conceptual framework within which the study has developed, providing details on the research design chosen and details of the methodology selected to carry out the research. The following chapter presents the findings obtained through primary research.
Chapter Four: Findings of Primary Research

4.1 Findings from Student Questionnaire
4.2 Findings from Career Guidance Counsellors’ Questionnaire
4.3 Findings from Focus Groups
4.4 Conclusion
This chapter will take all three mediums of the primary research, namely the student questionnaire, the career guidance counsellors' questionnaire and the focus groups and present them in data format. The findings will not be analysed at this point but will be in the following chapter when they are analysed by way of comparison with chapter two the literature already in existence on this area.

4.1 Findings of Student Questionnaire

4.1.1 Individual Question Findings

Of the 880 students surveyed 534 returned completed or partially completed questionnaires. The following are the results.

Question one required respondents to give the name and address of their school, no analysis of this question is necessary.

Question two required respondents to identify their school type. Of the 534 respondents 318 (59.5%) were in secondary schools, 120 (22.5%) were in vocational schools, 48 (9%) were in comprehensive and 48 (9%) in community schools.

Question three required the identification of the school size. 28 (5.2%) responding students were in schools of 100 to 250 enrolled students; 236 (44.2%) respondents were in schools with 260 to 500 enrolled students; 168 (31.5%) respondents were in schools with 500 to 750 enrolled students, and 102 (19.1%) students were in schools with 750 plus enrolled students.

Question four required the identification of the school location. 174 (32.6%) students were in schools located in a city; 264 (49.4%) students were in towns, and 96 (18%) responding students were in schools in a rural area.
Question five required identification of the population of the area in which the respondents attended school. 172 (32.2%) respondents were in an area with less than 5,000; 166 (31.1%) were in an area with 5001 to 25,000; 22 (4.1%) respondents were in an area with 25,000 to 50,000; 24 (4.5%) students were in an area with 50,000 to 100,000; 102 (19.1%) students were in an area with 100,000 to 500,000, and 48 (9%) respondents were in an area with one million plus.

Question six required respondents to identify the number of higher-level and ordinary level subjects they were undertaking for the Leaving Certificate. Table 4.1 is the breakdown from zero higher-level subjects to eight higher-level subjects and table 4.2 is the breakdown for the ordinary level subjects.

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<tr>
<th>No of Higher Level Subjects</th>
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<td>22</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Table 4.1 Number of higher-level subjects taken by students for Leaving Certificate

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<tr>
<td>9.00</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>534</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Number of ordinary-level subjects taken by students for Leaving Certificate
Question seven required respondents to identify the socio-economic background of their family. 74 (13.8%) respondents were from middle class backgrounds; 228 (42.7%) respondents were from lower middle class backgrounds; 136 (25.5%) respondents were from skilled working class backgrounds; 86 (16.1%) respondents were from working class backgrounds, and 10 (1.9%) were from subsistence level backgrounds.

Question eight required respondents to indicate if they had chosen on their CAO form a course in Hotel and Catering Management. 74 (13.8%) said yes, and 460 (86.2%) said no they had not chosen a course in the Hotel and Catering Industry.

Question nine required respondents to identify why they selected a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry. A number of headings were given, and using the Likert scale, respondents were required to rate the importance of that heading as a reason for choosing such a career. For the heading **pay and benefits** 34 respondents indicated this to be most important and 16 indicating it to be important. For the heading **personal interest** 42 respondents indicated this to be most important with 10 indicating important. For the heading **image of the profession** 12 indicated this to be most important in choosing a course in the industry with 14 indicting this to be important and 42 indicating this to be either not important or very unimportant. For the heading **hours and conditions of work** 16 respondents said it was very important with six indicating important; 30 indicted this to be not important and 20 indicated this to be very unimportant. For the heading **parents and counsellors influence** 14 indicated this to be most important in selecting such a career, eight indicated important and 40 indicated very unimportant. For the heading **training and development** 22 indicated this to be most important factor in selecting this industry with 16 indicating important and 28 indicated not important or very unimportant. And finally, for the heading **travel opportunities** 42 respondents indicated this to be most important or important with 20 respondents indicating this to be not important or very unimportant.

Question 10 required respondents who did not select a career within the Hotel and Catering Industry to indicate why. Again a number of headings were provided and respondents had to, using the Likert scale, rate the importance of each heading in not selecting such a career. For the heading **pay and benefits** 176 respondents said it was most important and 90 indicted important in not selecting a career within the sector,
with 68 respondents indicating not important or very unimportant. For the heading personal interest 336 respondents indicted this to be most important and 34 indicated this to be important in not selecting a career in this sector. Under the heading image of the profession 122 respondents indicted this to be most important with 100 saying this was important in not choosing a career within this sector. 156 indicated this to be not important or very unimportant in their decision. For the heading hours and conditions of work 182 respondents indicated this to be most important and 66 indicated this to be important in their decision, and 108 indicated this to be not important or very unimportant in the decision-making process. Under the heading parents and counsellors influence 64 said this was most important and 54 indicted important with 248 indicating this to be not important or very unimportant when not choosing a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry. For the heading training and development 84 respondents indicted most important and 68 indicated important with 186 indicting this to be not important or very unimportant when not selecting a career in the sector. And finally, for the heading travel opportunities 54 indicated this to be most important and 44 indicated this to be important in not selecting the industry as a career and 250 indicated this to be not important or very unimportant in not selecting the industry.

Question 11 required respondents to indicate wheather they are now or had in the past worked in the industry. Of the 526 respondents who answered this question 244 (46.4%) said they had worked in the industry with 282 (53.6%) indicating they had not.

Question 12 required respondents who had worked in the industry (those who answered yes to question 11 – 244) to indicate wheather this work experience influenced them negatively or positively towards the industry. Of these respondents 210 (86%) had been influenced negatively towards the industry and 34 (14%) had been influenced positively.
Question 13 required respondents to indicate who or what influenced them most in their career or CAO choice. The following table shows the results (1 is most important influential factor, or influential person; and nine is least important influential factor, or influential person).

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<thead>
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<th>Influential Factor</th>
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<th>3rd</th>
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<td>Teachers</td>
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<td>Range of Optional Subjects</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Material or Leaflets</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>Family Financial Means</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Influential Factors for School Leavers in Career/CAO Choice

Question 14 required respondents, if they had selected a career within the Hotel and Catering Industry (of which there were 74), and had been influenced by family or friends in doing so, to indicate if these influencing people are now, or had in the past, worked in the industry. 30 (40.5%) respondents indicated their family or friends were in the industry right now; 16 (21.6%) indicated family or friends had in the past worked in the industry, and 28 (37.9%) indicated that family or friends had never worked in the industry.

Question 15 required respondents, if they had not selected a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry (of which there were 460), and had been influenced by family in friends in not doing so, to indicate if these influencing people, are now, or had in the past, worked in the industry. 50 (10.9%) respondents indicated that family or friends were right now working in the industry; 108 (20.2%) respondents indicated family or friends had in the past worked in the industry, with 302 (68.9%) indicating family or friends had never worked in the industry.

Question 16 required respondents to identify their gender. 202 (38%) respondents were male and 332 (62%) respondents were female.
And finally question 17 required respondents to give any further comments they may wish to include. A sample of these comments can be found in appendix F.

4.1.2. Cross Tabulation Findings

The following information was possible through cross tabulation.

**Cross tabulations of those who selected a career within the Hotel and Catering Industry**

Of those respondents who did select Hotel and Catering Management as a career choice on their CAO application form, of which there were 74, 20 (27%) were male and 54 (73%) were female.

Of these 74 respondents 38 (51.4%) were located in a city, 22 (29.7%) were located in a town, and 14 (18.9%) were located in a rural area.

18 respondents (24.3%) were from a school with 250 to 500 enrolled students, 34 (45.9%) were in schools with 500 to 750 enrolled students, and 22 (21.6%) were in schools with 750 plus enrolled students.

In looking at the socio-economic background of these respondents who selected this sector, 10 (13.5%) were from the socio-economic group B (middle class), 20 (27%) were from group C1 (lower middle class), 30 (40.5%) were from group C2 (skilled middle class), and 14 (18.9%) were from the socio economic group D (working class).

In looking at the achievement levels of these students, 16 (21.6%) students were attempting one or two higher level subjects; 22 (29.7%) were attempting three or four higher level subjects; 14 (18.9%) were attempting five higher level subjects; 16 (21.6%) were attempting six higher level subjects, and only four students out of these 74 respondents were attempting seven or eight higher level subjects.
30 (44.2%) of these respondents who did select this sector said there parents or friends were the most influential factor in doing so, with a further 16 (23.6%) indicating their parents or friends to be influential in their career choice. And of these who said they were at some level influenced by parents or friends in making this decision, 100 percent of respondents said their parents or friends are working, or had worked, in the industry.

Of the 74 respondents, 54 (73%) are at present working in the industry in some capacity with 20 (27%) not working, or have never worked, in the industry. Following on from this, 40 (74.1%) of these respondents with industry experience indicated their work experience influenced them positively towards the industry and 14 (25.9%) said there experience influenced them negatively towards the industry.

Of these 74 respondents 50 (67.5%) rated pay and benefits in the range from important to most important as a factor in choosing the industry.

From the factor personal interest 52 (70.2%) rated this to be important or most important when making their career choice to enter this sector.

For the factor image of the profession 26 (35.1%) rated this to be most important or important when making their career choice, with 34 (45.9%) rating this from not important to least important.

For the factor hours and conditions of work 22 (29.7%) rated this from important to most important when making the decision to enter the sector, with 34 (45.9%) rating this from not important to least important.

For the factor training and development 38 (51.3%) rated this factor in the range important to most important when deciding to enter this sector.

For the factor travel opportunities 42 (56.7%) rated this in the important to most important range.
Cross tabulations of those who did not select a career within the Hotel and Catering Industry

Under the heading **image of the profession** 51.1 percent of respondents rated this factor in the range of *important to most important* in not choosing this career.

Under the heading **parents and counsellors influence** only 27.9 percent rated this factor in the range *important to most important* in not choosing this sector.

For the heading **hours and conditions of work** 58.3 percent rated this hading under the range *important to most important* as a factor when not choosing this industry.

Under the heading **personal interest** 82.6 percent rated this ranging from *important to most important* in their decision not to enter the Hotel and Catering Industry.

And for the heading **pay and benefits** 63.1 percent rated within the range *important to most important* in their decision not to enter the sector.

For those respondents who did not choose the industry as a career choice, but had some experience working in the sector (198 respondents), 93.3 percent of these respondents indicated this work experience influenced them *negatively* towards the profession.

General cross tabulation of all respondents

Looking at the socio-economic background of respondents against achievement levels of all respondents: 70.2 percent of those students from a middle class background were undertaking six or more higher level papers in their Leaving certificate; 53.5 percent of students from lower middle class backgrounds were studying six or more higher level papers; 36.8 percent of students from skilled working class backgrounds were undertaking six or more higher level papers, with just 21 percent of students from a working class background undertaking six or more higher level papers in the Leaving Certificate. No students from a background of subsistence level were taking six or more higher-level papers.
Looking at students who rated family background as the most influential factor in making a career decision, 78.8 percent were from a middle class background. Only 28.3 percent of students from a working class background rated family background as the most influential factor, with only 6.5 percent of those from a subsistence level background rating family background as an influential factor in career choice.

Of those respondents who rated family background as the most influential factor in making a career choice, 37.9 percent were male and 62.1 percent were female.

Of those respondents who rated friends as the most influential factor in career choice, 57.1 percent were male and 42.9 percent were female.

Of those who selected college open/information days as most influential in making a career choice, 32 percent were male and 68 percent were female.

Of those who said written material or career leaflets were most influential in making a career choice, 34.2 percent were male and 65.8 percent were male.

Of those who rated career guidance counsellors as most influential, 46.2 percent were male and 53.8 percent were female.

Of those who said parents were the most influential factor, 41 percent were male and 59 percent were female.

Looking at the achievement levels of both male and female respondents, 24.3 percent of males were undertaking six or more higher-level papers in the Leaving certificate with 75.7 percent of females undertaking six or more higher-level papers.
4.2 Findings of Career Counsellors Questionnaire

Of the 80 schools surveyed 45 responded, thus 45 career guidance counsellors completed a questionnaire. The following information was obtained.

Question one was a general question requiring the name and the address of the school; no analysis of this question is required.

Question two required the identification of school type. Of the 45 respondents, 26 (57.8%) were secondary schools, ten (22.2%) were vocational schools, five (11.1%) were comprehensive schools and 4 (8.9%) were community schools.

Question three required identification of school size. The majority of schools had 250-750 enrolled students with 35 (77.7%) schools in these two categories. There were two (4.4%) schools of 101-250 size, and eight (17.8%) schools of 750 plus size.

Question four required identification of school location. 15 (33.3%) were located in a city, 22 (48.9%) in a town, with 8 (17.8%) located in a rural area.

Question five required identification of population of the area. 12 (26.7%) were located in an area with less than 5,000 people; 18 (40%) in an area with 5,000 to 25,000; 2 (4.4%) in an area with 25,000 to 50,000; nine (20%) in an area with 100,000 to 500,000; and four (8.9%) in an area with one million or more.

Question six required the gender of the school. Eight (17.8%) were all boys’ schools; 16 (5.6%) were all girls, while 21 (46.7%) were co-educational.

Question seven required identification of socio-economic class of students within the school. Five (11.1%) schools had mainly middle class students; 28(62.2%) schools had mainly lower middle class students; 10(22.2%) schools had mainly skilled working class students, while two (4.4%) schools had mainly working class students.
Question eight required the counsellor to identify from a number of headings, using the Likert scale to rate importance, in their opinion, the factors most influential on students when making a career choice.

<table>
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Table 4.4 Influential Factors on Students when Making a Career Choice

Question nine required counsellors to indicate their perceptions of the Hotel and Catering Industry under a range of headings, again using the Likert scale. Under the heading pay, no respondent rated the industry as excellent; eight rated the industry very good for pay; 16 rated the industry as good; 12 rated fair and nine rated the industry poor for pay. Under the heading benefits package: two rated the industry as excellent; four rated very good; 24 rated good; 13 rated fair while two rated poor. Under the heading image of the industry: none of the respondents rated the image of the industry as excellent; eight rated very good; 16 rated good; 15 rated fair while six rated the industry as poor. Under the heading hours and conditions of work: no respondents rated the industry as excellent; two rated the industry as very good; six rated the industry...
as good; eight rated the industry as fair, while 29 rated the industry as poor. Under the heading training and development opportunities: six rated the industry as excellent; 16 rated as very good; 12 rated as good; nine rated as fair, and two rated the industry as poor. And finally under the heading travel opportunities: 25 respondents rated the industry as excellent; six rated the industry as very good; eight rated the industry as good, while six rated the industry as fair.

Question 10 required respondents to rate the importance of a list of characteristics in order to enter the Hotel and Catering Industry. The Likert scale was used in order to rate these characteristics. The following are the results: when asked how important physical strength was in order to enter the Hotel and Catering Industry 25 respondents indicated it was most important with 14 indicating it was important. For the characteristic being assertive four indicated it was most important while 12 indicated it was important with 20 indicating it was neither important nor unimportant. For the characteristics being intelligent or having a high IQ no respondent indicated it was most important, 18 indicated it was important with 21 indicating it was neither important nor unimportant. For the characteristic being a good listener 10 indicated it was most important with 20 indicating it was important and 12 responding neither important nor unimportant. For being assertive eight responded most important with 29 indicating it was important. For the characteristic being a team player 22 indicated this as most important with 19 indicating it was important. For the characteristic having a diploma or degree only four indicated it was most important and 15 indicated it was important with 14 indicating it was neither important nor unimportant and 12 responded unimportant. For being caring four indicated it was most important with 14 saying it was important and 12 indicating it was neither important nor unimportant. For the characteristics being business minded 15 indicated it was most important with 22 indicating it was important. For numerical ability two respondents indicated this as most important with 19 indicating it was important. For verbal ability 15 indicated this to be most important with 22 indicated it to be important. And finally for perceptual ability two indicated it was most important with 28 indicating it was important while six indicated it was neither important nor unimportant.

Question 12, the final question for the career guidance counsellor, required the respondent, in their opinion, to rate the status or image of the hotel and catering industry
as a career choice among school leavers. No respondents awarded a status of very high and no respondents awarded a status of high. 10(22.2%) respondents awarded a medium status with 33(73.3%) respondents awarding a low status and two (4.4%) awarding a status of very low.

Some of the pertinent findings from the above questionnaires where then presented to the students who participated in the focus groups in order to probe the findings further. The following information was ascertained from this.

4.3.1 Focus Group A - Vocational School

This vocational school is situated in a small town in the south east of Ireland. It is an all-boys school with a student enrolment of circa 230 students. The socio-economic background tends be lower middle class with the majority of students coming from large farming backgrounds.

The students were probed on a number of issues that became apparent from the questionnaires. The following is the findings from this focus group of 10 students.

From the questionnaires, student and counsellor, the findings showed a poor image of the Hotel and Catering Industry in Ireland. Upon probing of this, students indicated that this was as a result of their picture of the industry portrayed to them, sometimes through their own personal experiences on weekend and summer work, but more interestingly, through the media. Such programmes as the Des Bishop Show aired recently on TV3 where the comedian’ work in an hotel was recorded and aired in a documentary format; and the host of cheffing programmes, which portray the industry to be rushed and panicked. Also reports in the printed media were influential in painting the industry in a bad light. When students were probed on what constitutes a “poor image” such variables as: long hours; stressful on-the-spot work; poor pay for the level of effort required; night-time work and unsociable hours, and dealing with difficult customers were all cited.
When students were probed on other factors, which contributed to their picture of the industry as a poor career choice, two variables became apparent quite strongly. First, the feedback received from friends who had worked in the industry. If they themselves didn’t have first hand experience of the industry there was a strong likelihood that a close friend had. This proved very influential in forming an opinion of the industry, especially if their experiences were negative, and in most cases their experiences were, in fact, negative. And second, the experiences of their parents or family members. Parents tended to give the most negative advice about the industry, not necessarily from they themselves having worked in the industry at some point in their careers, but from frequenting hotels and seeing staff over worked and quite stressed while on duty.

One of the main influential factors on students when choosing a career tended to be their own personal interest. When this was probed some rich information was communicated. When asked where this personal interest came from students indicated that “personal interest comes from what you know, what you think you might like and be good at”. When this was probed it became apparent that teachers were very influential in this area. If a student was studying biology or social science or a business subject and they were good at such a subject where the teacher recognised this and gave advice to enter a career in this field, they tended to take this advice on board. When questioned why they took the advice of the teacher over the advice of the guidance counsellor they responded saying “the teacher knows us better, they are in class with us every day and they get to know our strengths and weaknesses better that the career guidance counsellor”.

When probed on the importance of written material as being influential in making a career choice they indicated that the college prospectus was the main piece of written material consulted. They viewed this as a vital tool in the decision-making process, but indicated that sometimes this should be supplemented with other written material, more specific material on a particular course they may have an interest in. Students did indicate a complete shortage of written material on careers in the hotel and catering industry, saying without this specialised material they could not make an informed career choice. They also viewed college open days as a vital step in the career decision-making process; such trips gave them first hand information on the college; course and the general feel for the third level institute.
4.3.2 Focus Group B – Secondary School

This secondary school is situated in a city in the south east of Ireland. It is an all-girls school with a student enrolment of circa 400 students. The socio-economic background tends be upper middle class with the majority of students coming from large farming backgrounds and professional career tracts.

The students were probed on a number of issues that became apparent from the questionnaires. The following is the findings from this focus group of 12 students.

When students were asked about the apparent lack of interest in the industry as a career choice students responded saying that the conditions of work were perceived to be too difficult. The conditions indicated were long hours, poor pay, too much night time work with unsocialable work, and high stress levels. Again these images of the industry were communicated via the media, friends and most importantly through family and their own experiences either working or socialising in hospitality operations. Interestingly in this secondary school it came across quite strongly that the career guidance counsellor did not favour this career choice for girls with the response being “the career guidance counsellor would never recommend it and advises against it if we expressed an interest”.

Quite a lot of these students appeared to have part-time work in the industry. When probed on their experiences the majority indicated that the pay was in fact quite good for part-time work but there were also problems in getting paid on time and getting the right amount of over-time, they indicated they got the impression that hotels were always trying to “fiddle” them out of what there were entitled to financially. Following on from this they communicated that from speaking to junior managers in these operations they got the impression that the pay was in fact quite poor for full-time members of the management team. They also noted that the full-time members of staff and management tended to be under severe pressure quite a lot. They went on to say,
“trainee and junior managers got the undesirable jobs and were over worked with little
thanks evident”.

When probed on the factors that influence their career-choice one of the most influential
factors tended to be the advice of their parents. It should be noted that quite a lot of
these students came from professional background such as doctors, dentists and
solicitors. They did not feel the career guidance counsellor was influential and when
probed on this they indicated that the counsellor didn’t know them personally and
because of this could not give appropriate advice for a particular individual. One
student said “how could the career guidance counsellor know what job I’m suited to,
she doesn’t even know my name”. These students also indicated written material and
college open days as vital factors influencing career choice. They said sometimes their
only information on a career might be that obtained through the college prospectus or
leaflets given to them from the careers’ office.

4.3.3 Focus Group C – Community School

This community school is situated in the vicinity of the capital of Ireland. It is a co­
educational school with a student enrolment of circa 700 students. The socio­economic
background tends be middle class with some students coming from professional
backgrounds.

The students were probed on a number of issues that became apparent from the
questionnaires. The following is the findings from this focus group of 10 students.

Students were again probed on the image of the industry and it was again established
that a poor image of the industry existed among students. When probed on this, the
majority indicated that this was due to their own personal experiences working in hotel
and catering operations around the city. They said that the pay did not match the effort,
and the level of stress was far greater than that experienced working in a retail outlet
such as a clothes shop or a Londus or Spar. All students in the focus group who had
worked in the industry for part-time weekend or summer work were now working in
retail outlets. When probed on this they indicated “the regular hours and knowing what time you were going to finish work” was a major influential factor in leaving the hotel and catering business and moving to retail outlets.

When asked about the role parents or other family members played in creating an image of the industry participants said that advice given was usually negative though two participants indicated parents had highlighted the fact that it was a sector constantly needing staff and employment prospects were always good. When probed on this it became evident that both these students were from a substance level background on the socio-economic ladder.

Students also indicated that they felt the poor image came somewhat from the media again mentioning some recent programmes on the TV. Two students in the group had selected a career in hotel and catering management on their CAO application form but when probed on this they did not like the industry having worked in restaurants and left them but did so in order to facilitate travel abroad.

When participants were probed on the influential factors when making a career choice a few interesting pieces of information came to light. The majority felt that the more option subjects available in the school the wider choices available. In other words if there was a large choice of subjects to choose from for the leaving certificate the greater the choices then available when selecting a course form the CAO application. Participants also felt that family background and financial means of the family plays an important role in career choice with the majority of the group saying “if your parents were professionals such as doctors or solicitors a student tended to choose a career within the same field”. Students also felt that teachers were more influential that career guidance counsellors as they were in class with them every day and were more likely to know what suited their personalities better.
Conclusion

This primary research is presented above in data format. Chapter five will analyse the information, compare it to research already in existence in the field of career choice and occupational decision-making and make comment on the more pertinent findings as they accord with or refute research already in the general domain.
Chapter Five – Empirical Analysis

5.1 Career Choices among School Leavers
5.2 The Decision-Making Process
5.3 Image of the Industry
5.4 General Analysis
This chapter will focus on findings of the research study. Specifically it will examine these in relation to the literature reviewed and present evidence to support or refute the research tasks presented in chapter three.

5.1 Career Choices among School Leavers

From this research Administration/Business (21.39%), Engineering/Technology (14.5%) and Arts/Social Science (29.6%) emerged as the most popular choices of students today. This is in line with present trends as tracked and documented by the Central Applications Office (1999). This research shows a moderate interest in Hotel and Catering Management (13.8%) and supports Cronin et al (2000) in their research findings, which documents a declining interest in hospitality courses throughout the country. Williams (1995) also recorded a decline of over 60 percent in those registering with hospitality employment agencies in the two-year period 1992-1994 in the United Kingdom.

Bereznicki and Lloyd (1998) in their research document the importance of employers placing a greater emphasise on personnel development and highlight the fact that nowadays employees are not just looking for financial remuneration. This is supported in this body of research where findings show 51.3 percent of students who selected the Hotel and Catering Industry rated training and development as most important or important in doing so. This is an interesting finding as it clearly shows respondents interest in the area of training and development. But on review of secondary research conducted, and the authors own personal experience of 12 years working in the industry, the industry does not have a favourable image as an industry for comprehensive training and development. This supports Barron and Maxwell (1993) when they document that in the United States graduate transfer and retention in the industry is low. Such low interest is accredited to absence of training, acceptable working conditions and benefits and a perception that such jobs are not desirable (Barron and Maxwell, 1993; Getz, 1994; Owens, 1997).
5.2 The Decision-Making Process

It must not be overlooked that an individual never reaches the ultimate decision in a single moment of time, but through a series of decisions over a period of many years. (Ginzberg et al, 1951). According to Payne (1982) occupational decision-making occurs in many different contexts, and the information required is highly dependent on the demands of the particular situation. From the primary research it is evident that there are a number of factors involved in the occupational decision-making process.

5.2.1 Parental and Counsellor Influence on Decision Making Process

One of the most interesting factors is that of parental and career guidance counsellors’ influence, with only 29.7 percent of those students who selected a career within the Hotel and Catering Industry rating parents and counsellors influence from important to most important while 54 percent rated their influence very unimportant. With those respondents who did not select this sector as a career choice only 25.6 percent rated parents and counsellors’ influential from important to most important and 53.9 percent of these students rated parents and counsellors not important or very unimportant. In question 13 only 22.8 percent rated parents as the most influential factor in career or CAO choice and 9.7 percent rated career guidance counsellors as the most influential factor. From the counsellors themselves only four (8.8%) indicated they themselves were most influential on the career choice of school leavers and only 12(28.8%) indicated influential. Only 12(28.8%) of counsellors rated parents as most influential with 19(42.2%) rating parents influential.

This refutes the secondary research findings from Bregman and Killen (1999); Middleton and Loughead (1993); and Taylor (1992) who documents the importance and the role of parents in career choice and the value placed on such advice by students, but supports findings by Nucci (1996); Smetana (1989) and Asquith (1994) who all found that adolescents judged parents to have jurisdiction over moral and conventional issues, but viewed personal decisions as outside parental authority.
Interestingly from the focus group discussion participants indicated parents to be influential in the career making decision process but were very clear in indicating that career guidance counsellors were not influential. Participants appeared to be somewhat negative towards counsellors in all focus groups with clear opinions on the lack of ability of the counsellor to make career recommendations due to the counsellor’s lack of personal knowledge of the individual student. This supports the findings of a study by Ferris State University (2002) where American students perceived a lack of career guidance in their schools, with just 10 percent indicating school personnel had played the primary role in their career guidance.

5.2.2. Influence of Friends on Decision Making Process

Also in evidence in this research is the role friends play in the process of career choice. Only 9.3 percent of respondents rated friends from influential factor or most influential factor. This supports secondary research findings where Taylor (1992) found only 18 percent of respondents indicated friends had a lot of influence. Interestingly in the focus group research the majority of male participants tended to indicate that friends’ opinions were influential in career choice. The majority of male participants appeared to favour advice rendered by close friends especially if they had experience in an area or had other friends or family with experience in that field. This refutes Taylor (1992) who concluded girls were particularly influenced by friends. All focus group participants indicated they would take the advice of a friend over a counsellor as the friend knew the personality of the individual making the career choice better than the career guidance counsellor. This in turn supports another finding of Taylor (1992) who concluded 82 percent of surveyed respondents indicated friends had some influence on the decision-making process. This may support the research by several academics who indicate the importance of knowing one’s self and having self knowledge before making a successful career decision (Taylor, 1992; Owen, 1992; Bareham and Arthur, 1993). It may be that students who are unsure of themselves tend to turn to the advice of friends, and anecdotally we know that males tend to be less confident and self assured than females during the teenage years.
5.2.3. The Role of Written Information/Leaflets on the Decision Making Process

Also evident is the role of written information and college open days in the process of career choice. 44.1 percent of respondents indicated written material or career leaflets influenced their career choice. Interestingly of those who said written material or career leaflets were influential in making a career choice 34.2 percent were male and 65.8 percent were female, clearly indicating female students placed greater importance on such publications. 30.3 percent of respondents rated college open or information days from important to most important in the decision-making process. It also became quite clear during all focus groups as to the importance of written material with some participants indicating that this material might be the only exposure of information available on a particular career path. Participants also indicated they felt college open days to be very helpful in making a decision but felt there were far few such trips provided by the careers offices in schools. Some interesting comments were registered in the comments section of the questionnaires when respondents were given the opportunity to comment specifically about the Hotel and Catering Industry with reference to information available.

"People do not know enough about what is involved in Hotel and Catering Management"

"I don’t know enough about Hotel and Catering Management to know if it is a suitable career for me"

"I am not interested in it, but it needs to be advertised more in schools as I don’t know what it’s about"

"I don’t know a lot about the career itself or the opportunities in the area; I would like it if there was more information available"

"I don’t fully understand what is involved in it, not enough information available"

"Not enough information in the information books"
This is in keeping with Cronin and Brennan (1999) who found that the college prospectus was the number one influential factor when deciding on a course in pursuit of a career.

5.2.4. The Influence of Family Background on Decision Making Process

The role of family background also proved to be moderately important for respondents when making a career choice. 29.5 percent of respondents rated this ranging from *important* to the *most important* factor when making a career choice. Interestingly 37.9 percent of these were male and 62.1 percent were female, clearly indicating that females were more likely to follow in the socio-economic background of their family. This is in line with research conducted by Kroger (1993) and Picklesimer et al. (1998).

5.2.5. The Role of Part-time Work on the Decision Making Process

The role of part-time work is also fundamental. Of the respondents 46.4 percent said they had work experience within the sector and 53.6 percent indicated they had not worked in the industry. Of those who had worked in the sector 86 percent indicated this experience had influenced them *negatively* towards the sector. Specifically for those respondents who did not choose the industry as a career choice, but had some experience working in the sector (198 respondents), 93.3 percent of these respondents indicated this work experience influenced them *negatively* towards the profession. This is emphasised by some student comments as follows:

"I have worked as a waitress and it negatively influenced me because of the hours"

"I would not consider working in this industry as having worked in an hotel for two months I feel that workers are treated badly by management"
“I have worked in an hotel and the management influenced me negatively towards the industry”

“I worked in a restaurant and the hours, pay and conditions put me off”

This all accords with secondary findings in Irish Marketing Survey (2000); Counsell (1996); Hodkinson (1995); Taylor (1992); Getz (1994) and Loughlin and Barling (1998) who all emphasis the importance of part-time work and its role in the occupational decision-making process. Barling et al., (1995) concluded from their research that the quantity of work engaged in had no effect on the teenagers self esteem, however the quality of work did. If the quality of work did not promote autonomy and role clarity it contributed to poor self esteem. There is extensive research some of which is cited in this research indicating the importance of self confidence and self esteem in the decision making process of a school leaver when making a career choice. In a study carried out by Counsel (1996) experiences of part-time work played an influential role on undergraduates surveyed. This work experience in the form of college placements, part-time jobs and summer work influenced the career-related thoughts of 26 percent of those surveyed. Hodkinson (1995) in her research found that work experience strongly influenced many pupils, some positively and some negatively, and cited one respondent comment as:

“Before I wanted to go into hotel work but I did my work experience and hated it” (Hodkinson 1995, p. 4).

Loughlin and Barling (1998) go on to say that employers need to be very cautious when employing students to ensure that the correct working conditions exist and the environment in which they work is conducive to learning and development. The majority of participants in the focus groups all indicated that working in hotels and restaurants tended to be unstructured and sometimes unsupervised with very poor working conditions. It must be noted at this juncture as to the importance of properly planned and executed work experience and part time jobs for teenagers in the Hotel and Catering Industry or the consequences for the individual and the industry will, in the long run, be negative.
5.2.6. The Role of Self Knowledge in Decision Making Process

Research conducted by Taylor (1992); Bareham and Arthur (1993), and Chapman (1983) all cite the importance of the school leaver having knowledge of self and self knowledge in order to make successful career choices. This is also evident in the primary research with participants in the focus groups indicating the importance of their own personal interest in making a career decision. This also accords with the questionnaire respondents. Of those who selected the Hotel and Catering Industry as a career path 70.2 percent rated personal interest as important or most important in doing so. Of those respondents who did not select the industry 80.4 percent rated personal interest as *important or most important* in not selecting this sector.

It is essential for adolescents to have developed self-confidence and interpersonal relations in order to give them the confidence to seek out the most effective and efficient information required to make an occupational decision (Taylor, 1992). Making a decision about post high school plans is a major problem-solving/decision-making process during adolescence (Picklesimer et al, 1998). An effective approach to deciding on careers and college majors is to provide adolescence with the opportunities to learn about themselves, their options, and decision-making strategies (Sampson et al, 1992). Career choices are best made by integrating what one knows about one’s self and about different occupations and/or majors (Billups and Peterson, 1994). It is imperative then if school leavers are to make successful career choices that the correct environment is created in secondary schools with the correct level of support and information being provided, and following on from that the correct working environment is creating for adolescents when they partake in part-time employment.

Overall the findings in this research study of patterns of decision-making are in keeping with those discovered by Hodkinson (1995).

Hodkinson (1995) completed an investigation and discovered some patterns of decision-making, some very different from the technically rational assumptions of much current policy. In this research it was found that decisions were arrived at with:

(v) the help of close relatives or neighbours working in the field of interest;
practical experience through part-time work during weekends and holidays;

the existence of childhood ambitions and particular interests;

the need for training and direction.

Hodkinson (1995) identified three main qualities in the process:

that students were instrumental, to a greater or lesser extent, in determining what career they will eventually follow;

they had rational reasons for making their choices and for changing their minds; that is they choose jobs they knew a lot about or had experienced first hand themselves;

these rational decisions were pragmatic, although sometimes in a restricted and partly inadequate way.

5.3 Image of the Industry

According to SIPTU (2000) the perception of employment in the industry is one of servile in nature. In support of this, in this study Walsh (2000) talks of the image being a stumbling block in attracting students as they feel servile and inferior when serving there friends in bars and restaurants. This is again emphasised in this study with only 17.7 percent of career guidance counsellors rating the image as very good, 35.5 percent rating it good, and 46.6 percent rating it fair or poor. When counsellors were asked to rate the image of the industry according to student opinion, 73.3 percent of counsellors said the industry had a low status among school leavers. When those respondents who did select a career in this sector were asked to rate image of the profession as a factor in choosing this career only 16.2 percent said they selected the sector because of its image or status. Of those respondents who did not select this sector 48.2 percent indicated image of the profession to be important or most important in not doing so. To solidify this notion students recorded the following comments:

"The image of a career in this area is not a good one"
“Hotel and Catering Management has a bad image”

“Image needs to be upgraded, recognised by students as a lesser course”

This is in keeping with secondary findings such as Price (1994); Barron and Maxwell (1993); Getz (1994); Owens (1997); SIPTU (2000) and the Irish Marketing Survey (2000) who all document the fact that the industry suffers from a poor or inferior image and that this image is an obstacle in attracting students to the sector.

Factors contributing to this poor image were cited by students as hours and conditions, poor pay and benefit packages. Some comments were recorded as follows:

“It has the image of being very tough with long hours and unrewarding pay”

“To me the image of a career in Hotel and Catering Management doesn’t seem inviting because of the long unsociable hours”

“One visualises long working hours and exhausting work”

“Hotel and Catering Management has a bad image. Young people want well-paid jobs with regular hours”

“The industry has a bad image due to pay and hours of work”

“The pay is low, the working conditions are poor, the hours are unsociable and the job is viewed with contempt”

“The poor pay gives the industry a bad image”

Participants in the focus groups all indicated that unfair treatment of students while working part-time is a fundamental contributing factor to the poor image associated with the sector citing long hours, poor working conditions, inferior benefit packages and low rates of pay as factors creating the poor image. This supports secondary research
findings as documented by Iverson and Deery (1997); ITIC (1998); CERT (1996) and the Irish Marketing Survey (2000).

Following on from this is the perception of hours and conditions of work within the sector with 64.4 percent of counsellors rating the Hotel and Catering Industry as poor for this. From the student questionnaires of those respondents who selected a career within this sector only 12.6 percent indicated this factor to be the most important factor in doing so. In contrast to those respondents who did not select this sector 53.9 percent rated this factor to be important or most important in not doing so. With reference to pay and benefits 46.6 percent of counsellors rated this as fair or poor. Interestingly 45.9 percent of those entering the sector indicated this to be the most important factor in doing so. This must raise the question as to whether these students are completely informed as to all aspects of the industry. This is in complete contrast to those respondents who did not select the Hotel and Catering Industry as a career; with these respondents 57.8 percent rated the heading pay and benefits from important to most important in not selecting the sector. This supports findings by Lochman and Jafari (1996) who accredit low interest in the sector to unattractive payment and working hours.

5.4 General Analysis

In general, some of the findings in this study can be accorded to the secondary research.

Of those who selected Hotel and Catering Management as a career choice 73 percent were female and 27 percent were male. This is in keeping with research findings by CERT (2000) which documents the labour force within the industry consisting of 61 percent female and 39 percent male.

The Irish Marketing Survey (2000) documented low levels of respect from arrogant and disrespectful managers and supervisors as negative aspects of the industry. This also was evident in this study with students recording the following comments:
“Usually poor management, staff treated unfairly”

"Lack of respect from management"

"Management usually have little respect for junior staff"

"Also the way you get treated by management as merely a cog in the wheel of production would turn me off"

"People in high positions are not able to communicate with staff"

Herriot and Pemberton (1996) talk about the need for a better fit between work and the employee's personal life. This is also evident in this study with focus group participants making reference to the fact that employers have little regard for employee's personal time and call for such a culture to change. Some students commented:

"No time to play football"

"No free time"

"Can't plan your time off"

Torrington and Hall (1991) document the importance of formal qualifications before entering the industry. In this study counsellors do not seem to support this philosophy as they rate having a diploma or degree somewhat low on the list of necessary characteristics for hotel management with only 42.2 percent rating this as important or most important in order to enter the industry. Interestingly career guidance counsellors rate the characteristic of physical strength more important than having a diploma or degree with 86.6 percent of counsellors rating this characteristic as important or most important in order to enter the industry. Some comments by students also appear to be in line with the attitude of the counsellors. Such comments were recorded as follows:

"I feel Hotel and Catering Management has the image of being an easy option, that you don't need many brains"
"I feel that a degree isn't needed to work in an hotel"

The issue of social class and occupational decision-making was extensively documented in the secondary research by such researchers as Boudon (1974); Owen (1992); Lauder (1993); and Picklesimer et al. (1998) all of whom document the influence of the socio-economic background and the occupations of parents on the career paths of school leavers. This is also evident in this research with only 13.5 percent of respondents from a middle class socio-economic background selecting the Hotel and Catering Industry compared with 40.5 percent of respondents from a skilled middle class background selecting the sector.

Following on from this a correlation between socio-economic background and achievement levels can be made with students who selected the Hotel and Catering Industry as a career path. Of these students only 21.6 percent were electing to take six higher level papers in the Leaving certificate and only 5.4 percent were attempting seven higher level papers. We can then deduct that the Hotel and Catering sector does not, for the most part, attract high achieving students from the upper socio-economic groups. This directly supports findings by Boudon (1994) and Kroger (1993).

Looking at the socio-economic background of respondents against achievement levels of all respondents: 70.2 percent of those students from a middle class background were undertaking six or more higher level papers in their Leaving certificate; 53.5 percent of students from lower middle class backgrounds were studying six or more higher level papers; 36.8 percent of students from skilled working class backgrounds were undertaking six or more higher level papers, with just 21 percent of students from a working class background undertaking six or more higher level papers in the Leaving Certificate. No students from a background of subsistence level were taking six or more higher-level papers. This accords with research by Owen (1992); Kroger (1993); Picklesimer et al. (1998), and Ginter and Brown (1996) who all make reference to correlation between socio-economic background and high achievers where for the most part students from the higher social classes tended to be higher achievers and continue on to third level education.
Looking at students who rated family background as the most influential factor in making a career decision 78.8 percent were from a middle class background. Only 28.3 percent of students from a working class background rated family background as the most influential factor, with only 6.5 percent of those from a subsistence level background rating family background as an influential factor in career choice. This accords with research by Kroger (1993) who established the link between Fathers occupation and that of the career choice of the adolescent. Kroger’s (1993) findings show that when measures of scholastic ability were taken into account there were clear differences in credential success and subsequent occupational destination, determined by Fathers occupation, where Fathers occupation determined the social position of the family.

Of those who rated career guidance counsellors as most influential 46.2 percent were male and 53.8 percent were female. This accords with Taylor (1992) who found girls tended to react more positively to guidance received from counsellors.

**Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has presented an analysis of the primary and secondary research findings and discussed some of the pertinent information to emerge from both methods of research. Chapter six will draw conclusions and present some recommendations.
Chapter Six – Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions
6.2 Recommendations
This chapter will draw conclusion from this study bearing in mind both the primary and secondary data. Finally the author will present recommendations for future consideration.

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 The Hotel and Catering Industry

It can be concluded that the Hotel and Catering Industry is a sector of intense growth with predictions of greater labour supply needs for the coming years. It is an integral part of the Irish economy both from the point of Gross National Product and employment. However it is not without its challenges.

6.1.2 The Image of the Industry

It can be concluded that the industry suffers from a very poor image among present Leaving Certificate students, with those who did not choose a career path in the sector registering the poor image/status as one of their top reasons for not doing so. The industry also suffers from an inferior status among parents and counsellors. Several reasons emerge for this poor image including poor pay; long unsociable hours; poor working conditions; poor benefit packages; limited training and development and career advancement opportunities. One of the most fundamental reasons for such a poor image to emerge is the mistreatment of school students during work experience (weekend and summer work). 86 percent of students who had work experience in the industry indicated that this experience had influenced them negatively towards the sector.
6.1.3 Occupational Decision-Making

From both the primary and secondary data collected the author has identified two tiers of influential factors on the occupational decision-making process of students today. Tier one, the primary tier, consisted of such factors as parental influential and influence of work experience, and tier two, the secondary tier, consisted of such influential factors as the media and information, and availability of courses (see figure 6.1).

Primary Influential Factors

(i) Parents are one of the most influential factors in this process though care needs to be taken by parents so as not to exert undue pressure as this may have a negative influence.

(ii) The role of work experience is fundamental. As students gain practical experience within their field of interest they may be influenced positively or negatively by such experiences.

(iii) Friends and counsellors also play a part in this process, either from their own personal experiences or by their perceptions.

(iv) The social class of the student is also a major influential factor on career choice. There is evidence of those from middle class backgrounds normally opting for university and more professional occupations and those of lower classes inclined to stay within what is familiar to them in their social environment.

(v) The image/status attached to the course or profession chosen is also fundamental and is directly linked with that of social class.

(vi) Expectations of training and development and pay are core motivational factors in choosing careers today.
Secondary Influential Factors

(i) The media and their influence though advertising campaigns on television and in the newspapers.
(ii) The economy and whether there is a boom or a recession.
(iii) Size of secondary schools and the availability of electives.
(iv) Availability of courses and the number of place available on those courses.
(v) The financial costs associated with tuition fees and the costs involved in living away from home.
(vi) Location of third level institutions and the courses offered at the local college.
(vii) Childhood ambitions and vocational interests.
6.1.3 Training and Development

Training and development has emerged as a force in school leavers choosing a career path in the Hotel and Catering Industry today. However, from this study the author deduces that there are some misperceptions on the part of students and counsellors as to the reputation of the Hotel and Catering Industry for training and development. Students and counsellors appear to view the industry as one that provides good comprehensive training and development opportunities. From previous research and qualitative data collected from the industry, and from the authors own personal experiences both in Europe and the United States the author concludes that training and development practices in this sector are below standard and completely under-funded.

6.2 Recommendations

In light of this study and its findings the author calls for a full scale national research study to be carried out to investigate further perceptions towards the industry and the effect these perceptions are having on the ability of the industry to expand and grow in line with predictions. Some fundamental issues have been presented and in light of the importance of this sector to the Irish economy it would behove the Department of Tourism and the Department of Education to consider a national survey.

It is vital that all stakeholders realise the valuable asset of school students as potential employees and entrepreneurs. The treatment of these students must be improved. Though the IHF through their code of practice for the employment of school students are making strides to improve the plight of the student while on work experience a combined effort between the industry its professional bodies and third level education institutions is called for.

The image of the industry must be improved. If this sector is to attract the number of employees required for future growth and expansion, the status of employment within the sector must be improved. Employees must be treated in a more professional manner
with conditions of employment overhauled. The industry must address such issues as poor pay, poor working conditions, lack of training and development and sub-standard benefits packages.

A combined effort between the industry, its professional bodies and third level institutions is called for in order to impart information to schools. Counsellors and students appear to be misinformed on some aspects of the industry and a nation wide information blitz is obviously required. A number of students indicated a lack of information on this industry.

With the falling numbers applying to Hotel and Catering Management courses the author calls on third level institutions to become more market orientated towards attracting student applications. A new culture is called for in that it is no longer sufficient for colleges to wait for students to come to them. The institution must now go out and actively sell the courses within the faculties.

The lack of trust in career guidance counsellors must also be addressed. Students appear not to value the advice given by counsellors looking more to other teachers and friends. All secondary schools have guidance counsellors and it may be looked on as a wasted resource unless they are utilised and valued more by the students involved in the occupational decision-making process. Possibly more communication between students, counsellors and subject teachers may go some way to addressing the issue.
Bibliography


CHL Consulting Group.


Educational Service, Poole, p. 13.


Irish Marketing Surveys (2000). *Perceptions of the Hotel and Restaurant Trade as a Way of Life and Place to Work*. Prepared no behalf of CERT.


Appendix A – Student Questionnaire
Post-Primary Student Questionnaire for Leaving Certificate Students 2003

1. School Name & Address: 

2. School Type: (Tick one)  
   - Secondary  
   - Vocational  
   - Comprehensive  
   - Community

3. What is the total number of enrolled students in your school? (Tick one)  
   - Less than 100  
   - 101 to 250  
   - 251 to 500  
   - 501 to 750  
   - 750 plus

4. School Location: (Tick one)  
   - City  
   - Town  
   - Rural

5. Population of your city, town or rural area: (Tick one)  
   - Less than 5,000  
   - 5,001 to 25,000  
   - 25,001 to 50,000  
   - 50,001 to 100,000  
   - 100,001 to 500,000  
   - 500,001 to 1,000,000  
   - 1,000,001 plus
6. How many higher and ordinary level subjects are you studying?
(Enter number in relevant box)
Higher Level
Ordinary Level

7. What is the occupation of the chief income earner (head of household) in your family?

8. Did you select, as one of your choices on your CAO Form, a course leading to a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry?
Yes
No

9. If you selected a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry, indicate why.
(Circle one numerical value with 1 being your most important reason for choosing and 7 being your least important reason for choosing a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</table>

10. If you did NOT select a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry indicate why.
(Enter a numerical value with 1 being your most important reason for NOT choosing and 7 being your least important reason for NOT choosing a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry)

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<thead>
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<th>Reason</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
11. Are you at present, or have you in the past, worked in an hotel, restaurant or catering facility? (Tick one).

Yes
No

12. If you answered yes in question 11, has your experience while working influenced you positively or influenced you negatively towards a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry? (Tick one).

Positively Influenced
Negatively Influenced

13. Who or what influenced you most in your CAO/career choice? (Enter a numerical value where 1 is the most influential and 9 is the least influential)

Parents
Guidance Counsellor
Teachers
Range of subject choices available at your school
Written material or leaflets on the course
College open days
Friends
Family Background (career of parents/grandparents etc)
Family financial means
Other (Specify here)

14. If influenced by your parents or friends in choosing a career in the Hotel and Catering Industry, tick one of the following:

Parents or friends are at present working in the industry
Parents or friends have in the past worked in the industry
Parents or friends have never worked in the industry

15. If influenced by your parents or friends into NOT choosing a career in the Hotel and Catering industry, tick one of the following:

Parents or friends are at present working in the industry
Parents or friends have in the past worked in the industry
Parents or friends have never worked in the industry
16. Please indicate your gender: (Tick one).

Male
Female

17. Please include any further comments that you may have with regards to career in the Hotel and Catering Industry.

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Student,

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire and wish you success in your exams and career choice.

Thank you,

Clement H Ryan, M.Sc.
Dublin Institute of Technology
School of Hospitality Management & Tourism
Cathal Brugha Street
Dublin 1
01 402 7567
Appendix B – Counsellors Questionnaire
1. School Name & Address:  

2. School Type: *(Tick one)*  
   - Secondary  
   - Vocational  
   - Comprehensive  
   - Community

3. What is the total number of enrolled students in your school? *(Tick one)*  
   - Less than 100  
   - 101 to 250  
   - 251 to 500  
   - 501 to 750  
   - 750 plus

4. School Location: *(Tick one)*  
   - City  
   - Town  
   - Rural

5. Population of your city, town or rural area: *(Tick one)*  
   - Less than 5,000  
   - 5,001 to 25,000  
   - 25,001 to 50,000  
   - 50,001 to 100,000  
   - 100,001 to 500,000  
   - 500,001 to 1,000,000  
   - 1,000,001 plus

6. The students in the above named school are: *(Tick one)*  
   - Boys  
   - Girls  
   - Boys & Girls
7. From what type of social grade are the students with whom you work?  
(Tick options as appropriate)

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<td>B</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Skilled Working Class</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Subsistence level</td>
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</table>

8. In your opinion, what factors influence students most in their career choice?  
(Circle one for each element below with 1 being most influential and 5 being least influential)

- Parents: 1 2 3 4 5
- Guidance Counsellor: 1 2 3 4 5
- Teachers: 1 2 3 4 5
- Range of subject choices available at school: 1 2 3 4 5
- Pay & benefits of career: 1 2 3 4 5
- Personal interest: 1 2 3 4 5
- Image of profession: 1 2 3 4 5
- Hours/conditions of profession: 1 2 3 4 5
- Training & development opportunities: 1 2 3 4 5
- Travel opportunities: 1 2 3 4 5
- College open / information days: 1 2 3 4 5
- Printed information / career leaflets: 1 2 3 4 5
- Family background (career of parents): 1 2 3 4 5
- Financial means of family: 1 2 3 4 5

9. Please indicate your perceptions of the Hotel and Catering Industry as a career choice under the following headings, where:  
(1 = Excellent, 2 = Very Good, 3 = Good, 4 = Fair, 5 = Poor. Please circle one)

- Pay: 1 2 3 4 5
- Benefits Package: 1 2 3 4 5
- Image of industry as a profession: 1 2 3 4 5
- Hours/Conditions of work: 1 2 3 4 5
- Training & Development opportunities: 1 2 3 4 5
- Travel opportunities: 1 2 3 4 5
10. In your opinion, how important are the following characteristics for a student entering into the Hotel and Catering Industry as a career? (1 being most important, 5 being least important)

Physical strength  1  2  3  4  5
Being sensitive  1  2  3  4  5
Being intelligent/high IQ  1  2  3  4  5
Being a good listener  1  2  3  4  5
Being assertive  1  2  3  4  5
Being a team player  1  2  3  4  5
Having a diploma or degree  1  2  3  4  5
Being caring  1  2  3  4  5
Being business minded  1  2  3  4  5
Numerical ability  1  2  3  4  5
Verbal ability  1  2  3  4  5
Perceptual ability  1  2  3  4  5

12. In your opinion, what is the status/image of the Hotel and Catering Industry as a career among school leavers? (Tick one)

Very high
High
Medium
Low
Very low

Guidance Counsellor,

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance in the completion of this questionnaire and wish you success in your endeavours.

Thank you,

Clement H Ryan, M.Sc.
Dublin Institute of Technology
School of Hospitality Management & Tourism
Cathal Brugha Street
Dublin 1
01 402 7567
Appendix C – List of Surveyed Schools
<table>
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<tr>
<th>County/Town</th>
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<td>Carlow</td>
<td>Presentation College, Askea</td>
<td>Sec Sc</td>
<td>O'Looney, Ms. Noreen</td>
<td>0503 - 43927</td>
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<td>Carlow</td>
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<td>Sec Sc</td>
<td>Roberts, Mr. Michael</td>
<td>0503 - 42419</td>
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<td>McGuinness, Mr. Kieran</td>
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<td>Griffin, Sr. Bosco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clare/Scariff</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sec Sc</td>
<td>Hickey, Ms. Maura</td>
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<td>Cork</td>
<td>Colaiste Christ Ri</td>
<td>Sec Sc</td>
<td>O' Loughlin, Mr. Colin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
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<td>Sec Sc</td>
<td>Bermingham, Mr. Brian</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bradley, Sr. Elizabeth</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Christ the King Girls Secondary Sc.</td>
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<td>Behan, Sr. Elizabeth</td>
<td>021 - 961448</td>
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<td>Fitzsimmons, Ms. Mary</td>
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<td>Good, Ms. Nora</td>
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<td>Donegal/Ballyshannon</td>
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Appendix D – Covering Letter
Dublin Institute of Technology
School of Hospitality Management & Tourism
Cathal Brugha Street
Dublin 1

Win a free weekend at the 4* Deluxe Ormonde Hotel in Kilkenny City

Dear Guidance Counsellor,

I am a lecturer at DIT Cathal Brugha Street studying for an MA in Third Level Learning & Teaching. As an integral part of this course I have undertaken a study of the attitudes among Guidance Counsellors and current post primary Leaving Certificate students towards a career in the Hotel & Catering industry and the process students go through when choosing a career.

The objectives of my study are as follows:

1. If a career in the Hotel and Catering industry is a listed career on students CAO forms, establish why and identify the perceptions held by the students towards the industry;
2. Establish the influencing factors in students choosing a career;
3. Ascertain if present or previous experience in the industry is an influencing factor in choosing the industry;
4. Ascertain the perception of the Hotel and Catering industry as a career choice for students among Career Guidance Counsellors.

I should be grateful if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire for Guidance Counsellors, and select at random 12 Leaving Certificate students who have completed the CAO forms to complete the student questionnaire, and return to me in the enclosed stamped self addressed envelope by Friday May 2nd 2003.

The information received will be treated in the strictest of confidence and will only be made available in aggregate form and will not be linked to any individual or to any individual school.

If you wish to contact me for further clarification in relation to the completion of the questionnaires, or receive the results of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me on 01 4027567 or 087 6470714.

As a 'Thank You' for your time I will, upon receipt of all completed questionnaires, include your name in a raffle for two nights Bed and Breakfast and one evening dinner at the Ormonde Hotel in Kilkenny City (See enclosed brochure). The raffle will take place on Friday May 9th 2003. May I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Marian Rabbitte on winning a weekend at the Dublin Hilton Hotel during the last survey on career choices.

Thank you for your assistance,

Yours sincerely,

Clement H Ryan, M.Sc.
Appendix E – Instructional Leaflet
Guidelines for Completion of Student Questionnaire

- Completion of this questionnaire will take 15 minutes.

- Questionnaires to be administered to 12 Leaving Certificate Students who have completed the CAO Form for third level college entry.

- In distributing questionnaires care should be taken to ensure a representative sample of those who completed the CAO Form is achieved.

- For convenience and immediate completion, questionnaires should be administered to all 12 students together, this way any assistance students may require with reference to some questions such as school size can be answered by the counsellor.

- Students may require your assistance in identifying the type of post primary school they are attending, whether it is secondary, comprehensive, vocational or community.

- Students may require your assistance in identifying the area in which the school is located, whether it is rural or urban.

- Students may require a definition of ‘benefits package’. For the purpose of this study benefits package should mean: medical coverage; dental coverage; holidays with pay, and pension schemes.

- Only completed questionnaires to be returned, all other materials can be retained or discarded.

- Only counsellors who return all 12 student questionnaires and one counsellor questionnaire will be included in the raffle.

Thank you for your time and assistance.
Appendix F - Students' Comments
Image of the Industry

“I feel Hotel and Catering Management has the image of being an easy option, that you don’t need much brains. I know this is not true but that’s what you think of. That you’re going to be a glorified waitress”.

“It has the image of being very tough with long hours and unrewarding pay”.

“To me the image of a career in Hotel and Catering Management doesn’t seem inviting because of the long unsociable hours, working when others are on holidays, and the on-the-spot pressure of the job”.

“The image of a career in this area is not a good one. One visualises long working hours, exhausting work, grumpy customers, hard to make it to the top and bad pay”.

“It seems very stressful with anti-social hours and poor pay. However it gives a good opportunity to meet people and use these skills in other countries”.

“Hotel and Catering management has a bad image. Young people want well-paid jobs with regular hours – not split shifts. You must improve both the industry’s image and provide good and interesting courses which will be highly sought after”.

“The industry has a bad image due to pay and hours of work”.

Perceptions of Employment within the Industry

“I imagine it would be very long unsociable hours and bad pay”.

“I think that Hotel and Catering Management is a very tough career in that the hours are long and unsociable, pay is not always satisfactory, and when working up to higher positions you’re not treated very well”.

“I think that Hotel and Catering Management is a very tough career in that the hours are long and unsociable, pay is not always satisfactory, and when working up to higher positions you’re not treated very well”.

“I have no interest in this career, as it is known for bad pay with long, hard unsociable hours”.

“Bad conditions of work”.

“Although Hotel and Catering Management would be an interesting career that I would quite enjoy, I don’t feel the financial benefits are enough to make it my career”.

"It comes across as a boring, unattractive job with few opportunities and no freedom to develop your own ideas".

"Not interesting enough".

"No regular working week".

"No time to play football!".

"No free time".

"Unsociable hours and poor pay".

"The hours are too long and unsociable".

"Pay terrible. Hours and working conditions terrible".

"Management have extremely unsociable hours and don’t get due credit for their work".

"The hours are unsociable and it’s hard to work your way up to management".

"Hours being worked have an extremely negative impact. Also the way you get treated by management as merely a cog in the wheel of production would turn me off".

"No one wants to work in hotels as the hours are too long and the pay is bad also".

"I feel that it is a seasonal job for the most part. Takes years to get a high position with good pay, starting off pay is poor compared to graduates from computer courses who get excellent pay straight away".

"Poor hours and a lot of pressure put me off choosing a career in this industry".

"Very poor working conditions and long hours with very little thanks".

"Bad hours, bad pay, bad conditions!"

"The pay is very low, the working conditions are poor, the hours are unsociable and the job is viewed with contempt".

"I have heard from friends that the pay and benefits are very poor and not worth the work put into it".

"Stressful".

"I would not go into the industry because the money isn’t good, the hours are long and you don’t get regular days off".
"I believe that Hotel and Catering management is a terrible career. The conditions of work are awful and the payment is below standard and employers have little or no regard for your well being".

"Due to the present boom work should be well paid at all levels but it is not".

"It is seen as a poorly paid and low opportunity profession".

"It is a very fast growing industry but I fell the hours are anti-social".

"Hotel and Catering is slave labour with poor pay. People should consider other opportunities if they have good educational achievements".

"I feel I would be interested in a career in this area but the pay and hours would have to improve before I would do a course in it".

"My dad is a chef and says the money for the stress and hours is not worth it, he works a 14-hour day every day".

"I attended a CERT road show, it was mainly based around chefs, and I was not interested".

"It is not very appealing as a profession, I would prefer to be involved in construction work".

"Hours of work and pay and conditions are terrible".

"The poor pay gives the industry a bad image".

"I feel the work would be too monotonous day after day".

"Over worked and under paid".

"If your are not a top manager you are not respected".

"Image needs to be upgraded, recognised by students as a lesser course"

"I would enjoy working in this industry but thinking about my future I'm not sure if the pay would be sufficient or that it would be a challenging enough career".

"Can't plan your time off".

"If you do it you can see the world".

"It is a great career".
"There needs to be a better working environment. People in high positions not able to communicate with staff".

"You can’t do training or get a formal degree".

"I think this is a good career and I have seen people do well in this sector".

"I feel there are good travel opportunities in the industry".

"If graduates got better pay and working hours more people would apply for courses".

**Opportunities For Development**

"I feel that a degree isn’t needed to work in a hotel. There doesn’t appear to be much opportunity for promotion".

"Excellent opportunities for advancement and promotion, the industry is changing for the better".

"The industry is growing fast in Ireland and I believe there are good opportunities in this career".

"Takes a long time to work up to a position of power".

"Quite unsociable hours with no further opportunities".

"I think it would have a lot of good opportunities but you get very underpaid for the work you do".

"I think Hotel and Catering Management as a career wouldn’t have great prospects".

"I don’t think the prospects are good".

"It seems like a good career with good opportunities".

"From family and friends experience there seems to be few promotion prospects".
The Need for More Information

"People do not know enough about what is involved in Hotel and Catering Management".

"I don’t know enough about Hotel and Catering Management to know if it is a suitable career for me”.
"Usually poor management, staff treated unfairly and money is poor”.

"I am not interested in it, but it needs to be advertised more in schools as I don’t know what it’s about”.

"I don’t know a lot about the career itself or the opportunities in the area, I would like it if there was more information available”.

"I do not fully understand what is involved in it, not enough information available”.

“Personally I am not interested in a career in Hotel and Catering Management but I feel there is not a lot of information about it”.

"There are not enough courses in secondary schools relating to Hotel and Catering Management. It also needs to be advertised more”.

"I would like to have more information on this area before I would choose a course in it”.

"Not enough information in the information books”.

Work Experience within the Industry

"I have worked as a waitress and it negatively influenced me because of the hours”.

"After working in a hotel I found that the training was inadequate. I was not given any proper training which led to me making mistakes”.

"I would not consider working in this industry as having worked in a hotel for two months I feel that workers are treated badly by management”.

"I have worked in a hotel and the management influenced me negatively towards the industry”.

"At present I work in a hotel and I think it’s horrible”.

"As I am working in a hotel I feel the pay could be much better for the hours”.

"I worked in a restaurant and the hours, pay and conditions put me off”.

The Treatment of Employees

“Lack of respect from management”.

“Management usually has little respect for junior staff which are in fact the most valuable asset a hotel has”.

“You get no credit for what you do, the attitude to staff is terrible”.

“Slave labour, usually very hard working conditions and very bad wages”.

“It is slavery”.