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A Critical Review and Evaluation of a Pilot Fishmonger
Training Programme in Order to Identify Potential
Modifications to Produce an Improved Training Programme
for Fishmongers

By

Eileen Soraghan

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for MA in Training and Education (QQI)

Faculty of Training and Education
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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Training and Education is my own work; based on my personal study and/or research and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certified that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other learners.

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Abstract

Fishmongers are highly skilled professionals working in a range of different types of businesses including supermarket fish counters, independent shops and mobile fish vans. Consumers expect fishmongers to have a broad range of knowledge and skills, and yet in Ireland and throughout Europe, there is no specific training available to become a fishmonger. Opportunities for career development is limited and the lack of specific accredited training for fishmongers is damaging the sector.

In this study an evaluation of a Pilot Fishmonger Training Programme was carried out. The purpose of this was to identify potential modifications that could feasibly be introduced to produce an improved training programme for fishmongers. Seven participants from the pilot programme were interviewed along with one programme trainer and one mentor. Current fishmonger training practices in other countries was also reviewed in the study.

The feedback from participants was largely positive with most reporting that they had enjoyed taking part in the programme, gained significant knowledge and skills, and had applied some aspects of the learning in the workplace. While it was found that many elements of the programme worked well and should remain unchanged, significant modifications will be required to produce an improved training programme for fishmongers.

The recommended modifications that could feasibly be introduced to produce an improved programme include changes to the programme assessment strategy with a move away from written assignments to skills demonstrations. Learners should be given more opportunities for experiential learning particularly in the seafood quality assessment unit. Significant improvement in the content and quality of pre-course material for participants, trainers and mentors is also recommended. The application to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) for programme validation should be progressed as a priority, as accreditation will add significant value to the programme and benefit to learners. The potential introduction of blended learning to the programme was considered but the researcher concluded that it would bring limited benefits to the programme at this stage. Blended learning should not be incorporated into the fishmonger training programme until more research is carried out and there is evidence of its potential benefits to this type of programme and with this cohort of learners.

Definitions and Terms

ADDIE:	Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate
ANCIPA:	Associação Nacional de Comerciantes e Industriais de Produtos Alimentares (the organisation which represents fishmongers in Portugal)
BERA:	British Educational Research Association
BRC:	British Retail Consortium
BIM:	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
CAS:	Common Awards System
CSO:	Central Statistics Office
DES:	Department of Education and Skills
DJEI:	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
EHEA:	European Higher Education Area
E-FishNet:	An Innovative Network for Enhancement of Fishmongers Management and Communication Skills
ENQA:	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ETB:	Education and Training Board
ESRI:	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU:	European Union
FEC:	Faculty Ethics Committee
FET:	Further Education and Training
FEDEPESCA:	Federación Nacional de Asociaciones Provinciales de Empresarios Detallistas de Pescados y Productos Congelados (the organisation which represents fishmongers in Spain).

FSIS:	Fish and Shellfish Industry Skills
IBEC:	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
MATE:	Master of Arts in Training and Education
MATIS:	A public commercial food research company in Iceland
MFS:	Master Fishmonger Standard
MSG:	Management Study Guide
NFQ:	National Framework of Qualifications
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QA:	Quality Assurance
QQI:	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
ROI:	Return on Investment
Seafish:	A Non-departmental public body set up to support the UK seafood industry
UK:	United Kingdom
VET:	Vocational Education and Training

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Chapter One: Introduction

Currently there are no formal accredited training programmes for fishmongers in Ireland. In this dissertation, a critical review and evaluation will be carried out of a pilot fishmonger training programme with a view to identifying the areas that might be changed, enhanced or introduced in order to produce an improved training programme for fishmongers. Feed-back from participants and trainer/mentors on the pilot programme will be evaluated. Current practices for fishmonger training in Europe will also be considered as well as Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) requirements in relation to programme validation. The improved fishmonger training programme will aim to meet the needs of the sector, comply with international best practice for fishmonger training and provide an opportunity for career development for participants.

Fishmonger - Introduction

Fishmongering is a highly skilled profession which is steeped in tradition (Digital Education Resource Archive, 2016). The sector plays a vital role in the European economy with traditional fish and seafood retailers employing around 55,000 people in Europe (E-FshNet, 2018a). According to Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), fishmongers contribute significantly to the economy in Ireland with the fish retail sector worth €249 million in 2017 (BIM, 2017a).

The Collins English Dictionary defines a “monger” as a trader or dealer in a commodity (Collins, 2018a). A fishmonger is defined as shopkeeper who sells fish or a retailer of fish (Collins, 2018b). In practice the term is used broadly to describe a highly skilled professional working in a range of different types of businesses including supermarket fish counters, independent shops and mobile fish vans (Digital Education Resource Archive, 2016). In Ireland and throughout Europe, there is no specific training available to become a fishmonger with most individuals entering the industry to continue the family business, while a much smaller number choose to become fishmongers out of personal interest (E-FishNet, 2018a). Fishmongers are expected to have a broad range of knowledge and skills ranging from knowledge of food safety, traceability and seafood nutrition to specific technical skills in filleting, gutting, scaling and boning fish (Digital Education Resource Archive, 2016). This knowledge and skills results in fishmongers being largely seen in a positive light by consumers. Most are held in high esteem by the majority of consumers who took part in a consumer survey between 2016 and 2018 in Spain, Portugal, Iceland, UK, Belgium and Turkey (E-FishNet 2018a). However, despite this positive view of consumers, fishmongers themselves do not think their profession is as valued as it should be, and they recognise that the lack of specific training to becoming a fishmonger is something that could harm the sector (E-FishNet 2018a). Indeed, while consumers hold the fishmongers in a positive light they too

recognise the benefits that specific training would bring to the sector with 45% of the total respondents who took part in a survey across several countries stating that they would have an improved perception of fishmongers if they knew that there was compulsory training for them (E-FishNet, 2018a).

Pilot Fishmonger Training Programme

Overview of Pilot Programme

BIM launched a pilot fishmonger training programme in September 2018 and delivery was completed in November, with final assessments submitted in December of that year. The programme was an amalgamation of some short workshops and training courses that had previously been delivered to industry on an ad-hoc basis, with some new elements introduced. There was limited industry consultation in the development of the pilot programme with the consultation focusing on programme duration and a general overview of aims and objectives.

The programme did not lead to a qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) with participants only receiving a certificate of attendance. The programme was delivered on seven days over a three-month. The topics covered are outlined in Table 1.

Pilot Fishmonger Programme	
Unit	Topics
Unit 1	Hygiene and Food Safety in Seafood Retailing
Unit 2	Technical Skills - Filleting, Skinning, Removing Bones
Unit 3	Seafood Quality and Freshness
Unit 4	Seafood Culinary Skills and Nutrition
Unit 5	Consumer Information and Customer Service
Mentoring	Storage, Display, best practice in setting up a fish counter (on-site in participants workplace)
Study Trip	Seafood Industry Study Trip
Duration: 7 Days	

Table 1: Pilot Fishmonger Training Programme - Content and Duration (BIM, 2018)

The programme was targeted at staff working with independent fishmongers or in supermarket fresh fish counters including both new entrants and staff who had not received any formal training in fishmonger skills. There were no entry requirements specified and places were offered on a first come

basis. Participants did not complete an application form and were not asked about access issues or learning difficulties at any stage. There were no evidence of any learner supports in place for participants who might have learning difficulties.

Teaching Methods and Assessment Strategy for Pilot Programme

The programme was delivered by industry experts, some with many years' experience in training while others were relatively new to training and education. Learning outcomes were defined and the programme was taught using a range of classroom theory and hands-on practical sessions. The teaching methods employed consisted of talks, demonstrations and practice sessions. However, the amount of time dedicated to each teaching method was not specified and there were no formal lesson plans in place for the programme.

There was no formal assessment strategy in place at the start of the programme. While stated on the pre-course material that assessment would be by means of technical skills and on-going assessment including multiple choice exams (BIM, 2018) it was later decided by the course trainers and programme leader that there would be no exam and that assessment would consist of a written assignment (20%) a skills demonstration (30%) and a project (50%). Participants were only informed of these changes as they progressed through the programme. There was no formative assessment included in the programme.

Pilot Programme Preliminary Review and Evaluation

All sixteen places on the programme were booked well in advance of the start date, however only fifteen participants commenced the programme. One participant dropped out after completing two units, a further two dropped out after completing three units resulting in just twelve participants completing the course.

While all participants submitted the initial assignment on time, only four participants (33.3%) submitted the final project on time. Six participants (50%) requested an extension that was granted and four of these subsequently submitted the assignment. Therefore, a total of just eight participants (66.6%) submitted the final project. All participants successfully completed the skills demonstration and most achieved high marks with an average grade of 71%. This compared to an average grade of 42% for the written assignment with only one participant scoring above 70%. The results for the project were slightly higher with an average grade of 50%. The only course evaluation carried out on the pilot programme was in the form of an evaluation sheet which participants were asked to

complete at the end of each unit. Apart from an initial review on the day of completion, there was no analysis carried out on the responses given in these evaluation sheets.

Blended Learning Considerations

One area that was not considered in the pilot programme was the use of e-learning or delivery of the programme in a blended learning environment. Teresa Whitaker (2017) discusses the role of technology in learning and education and highlights how all aspects of academic and administrative practices are increasingly underpinned by digital technology. Whitaker (2017) goes on to discuss how the dawn of the personal computer, the internet and smart phone have brought significant changes to education and how technology can no longer be considered just a part of education but must be incorporated into programmes. BIM have recently introduced an e-learning platform and it is envisaged that many of BIM's current training programmes will be delivered in a blended learning environment in the future. The potential role and benefits of blended learning will be explored as well as a review of the feasibility of delivering some elements of the programme in a blended learning environment.

Fishmonger Profile

In Europe the average age of a fishmonger is 45 and 74% are male while 30% have a relatively low qualification corresponding to primary education (E-FishNet, 2018a). There are some remarkable similarities between European fishmongers and the group who took part in the pilot programme where the age of participants ranged from early twenties to early fifties and 75% were male. The level of educational qualifications held by participants in the pilot study was also similar with many in the group having left school early without any formal qualification. Indeed, this is similar throughout the seafood industry where operatives with low qualifications in low skilled roles are a major component of the marine economy (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2015). This is also quite similar to educational standards across the retail sector in Ireland where the most common level of qualification is upper secondary but a substantial number (16%) having just lower secondary with a further 6% only having primary education with no formal qualifications (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2010).

Despite their lack of educational qualifications, many fishmongers are highly skilled and knowledgeable about running a business, promoting their products and they know what it takes to supply excellent quality fish and shellfish (Seafish, 2018). However, the opportunities for career development and higher earnings are restricted because of lack of educational attainment with early school leavers earning significantly less over their career (McCoy and Williams 2000).

Early School Leavers

A significant number of fishmongers in Ireland and throughout Europe are early school leavers. Early school leaving can be defined as the voluntary or involuntary decision to leave school without undertaking Junior Cycle Examinations and/or prior to the legal minimum age (National Youth Federation, 1998). According to the definition used by Eurostat and the European Commission, early school leaving occurs when an individual aged 18 to 24 has attained at most, lower secondary education and is not engaged in education and training (Eurostat Statistics Explained, 2018). In Ireland, the legal definition of early school leaving is;

non-participation in school before reaching the age of 16 years or before completing 3 years post-primary education, whichever is later. A more specific definition of early school leavers is those who leave the education system without a minimum of 5 passes in the Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification. (Citizen Information, 2018).

Regardless of the specific definition used, young people who leave education without recognised qualifications are at a disadvantage in the labour market and are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion (Klasen, 2001). The Central Statistics Office (CSO) Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2017 highlights that higher educational attainment levels are associated with higher employment rates amongst 25-64-year olds in Ireland (CSO, 2018). It also reported that those with just primary education/no formal education were over four times more likely to be unemployed in Q2 2017 (14%) when compared with those who had a third level qualification (3%).

Not only are early school leavers more likely to be unemployed, but educational attainment is also strongly linked with earnings (McCoy and Williams, 2000). Findings from several studies on the relationship between earnings and education conclude that each additional year of schooling is likely to yield an annual 'rate of return' for individuals of 8-10 per cent (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). The National Economic and Social Forum (2002) discusses further the impact of early school leaving not only on the individual where there is the increased likelihood of long-term unemployment, low-skilled and poorly-paid employment as well as social and economic marginalisation but also on a societal level effecting health, crime and social cohesion. Many early school leavers are either unemployed or in poorly paid employment. It is important for early school leavers to gain skills that improve their employment and career progression opportunities. Vocational Education and Training (VET) plays a critical role in upskilling this cohort (Dommers et al., 2017).

Importance of Upskilling While in Employment

Many early school leavers find employment in the retail sector including fishmongering. One of the main outcomes of the report on future skills requirement of the wholesale and retail sector is the dispelling of the myth that working in retail is just a job in a shop (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2010). Upskilling while in employment is important for both employers and employees. John Sweeney (2016) discusses the importance of upskilling when in employment and highlights that low skills do not go away automatically when a poorly qualified person enters employment. Retail Ireland who operate as a dedicated business unit within the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), recognise the benefits to both employer and employee of training:

As retailers we know how difficult it has been to attract and retain good employees to the retail sector. To get the right people to join and stay in your business you must provide a transparent and achievable career development path which offers the opportunities to upskill. Today's workforce rates career development opportunities as a top consideration when seeking employment (Retail Ireland SkillNet, 2018).

For the employee progressing from a sales assistant to a fish specialist can result in up to a 36% increase in salary. Typical starting salary for a sales assistant in a large supermarket is €10 per hour. This may rise to €11 per year after 3 years while a fish specialist with 3 years' experience can expect to earn at least €15 per hour (Excel Recruitment, 2018). The National skills strategy to 2025 seeks to raise skills at all levels and for all ages. It commits to supporting up-skilling initiatives specifically targeted at economically disadvantaged (Department of Education and Skills, 2016). According to the British Retail Consortium (BRC), large supermarkets are already planning for a future with smaller but more skilled and better paid workforce (BRC, 2016). It is expected that retailing will be more productive in the future, offering better jobs with opportunities to develop skills and increase earning potential (BRC, 2016). It is predicted that retailers will need to invest more in their workforce in 2019. According to Stagg (2018) for retailers to remain competitive they will need to step up their game when it comes to staff hiring and development and it will no longer be enough to train employees just on products and store policies.

In Ireland, there is an ambitious drive at governmental level to raise the skills of those in employment to ensure that workers are adaptable to future challenges and the importance of continuous learning is recognised;

Our ambition is that Ireland will be internationally renowned for its talent, for its highly skilled and adaptive people, equipped with the higher order capabilities required in the 21st century workplace and for its openness to continuous learning.

(Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2015, p. xxi).

Fishmonger Training

The one thing that many fishmongers have lacked in the past is a professional qualification that reflects the nature of their business and their skillset (Seafish, 2018). In Ireland, there has never been formal accredited training courses for fishmongers. BIM which is the state agency with responsibility for development of the Irish Seafood Industry launched a pilot fishmonger training programme in 2018 which is the subject of this study. This was the first time that a formal fishmonger training programme was delivered in Ireland (BIM, 2018). The need for formal fishmonger training is crucial for developing skills as well as attracting workers to this sector; “The continued success of Ireland’s seafood sector is contingent on being able to attract and retain a talented workforce and to enhance fishmonger skills within the retail sector” (Mannix, 2018).

The lack of formal fishmonger training is not unique to Ireland with many European countries also having no formal training programmes in place despite the large number employed in the sector (E-FishNet, 2018b). Currently there is no compulsory training to work as a fishmonger in Spain, Iceland, Turkey or the United Kingdom (UK). These countries do however have compulsory training in food safety for all working in the food industry including fishmongers. There are limited specific fishmonger training opportunities available (E-FishNet, 2018a).

Designing an Improved Fishmonger Training Programme

Designing an improved fishmonger training programme will primarily draw on the findings of the evaluation of the pilot programme as well as a study of international best practice for fishmonger training. It will also incorporate Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) guidelines in relation to programme validation to ensure that future participants of the programme will be eligible for an award on the National Framework of Qualifications thus providing an opportunity for career progression.

The research focused on producing an improved training programme for fishmongers that will bring a level of professionalism to the sector and will seek to answer the following questions:

- What elements of the pilot programme need to be modified?

- What modifications can feasibly be made to the programme?

The evaluation study of the pilot programme involved interviewing participants of the pilot programme as well as a trainer and mentor from the programme.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The Irish government report FoodWise 2025 sets out a vision and strategy for the future development of the agri-food industry. The report recognises that the agri-food sector will only achieve its full growth potential if it can address the skills needs within the industry. It is recognised that the sector faces challenges and there are skills gaps which must be filled in order to enable the potential of the sector to be realised:

The ability of the sector to retain, access and attract the best talent to address these skills gaps represents a key challenge towards 2025 and will define the capacity of the sector to realise 2025 growth, development and sustainability targets.

(Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 2015, p. 45).

The workforce within the seafood sector is aging and this will present a skills shortage unless measures are put in place to attract and upskill younger workers. (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2015). This report recognises that operatives and low skill roles are a major component of the marine economy in Ireland but there is evidence of a shift towards more professionals being employed right across the economy including sectors such as seafood which has predominantly employed low skilled operatives.

Current Fishmonger Training Programmes

While fishmonger training is not compulsory in the UK, there are a number of well-established training programmes available such as the Level 3, Fish and Shellfish Industry Skills (FSIS) programme offered by Seafish (Seafish, 2018). Seafish is a non-departmental public body set up to support the UK seafood industry. This programme is not specific for fishmongers but can be tailored to meet their needs. The topics covered in this course are outlined in Table 2. The seafood school at Billingsgate in London offer a short introductory two-day course for fishmongers leading to a City and Guilds Certificate in Retail Skills (Billingsgate, 2018). While this is a very short course it does offer an opportunity for fishmongers to have their knowledge and skills formally recognised. The topics covered in this course are outlined in Table 3

Fish and Shellfish Industry Skills (FSIS) - Seafish	
Topic	Content
1	Principles of fish and shellfish product knowledge
2	Principles of fishmonger practice
3	Principles of the fishmonger industry
4	Principles of displaying fish and shellfish for retail sale
5	Managing fish/shellfish operations
6	Quality assessment
7	Setting up and maintaining food retail operations
8	Customer service
9	Maximising sales
Duration: 1 Year	

Table 2: Fish and Shellfish Industry Skills (FSIS) - Content and Duration (Seafish, 2018)

City and Guilds Certificate in Retail Skills - Billingsgate	
Topic	Content
1	<i>Cutting fish</i>
2	<i>Quality assessment</i>
3	<i>Aquaculture</i>
4	<i>Sustainability issues</i>
5	<i>Cooking</i>
6	<i>Selling fish and shellfish</i>
7	<i>Display</i>
8	<i>Customer service</i>
Duration: 2 Days	

Table 3: City and Guilds Certificate in Retail Skills - Content and Duration (Billingsgate, 2018)

A significant difference in the two UK fishmonger programmes is that the City and Guild award can be achieved after just two days training while the Seafish Level 3, FSIS award can take up to one year to complete. There is no evidence available regarding the effectiveness of either of these two training programmes and surprisingly there is no record of any evaluation of the training programmes ever being carried out.

Both the City and Guilds retail skills programme and the Seafish Level 3, FSIS programme are delivered using a combination of hands-on practical sessions and classroom theory sessions. The teaching methods employed for both consist of talks, demonstrations and practice sessions, while only the Seafish programme has an option of including some on-line learning (Billingsgate, 2018; Seafish, 2018).

Future of Fishmonger Training

The importance of training within the sector was discussed at a European fishmonger seminar which was held in Madrid in June 2018. The key message communicated to delegates attending the seminar was that training is essential for the future development of the fish retail sector in Europe (E-FishNet, 2018b). It is recognised that fishmongers play an important role in society; they inform customers about fisheries' products and encourage healthy habits amongst the population. Nevertheless, this sector has many difficulties related with training issues; the lack of training culture, professional ageing and long working days are amongst the factors that hinders professional training (E-FishNet, 2018b).

E-FishNet was an innovative programme established by the European Union (EU) to address some of the issues faced by fishmongers due to changing consumer habits, new technologies and market trends. This project was co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the EU. The project was co-ordinated by FEDEPESCA; the organisation which represents fishmongers in Spain. Other partners in the project were Billingsgate Seafood School in the UK, ANCIPA; the sectorial organisation of the Portuguese fish retailer sector, MATIS; a public commercial food research company in Iceland and Ankara University in Turkey. The E-FishNet programme commenced in September 2016 and finished in September 2018 (E-FishNet, 2018b).

One of the main aims of the E-FishNet project was to create a more positive image of fishmongers amongst consumers and society in general. Another objective was the boosting of employment opportunities within the sector and the designing an ideal training model for fishmongers (FishNet, 2018a). The ideal training model proposed consists of six modules as outlined in Table 4 below:

Proposed Training Model for Fishmongers in Europe (E-FishNet)			
Module	Topic	Proposed Content	
1	General Overview: Fishery Value Chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General knowledge • Fishing gear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquaculture
2	Our Product: Fish and Seafood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species recognition • Gutting and filleting • Freshness recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition • Cooking
3	Food Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good handling practice • Storage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazards • HACCP
4	Sustainability and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food waste and Discards • Energy saving • Resources • Quotas • Sustainability standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal welfare • Minimum size catches • Aquaculture and sustainability • Packaging
5	Marketing and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social networks management • Communications skills • Tastings • Counter display 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazards and crisis communication • Preparation of processed products
6	Economic Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business models • Economic management • Record keeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxation • Pricing • Labour market issues
Duration: Not specified			

Table 4: Proposed Training Model for Fishmongers in Europe (E-FishNet, 2018a)

While the proposed model for fishmonger training designed by E-FishNet and outlined in Table 4 above is detailed on content, there is no reference to duration, teaching methodologies or assessment strategy.

Accredited Training

Importance of Accreditation

BIM's statement of strategy 2018-2020 outlines ambitious targets for workers in the seafood industry; *'to deliver a structured career path through the provision of life long, accredited learning to create a*

professional, educated talent pool for the sector' (BIM, 2017b, p.17). Accreditation adds value to learning by formally recognising what a student knows or can do as a result of participation in training (Cassey and Whelan, 2013). Saxton (2015) discusses the benefits of accredited training and sees accreditation as a mark of quality for the training that a business has put in place. The benefits of accredited training go beyond benefits for a business; the learners benefit by having assurance that their education has met industry standards, training institutes benefit by having assurance that their programmes are high quality and ultimately the general public benefits by receiving high quality service from graduates of accredited programs (Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, Canada (2018).

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

In Ireland Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the state agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services (QQI, 2018a). QQI are members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) which is the umbrella organisation representing quality assurance organisations from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EHEA is made up of 48 countries. Member countries commit to continue adapting their higher education systems making them more compatible and strengthening their quality assurance mechanism with the main goal being an increase in staff and student mobility (EHEA, 2017).

A QQI award is a quality-assured qualification awarded for further and higher education and training in Ireland. Learners receive a QQI award when they successfully complete a course at any of the 10 levels of the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) (QQI, 2017a). The NFQ is a framework through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way. The many different types and sizes of qualifications included in the NFQ are organised from 1 to 10 based on their level of knowledge, know-how and skill, and competence. NFQ has been verified as compatible with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) quality framework. This means that higher education and training qualifications from Ireland are consistent with those in the EHEA (QQI, 2018b).

A QQI award is beneficial to the learner because all QQI awards are quality assured, nationally and internationally recognised, offer access to further and higher education and training opportunities and are recognised by employers (Qualifax, 2018). The six assessment techniques that may be used to achieve a QQI award are as follows:

- Portfolio - a collection and/or selection of pieces of work produced by the learner over a period of time

- Assignment - an exercise carried out in response to a brief with specific guidelines as to what should be included
- Skills Demonstration - used to assess a wide range of practical based learning and can be carried out in a simulated environment or in the workplace/live environment
- Project - a broad brief that may involve research, investigation of a topic, issue or problem and generally carried out over a period of time.
- Examination - assesses a learner's ability to recall, apply knowledge, skills and understanding within a set period of time and under clearly specified conditions
- Learner Record - the learner's own self-reported and self-reflective record in which they describe specific learning experiences, activities or skills (Cork Education and Training Board, 2018).

Accredited Programmes in the Food/Retail Sector

Currently there is no QQI award for fishmongers unlike other related sectors for example there are many QQI awards for general retailing such as Retail Practice, 5M2105 and Retail Skills 4M1998. There are also QQI awards in existence for specific sectors of the seafood industry such as: Fish Processing Techniques, 5N5205 and Commercial Fishing 5M5125. There are two QQI awards for butchers namely Butchery Skills, 5M5155 and Craft Butchery, 5M20692 however there are no validated programmes leading to either of these awards listed on the QQI website. An NFQ level 5 apprenticeship in butchery is currently under development to meet the demands for this occupation (National Skills Council, 2017).

All existing QQI awards at levels 1 to 6 under the common awards system (CAS) are listed on the QQI website. "The common awards system (CAS) is a system of linked Further Education and Training (FET) award specification at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ or Frameworks) Level 1-6 inclusive" (QQI, 2014, p.2). There is no existing CAS award specifically for fishmongers. The learning outcomes for other general retail CAS awards do not match the skills, knowledge and competence required to work as a fishmonger. QQI have therefore agreed to consider validation of the fishmonger programme as a non-CAS award. The learning outcomes must therefore meet the generic award descriptors for the appropriate NFQ award level (QQI, 2018c).

Program Design

One of QQI's key tasks is validation of training programmes leading to QQI awards. Validation is a regulatory process that determines if a QQI award can be offered in respect of a provider's programme

of education and training (QQI, 2018d). A thorough understanding of the requirements relating to knowledge, skills and competence at each NFQ level is essential in advance of designing a programme in order to ensure that it is pitched at the correct level. The learning outcomes at the different NFQ levels are outlined in the National Framework of Qualifications, Grid of Level Indicators (NFQ, 2003). At level 5, learning outcomes include a broad range of knowledge and skills that require some theoretical understanding. The learning outcomes may relate to engaging in a specific activity, with the capacity to use the instruments and techniques relating to an occupation. Work is usually undertaken independently, subject to general direction. In comparison at level 4, the requirements are less stringent, and the learning outcomes would be associated with first-time entry to many occupational sectors. Non-major awards do not require the full completion of all eight strands of knowledge, skills and competencies defined for any level of the NQF levels. (Dundalk Institute of Technology, 2016).

Re-engaging Adult Learners

Re-engaging adults who have dropped out of school at an early age is an important and challenging task for educators (Mitchell and Murray, 2016). McGregor et al. (2014) discuss how young people who had often clashed with school authorities in their original schools, were able to engage in education when it took place in a learning environment that recognised and accommodated their personal circumstances and avoided authoritarian rule. Mitchell and Murray (2016) found that teaching strategies that were effective in re-engaging young adults in education included: strong concern for student welfare; positive teacher–student relationships; relevant course content; a mastery-based approach to learning; and an overarching goal of building students’ confidence in their ability, and more generally, in themselves. During training, the provision of multiple supports is required including logistic, academic and social supports (Dommers et al., 2017).

Indeed, re-engaging and motivating all adult learners can pose different challenges. Megan Hicks (2015) discusses how adult learners are different from child learners in how they are motivated. Hicks suggests three motivational techniques; involving the learner in the instruction process, creating an environment where learners can solve an immediate problem and maximising autonomy by allowing the learners to take on as much of the decision-making process as possible (Hicks, 2015). Not only are adult learners motivated differently but they also have different learning styles that can either enhance or deter their learning according to Isacc-Savage (2009). Instructors should therefore attempt to employ a range of teaching methods to motivate these individuals with different learning styles. Isacc-Savage (2009) also discusses the different assessment techniques that can be used for assessing adults and highlights the importance of formative assessment to adult learners.

Blended Learning

The term blended learning is generally applied to the practice of using both online and in-person learning experiences when teaching students (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013). While the concept of blended learning has been around for almost 20 years, the lack of technological availability prevented blending of traditional face-to-face learning with e-learning in the earlier years. (Caner and Guzer, 2013). Caner and Guzer (2013) found that in all studies reviewed, blended learning is now considered, useful, enjoyable, supportive, flexible and a motivator to learners. However, Safford and Stinton (2016) found that significant barriers remain for participation in blended learning programmes such as outdated technology at home, poor internet access in some areas and slow processing speeds. Additional issues for adult learners were highlighted by Safford and Stinton (2016) such as intimidation by technology and a false assumption that everyone is computer literate. Caner and Guzer (2013) also recognise that more guidance for teachers and administrators is needed to ensure that blended learning is successful as well as enjoyable. Cigdem and Ozturk (2016) found that students' self-direction towards on-line learning was the strongest predictor of achievement within a course.

Blended learning is now used in a variety of training situations and a broad range of courses from English studies to nursing and military studies, and it is predicted that blended learning will be incorporated into other training areas in the future (Caner and Guzer, 2013). A second outcome from the E-FishNet project, discussed earlier is described in the *Intellectual Output 102* which describes an e-learning platform for fishmongers (E-FishNet, 2018c). On the platform, both fishmongers and trainers will be able to source content and material which can be incorporated into their future blended fishmonger training programmes.

Training Evaluation

The importance of training evaluation has been discussed by many authors. Praslova (2010) sees evaluation as vital for Institutes of Higher Education as well as for other stakeholders such as prospective students, parents, employers and governmental bodies. Saks and Burke (2012) delve deeper into the relationship between training evaluation and the transfer of training and they found that organisations that evaluate their training programmes more have a higher rate of training transfer.

Evaluation is a crucial step in the systematic training cycle (Piskurich, 2016). In training and education, most instructional design models are based on the ADDIE (Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate) model. While the last step in ADDIE model is evaluation; in reality evaluation is an important element in all steps. Formative evaluation takes place through the design process while summative

evaluation occurs at the end of the process (Education Technology, 2018). Most current instructional design models are variations of the ADDIE process (Piskurich, 2016).

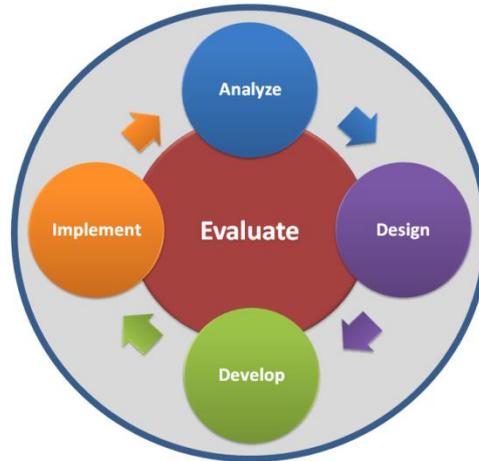


Figure 1: The ADDIE Process

The main goal of the evaluation stage is to determine if the goals have been met, and to establish what will be required moving forward to improve the programme. According to Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2015), there are three main reasons to evaluate training; to improve the programme, to maximize transfer of learning to behaviour and crucially to demonstrate the value of training to the organisation. As organisations spend a considerable amount of money on training, it is important for them to understand the usefulness of that training (Management Study Guides, 2018). Businesses need to be able to demonstrate a return on training; *'When the Finance Director knocks on your office door, it's unlikely that he is going to ask how effective your training was last month - Therefore it's essential for training companies to show the return on any training or marketing related costs'* (Weston 2016).

Training evaluation can be described as the systematic collection of descriptive and judgmental information necessary to make effective training decisions related to the selection, adoption, values and modification of various training activities (Goldstein & Ford, 2007). Training evaluation continues to be a challenge for workplace learning and development professionals (Srimannarayana, 2017). However, Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2014) see it as an important but straight forward process where the ultimate intent is to show the business value and worth of training. Most training professionals are accustomed to evaluating training programs for the purpose of improving the programs using formative (during the program) and summative (after the program) methods. More and more training

professionals now realise that even the most well-designed and well received training programs are of little use unless what is learned in training gets implemented on the job (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2015).

The most popular and recognised model of training evaluation is Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation (Saks and Burke, 2012) The Kirkpatrick model developed by Donald Kirkpatrick in the 1950's remains the worldwide standard for evaluating the effectiveness of training (Kirkpatrick Partners, 2018). The Kirkpatrick model considers the value of any type of training, formal or informal, across four levels; Reaction, Learning, Behaviour and Results:

- **Level 1: Reaction** - The degree to which participants find the training favourably, engaging and relevant to their jobs.
- **Level 2: Learning** - The degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills and attitudes based on their participation in the training/Were the learning objectives achieved?
- **Level 3: Behaviour/ Application of the Training** - The degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back in their job.
- **Level 4 - Results/ Business Impact** - The degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training. (Kirkpatrick Partners, 2018).

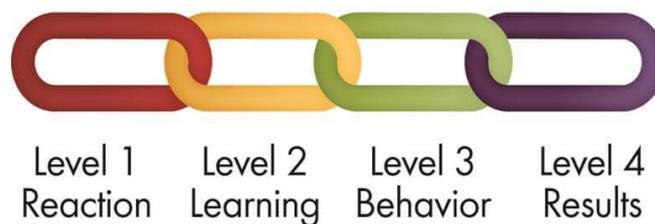


Figure 2: The Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation

A fifth and important level of training evaluation was added by Jack Phillips in the 1990's. Phillips argued that the evaluation process is not complete without the fifth and ultimate level of evaluation which compares the monetary benefits of training with the associated costs (Phillips, 1996). This fifth level of evaluation - Return on Investment (ROI) is now recognised as an important step in the evaluation process. ROI provides Human Resource Departments with valuable information used to convince management that training is an investment and not an expense (Phillips, 2011). Many other authors including Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2015) now also recognise the importance of considering monetary return on training investment. As training budgets are cut, trainers need to provide compelling evidence that training delivers bottom-line results and contributes to mission

accomplishment. However, Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2015) differ from Philips (1996) in that they do not see this as a separate level of evaluation but rather it is built into level 4 evaluation. They do however draw a clear distinction between 'for-profit companies' where results are measured in monetary terms unlike in 'not-for-profit', government or military organisation, where it means accomplishing the mission.

Both level 3 evaluation (results) and level 4 evaluations (impact) are related to higher rates of transfer of training (Saks and Burke, 2012) and yet many businesses continue to only carry out level 1 reaction evaluations. There is very little correlation between reaction evaluations (level1) and evaluations of learning, behaviour and results (levels 2, 3 and 4) (Alliger and Janak, 1989). Despite this lack of correlation, Kraiger (2003) found that all four levels of Kirkpatrick's evaluation criteria can be used for the purpose of making improvements in training programmes. Saks and Burke (2012) however concluded that organisations that evaluate their training programmes more frequently in terms of behaviour and results criteria report higher rates of transfer of training.

Conclusion

While some fishmonger training is available in Ireland and other European countries It is clear that the lack of formal accredited training is hindering career progression for staff working in the sector and is also having a negative impact on the profession. This study aims to produce an improved fishmonger training programme of a standard that will meet QQI's programme validation criteria.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design - Strategy

When choosing a suitable research strategy, the researcher considered the suitability and feasibility of different strategies as well as ethical considerations. Dencombe (2010) discusses the various research strategies used in small scale social research projects. These strategies include; surveys and sampling, experiments, grounded theory, action research and mixed methods among others. While initially considering the use of sampling and surveys as well as a mixed methods approach, it was decided that action research was the appropriate research strategy for this study due to its practical nature and the purpose of the research; to improve a training programme. There are four defining characteristics of action research;

- it is practical in nature and aims to deal with real world problems typically in a workplace,
- change is an integral part of the research and
- it is a cyclical process and the participants are the crucial people in the research process (Dencombe, 2010).

Action research is typically used in small-scale research and is particularly useful among professionals who want to use their research to improve their practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). Dencombe (2010) suggests that action research is particularly suitable as a strategy when the purpose of the research is to solve a practical problem and/or produce guidelines for best practice. The checklist described by Dencombe (2010, p.9) was used as an aid in choosing this as suitable research strategy. This check list asks questions around suitability, feasibility and ethics of the strategy. A research strategy can be described as a step-by-step plan of action that gives direction to your thoughts and efforts, enabling you to conduct research systematically and on schedule to produce quality results and detailed reports (DInnen, 2014). It is however important that there is a clear distinction drawn between the strategy and the research methods. The choice of strategy does not dictate the choice of method (Dencombe, 2010) however Dencombe (2010) further explains that in practice certain methods tend to be associated with certain strategies.

Research Approach Adopted

It was decided that obtaining feed-back from participants in the pilot fishmonger programme would be vital in the evaluation process and crucial to answering the first research question – *‘what elements of the pilot programme need to be modified to improve the programme?’* With seven out of the fifteen participants (47%) who started the pilot programme either failing to complete it or failing to submit

the final assignment the researcher decided to include this cohort of 'drop-outs' in the study. It was felt that this group could provide vital information on inadequacies in the programme and therefore assist with identifying the necessary modifications for improvement. The impact of any training on a business is of vital importance to employers and a key element of the evaluation process according to Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2014). Therefore, it was decided to get the views of participants on how much of their training had been applied in the work place. It would also have been beneficial to obtain the views of employers however that was beyond the scope of this research. The research involving participants on the pilot programme took place in phase one of the research.

It was anticipated that there would be a wide range of suggestions for improving the programme therefore following an analysis of the data collected from participants the researcher interviewed a trainer and mentor from the pilot programme to get their views on the feasibility of introducing suggested changes and thereby answer the second research question - '*what modifications can feasibly be made to the programme?*' The research involving trainer and mentor from the pilot programme took place in phase two of the research.

Research Design - Methodology

The researcher decided that face-to-face semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate research method in this study. It was also decided that the interviews would take place on a one-to-one basis. While more time consuming, one-to-one interviews have the advantage of being relatively easy to organise, are easy to control and the opinions and views expressed stem from one source (Dencombe, 2010).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe a research interview as an extended conversation with key qualities. While there are many similarities between an interview and a conversation it is important to understand that research interviews involve a set of assumptions and understandings about a situation which are not associated with a normal conversation (Silverman, 1985). According to Dencombe (2010) there are a number of key distinctions between a conversation and an interview in particular; with a research interview, the interviewer must achieve the consent of the interviewee, there is an agenda for the discussion and the interviewees word can be treated as "*on the record*". The researcher had initially considered the use of questionnaires which would be a cost effective and less time-consuming method for collection of data than interviews. Questionnaires can be used for the collection of straightforward factual information or opinions and the information gathered tends to fall into these two broad categories - 'facts' and 'opinions' (Dancombe, 2010). Interviews on the other-hand lend themselves to the collection of data based on opinions, feelings, emotions and

experience as well as providing an opportunity to deal with sensitive issues (Dancombe, 2010). The potential of interviews to gain deeper insights into opinions, feelings and exploration of complex issues was considered to be the best research tool for gathering data in this study.

There are various types of interviews used in educational research. Open-ended interviews or qualitative interviews are used where the intent is to understand participants in their own terms and it allows them to give direction to the interview process (Brenner, 2006). Open ended interviews can be structured, semi-structured or indeed, unstructured. Interviews can be conducted on a one-to-one basis or within a group. They can be conducted face-to-face, by phone or over the internet.

Structured interviews involve tight control over the format of the questions and answers and are useful for collecting large volumes of data from a wide range of respondent (Dencombe, 2010). In this study, the research group was small and rather than collecting large volumes of standardised data, the researcher wanted the opportunity to explore the experiences and opinions of the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews were used in this study because unlike structured interviews there is an element of flexibility that allows the interviewee to develop their thoughts and speak broadly on the issues raised (Dencombe, 2010).

With semi-structured interviews, the interviewer still has a clear list of issues to be addressed, however according to Brenner (2006) one of the key advantages in the use of semi-structured interviews is that they will allow the interviewer to follow-up on unexpected topics that emerge during the interview. This enables the interviewer to build on the responses received and obtain deeper more meaningful information than would be possible with structured interviews.

Two different interview sheets were prepared and used with the two different groups of interviewees, (i) participants in the pilot programme and (ii) trainers/mentors on the pilot programme. The blank interview sheets are available in Appendices 3 and 4. These interview sheets were used as a prompt for the researcher during the interview, however the questions were not always asked consecutively as often the interviewee had addressed the issue in response to an earlier question.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is not an option; it is a fundamental feature of all good research (Dencombe, 2010). Ethics can be defined as the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). De wet (2010) describes how research in social science poses various and complex dilemmas in relation to ethics. Ethical research involves getting the informed consent of those who will be interviewed, questioned, surveyed or observed or whom material will be taken

from. According to Bell and Ilgen (2001), the practice most frequently relied upon for protecting human participants is informed consent in which potential participants are told the conditions they will encounter and are given the freedom to accept or decline participation. Diener and Crandall (1978) defined informed consent as the procedure in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of the facts that would likely influence their decision. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) further expands this definition of voluntary informed consent and outlines the importance of participants understanding and agreeing to participation without any duress (BERA, 2011).

Before commencing any research, approval was sought from Griffith College, Master of Arts in Training and Education (MATE), Faculty Ethics Committee (FEC). The following documents were submitted:

- Ethical Approval Form
- Summary of Project Proposal
- Information Sheet for Participants
- Participants Consent Form
- Draft Research Instruments
- Debrief Note

The Faculty Ethics committee granted approval to proceed with the research on 14th December 2018. (See appendix 1).

For the primary research, participants were given clear instructions and the purpose of the interview was explained at the start. The information sheet for participants (see appendix 2) was handed out before the interview commenced and adequate time was provided for reading and asking questions. The information sheet contained details about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their data, voluntary participation as well as the option to withdraw from the study without any effect on them at any stage up to the data analysis stage. It also explained that the interview would be recorded with their permission. The participant consent form (see appendix 5) was handed out and again the participant was given adequate time to read and ask questions. The interview only commenced after the participant signed the consent form. At the end of the interview, participants were given a debrief note (see appendix 6) which thanked them for their participation and again offered assurances regarding the confidentiality of the data. The debrief note also provided contact details for the researcher and supervisor and explained that they could contact either if they had any concerns or questions about their participation in the study. There was no financial incentive offered for taking part.

All data collected was securely stored. Recordings were stored on a password protected device and will be held until after the final exam board review in September 2019. After this time, the recordings will then be deleted, and any confidential material will be shredded.

All participants in this study were over the age of 18, therefore it was not necessary to consider the additional ethical issues associated with research involving those under the age of 18.

Data Collection

Fifteen participants took part in the pilot fishmonger programme representing eight different seafood businesses. Six different trainers taught units on the programme and there was one mentor.

Phase One: Interviews with Participants on Pilot Programme

All fifteen participants were contacted by email and invited to take part in the research. This included the three participants who failed to complete the programme. For those who expressed an interest, there was follow-up communication by phone or email to arrange a suitable time and location. Participants who didn't respond to the initial email were contacted a second time. In total seven interviews took place with participants. Interviews were arranged in locations and times suitable for the participant. The range of locations used included, BIM office in Dún Laoghaire, workplace meeting rooms, hotel lobbies and cafes. The interviews took place between 10th January and 14th February 2019. The interview sheet in Appendix 3 was used as a prompt for the interviewer when interviewing participants.

All interviews were recorded using 'voice memos' on a password protected IPAD. The interviews were saved using the interview number and date. As soon as possible after each interview, the recordings were transcribed using voice to text software on an IPAD. Recordings were played back a second time to allow for edits where necessary.

The data collected from participants in phase one was analysed prior to progressing to phase two of the research. The purpose of this was to get an insight of the trainers/mentor's views on the categories that had emerged from the interviews with participants. These categories formed the basis for the interviews in phase two of the research.

Phase Two: Interviews with Trainer/Mentors on Pilot Programme

This second phase involved further qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews with trainers/mentors from the pilot programme. The interview sheet in Appendix 4 was used as a prompt for the interviewer when interviewing the trainer and mentor.

Of the six trainers who taught units on the programme, one was the researcher and four were guest lecturers who taught the shorter units of the programme and were not closely involved with programme design and development. Therefore, just one trainer was identified as key to providing valuable feed-back on the programme. The mentor was also identified as a key person to provide feed-back. The trainer and mentor were contacted by email and invited to take part in the research. A positive response was received from both and subsequently the interviews took place on 6th and 7th March 2019. One interview took place in the BIM office in Dún Laoghaire while the second interview took place in a hotel lobby.

In addition to exploring the categories that had emerged in phase one of the research, findings from the literature review particularly in relation to blended learning were also explored with the trainer and mentor in order to determine their views on the feasibility of potential modifications to the programme. Overall feed-back on the programme was also sought as well as their specific role as a trainer or mentor.

These semi-structured interviews were again recorded using “voice memos” on a password protected IPAD and the interviews were saved by the interview number and date. The data was transcribed promptly after the interviews take place.

Data Analysis

The purpose of analysing something is to get a better understanding of it (Denscombe, 2010). Data analysis can be simply described as the process of making meaning from data (Malone, 2018). Dencombe (2010) breaks down the process of data analysis into five main stages starting with data preparation, which in the case of qualitative data involves transcribing the text. The next stage is an initial exploration of the data. Gardner (2010) discusses the importance of the researcher immersing themselves in the data, the purpose of which is to get a real feel for that data. The next stage is the main data analysis. For qualitative data this involves coding the data, then grouping the codes into categories or themes. If there are a large number of codes, they may be clustered together to reduce them to a smaller more manageable number (Malone, 2018). Categories or themes are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea. Malone, 2018 explains the importance of focussing on a few themes rather than general information when writing reports on qualitative data and recommends 5-7 themes. Gardner (2010) describes how the themes or categories can emerge directly from the immersion process or preliminary analysis of the data. The final stages in the data analysis process according to Dencombe (2010) are presentation and display of the data followed by validation of the data.

In this study, when the data was transcribed all interviewees were assigned reference codes in order to ensure their anonymity and to comply with ethical criteria. The seven interviewees who were participants on the pilot programme were assigned the following reference codes: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7, while the trainer/mentors were assigned the following reference code TM1 and TM2.

The data collected in phase one was firstly analysed using preliminary exploratory analysis to get a general sense of the data. Deeper analysis took place to identify themes which were subsequently coded. Similar codes were clustered and further reviewed until eventually seven categories emerged. Data collected in phase two was coded using the seven categories that had emerged in phase one.

Limitations and Challenges

According to Dencombe (2010) interviewees respond differently depending on how they perceive the person asking the questions and suggests that in particular; the age, sex and ethnic origin of the interviewer can have a bearing on the amount of information that people are willing to divulge as well as the honesty about what they reveal. While there may be little that an interviewer can do about this it is important that they are aware of the “*interviewer effect*”. Many of the interviewees in this study were early school leavers. Before the interview commenced it was explained that the purpose of the research was in part fulfilment for a master’s degree and the researcher wondered if this might have had a negative effect on the interviewer-interviewee relationship. However, as the interviews progressed, the researcher does not believe that this had any significant effect on the information given. A bigger potential challenge was the fact that the interviewer had taught some of the units on the pilot programme. This issue was highlighted when ethical approval was sought from Griffith college. College authorities concluded that there was no risk in this situation as the programme was completed prior to commencement of the research.

While three participants failed to complete the programme, only one of these (33%) agreed to take part in the study. Of the twelve participants who completed the programme six (50%) agreed to take part in the study. This may lead to a slight bias in the findings as there is less input from those who failed to complete programme and were perhaps the most dissatisfied group.

While it was decided that interviews were the most appropriate research method, the feasibility of data collection was an important consideration. The researcher was confident that it would be possible to access sufficient participants from the pilot programme, however the time factor in conducting interviews in various geographical locations was challenging for the researcher.

While interviews are an attractive proposition for project researchers, Dencombe (2010) explains that they are however fraught with hidden dangers due to their apparent simplicity. The researcher was aware of these hidden dangers and took extra precautions in the planning and preparation of the interviews. The researcher was aware that sensitive and controversial issues might arise but was prepared and succeeded in maintaining a passive neutral stance while encouraging the interviewee in elaborate on the issues raised.

Initially it was planned to interview employers of participants on the pilot programme in order to get their feed-back on the application of the training in the work place as well as the business impact of the training. However, it was later decided to focus the limited time and resources on interviewing participants from the pilot programme instead in order to get a broader spectrum of opinions on the pilot programme from those who directly participated. As a result, the employer's perspective on the application of the training as well as the business impact of the training will not be included in this study. While participants had an opportunity to express their views in these areas, the researcher is aware that their views may be biased.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Preliminary Analysis

Overall the responses from interviewees to the pilot programme were mainly positive with most reporting that they had enjoyed the course, had learned and/or applied some aspects of the training to their work. P3 summed it up when she said, *“For a first time ye did a really good job”*. While all said that they would recommend the course, some stated that certain aspects would need to change before recommending it to a colleague.

From initial review of the data, it was clear that the technical skills unit along with the instructor of that unit stood out as key to the success of the pilot programme. Equally one unit; Seafood Quality and Freshness stood out for particular criticism with many negative comments relating to both the trainer and teaching methodologies employed for that unit.

While all interviewees recognised the importance of assessment, it was clear that certain aspects of the assessments proved challenging for some, in particular the written project. A small number of interviewees recognised the potential for learning through assessment while some questioned why they should even bother completing the project when there was no qualification at the end.

Following preliminary analysis of the data, twelve themes emerged and were subsequently coded. The themes were:

- Learning applied to work/positive impact with employers
- Positive aspects
- Positive aspects specifically related to the technical skills unit
- Educational challenges
- Learning through assessment
- Reason for doing the course/benefits
- Things that didn't work, need to change
- Suggested improvements
- Benefits not directly related to the course -e.g. networking benefits /interest in education
- Certification/ accredited training
- Blended learning- negative
- Blended learning - positive

On further review of the data and the volume of comments under these codes, some codes were clustered and further reviewed until eventually seven categories emerged. The data will be discussed and analysed under these seven categories:

- Category 1: Positive Aspects of the Pilot Programme - Overview
- Category 2: Technical Skills Unit
- Category 3: Seafood Quality and Freshness Unit
- Category 4: Mentoring
- Category 5: Assessment
- Category 6: Certification
- Category 7: Blended Learning

Category 1: Positive Aspects of the Pilot Programme - Overview

To identify potential modifications to produce an improved fishmonger training programme, the researcher felt that it was firstly important to get an insight into the positive aspects of the programme. The purpose of this was to highlight elements of the programme that worked well and therefore should be retained or enhanced as well as providing an opportunity to explore aspects that could be applied to other units of the programme.

All seven interviewees who had participated in the pilot reported that they had *“enjoyed the programme”*. However, the degree to which they enjoyed it varied. For some there was a very high level of satisfaction with the programme with P6 reporting that it had far exceeded her expectations *“there were things I learned that I would have never dreamed of”*. Those who were relatively new to fishmongering reported the highest level of satisfaction with P1 stating that *“coming from no fisheries background it was all a learning experience”* while P4 stated that *“for me that is new in the retail business it was a big help”*.

When asked if she would recommend the course P6 said *“Oh yes, I would say definitely”*. P2 stated that he would recommend the course to colleagues and highlighted the intangible benefits of participating in the course when he stated that it would give colleagues *“a greater interest in their job and a sense of worth”*. Other intangible benefits highlighted by respondents included networking and knowledge sharing opportunities. P3 stated that she wouldn't have previously known anybody outside of her own shop, while P5 stated that *“it was good when we were out at the course, we were all comparing counters and showing pictures.... you meet lads in the game”*. The networking benefits were reiterated by P7 *“we keep in touch on social media, I think that's what it's all about -meeting new people”*. P6 also felt that the networking benefits were extremely important *“it is a whole big circle*

now, we are all going to help each other work together". TM1 discussed the importance of formal training courses for fishmongers such as this programme *"this is starting students off on the right foot....it has the capability of bringing somebody into an industry as a fairly well qualified handler"*.

Participants were generally satisfied with the structure and layout of the programme. P3 said that we should leave all the units in. P2 expressed particular satisfaction that the course was run on Mondays and Tuesdays as these are the least busy days for fishmongers and he hoped that this would continue *"Head office would be happy with that because somebody is not leaving the shop on a busy day"*. P6 felt that the block release structure gave participants an opportunity to absorb what they had learned.

Many aspects of the training have been applied in the workplace. P3 said *"It's the little things that make a big difference.... I can say how to make chowder"*. Referring to the seafood nutrition unit and the importance of giving the consumer correct advice, P3 said *"You don't want to be leading somebody on especially if they come to you for advice"*. P5 said that he can *"now give a couple more ideas on cooking"*. Other examples of where the training has been applied in the workplace are discussed below under Category 3: Technical Skills Unit and Category 4: Seafood Quality and Freshness.

When reviewing the positive aspects of the pilot programme, the technical skills unit and the trainer for that unit were referenced on numerous occasions therefore it was decided to look at this unit as a stand-alone category. The researcher considered this important not only to gain a deeper understanding of why this unit and trainer were singled out for positive comments by interviewees, but also to gain an insight into what aspects might be built upon and incorporated into other elements of the programme.

Category 2: Technical Skills Unit

The technical skills unit was delivered over two days with a mixture of classroom learning, demonstrations and practice. The classroom session introduced participants to fish filleting techniques and knife safety. After an initial demonstration, participants spent several hours over the two days practicing their technical fish filleting skills and this unit was consistently highlighted as one of the most positive aspects of the programme. P3 said *"the filleting was very good, it was really enjoyable as well"*. P5 said *"I would have liked a little bit more hands-on on the filleting side"*. When asked about the best parts of the course P4 said *"the filleting part"*, P2 responded *"the filleting and boning"*. P7 summarised the importance of the technical skills unit in the context of the programme when he said, *"it's all about the practical skills.....you could know as much theory as you want but if you can't actually do the practical stuff, I don't think they would take you on (employers)"*. P7 went on to explain the importance of technical skills relative to knowledge when working as a fishmonger "A

customer comes to you and asks about the health benefits of mackerel.....and I tell her.....and then if she says I want some mackerel fillets, can you cut them for me and I don't know how to cut them that means we can talk the talk but we can't walk the walk.....that is why the practical side is so important".

Many of the learnings from the technical skills unit are now being applied in the workplace. Referring to one of his clients, P4 reported that *"we started scaling their fish and sales have gone crazy"* while P2 reported that *"customers are coming back now, and they are quite happy with all the pin-boning"*. P6 said that her skills had vastly improved *"when I get whole salmon in now, if they don't sell in two days I can fillet it and put the side out"*.

The only negative element of this unit was that there wasn't enough time or fish. P4 said *"on the filleting side we didn't have enough time or as many days as we should have to cover what we needed to learn, and we didn't have the required species of fish"*. TM2 agreed that it would be desirable to have a greater range and quantity of fish, however he explained that this is not always feasible and is reflective of the challenges faced by the fishing industry *"Okay the only problem that we have in the industry is that the volume and variety of fish depends on the weather. Normally whenever we are doing the course in Howth we would have anything from up to eight or nine varieties of fish, but it just happened on those days of the pilot that we ran into a situation where there had been gale force winds on the coast five or six days before the course"*. Responding to the possibility of spending more time on this unit, TM2 said *"the two days covers everything that would be needed in a real-life situation in your fish shop or your supermarket counter or your wholesale or retail premises so you're getting everything from your knife sharpening and all your basic skill set"*. He went on to explain that there are more intensive fish filleting courses available for those who wish to progress their career as a fish filleter rather than a fishmonger.

The trainer on the technical skills unit was consistently praised by interviewees with P6 saying *"It was good having Hal there, he is a good teacher, he is one of those people that you learn fast of... he'll show you and you will watch him, and you'll get it... he is a master in his trade and it showed"*. P5 said *"Hal is great at everything that he does...he is a lot easier to work with"*. P1 said *"he was brilliant.... he is a master fishmonger.... I could listen to him all day.... He has the experience and he knows what he is talking about"*. It was suggested that Hal should have a greater role in the Seafood Quality and Freshness unit as well as mentoring as discussed below.

Category 3: Seafood Quality and Freshness Unit

While the technical skills unit was singled out for its excellence, the seafood quality and freshness unit stood out for criticism. Interviewees consistently referred to this unit and the trainer when asked about aspects of the programme that they felt didn't work well or needed to change. P3 said *"you know what I'm going to say; the seafood quality and not because of what it is – well nobody is going to like tasting and smelling fourteen day old fish, but it's not the problem... it's the fact that he stood there (the instructor) and he was just saying this would be a 5 this would be a 6, whereas we were just writing it down"*. Referring to this unit, P2 said *"we were learning nothing...there he was just telling us that it is a Torry whatever and we were writing it down"*. P5 said *"we didn't get to do enough of the grading, it was being done for us, it was probably dragged out way too long"*. P6 too felt that the day could have been a lot shorter *"I felt the whole day was just taken up by listening to his voice"* and she was particularly critical of the tasting aspect of this unit stating that *"it was no benefit whatsoever because people didn't want to do it, there is no point in having a tasting ...and you are turning people off"*. P3 however felt that the tasting was an important aspect of this unit *"everybody should have to smell them and eat them...I think some people got off very lightly"*.

While the unit came in for much criticism, interviewees recognised the importance of the subject and were eager to suggest ways of improving it. The improvements suggested revolved around more time for participants to practice the grading of fish themselves rather than just watching the trainer carry out the demonstration. P2 said *"Put the people into groups and let them think and come up with a figure"*. P6 suggested a short demonstration followed by participants grading the fish themselves *"He could have had three or four boxes of fish...he didn't have to go into the process for every single one of them but could have asked- what do you think of this fish?"* P3 also suggested having a shorter demonstration followed by individuals having an opportunity to grade the fish themselves *"just have a demo or two.... we need to be sent off on our own with a few day-old fish.... different days and we need to test these"*. P3 felt that the learnings from this unit would translate into a practical application in her day-to day work and ultimately wanted to learn *"would it be okay to put on the counter; would it be okay to use in a fish mix or something else?"* rather than having the trainer allocate a score that was meaningless to her.

While there was dissatisfaction with how the unit was taught some had applied the learning to their work. P4 said *"the things I look for now when my fish comes in is the gills, the smell, how it looks, the eyes..."* and P1 said *"I can now definitely see a difference in quality"*. P5 was most dissatisfied with the trainer and suggested that the trainer from the technical skills unit could easily fill the role; *"Hal*

probably would have done just as good a job and he would have broken it down into layman's terms.... I think Hal could have done the whole thing between him and John".

Category 4: Mentoring

On the pre-course material, participants were informed that they would each receive a visit to their workplace from a mentor where they would receive further guidance on best practice for the storage and display of seafood in order to maintain freshness and quality (BIM, 2018).

Some interviewees expressed confusion about the role of the mentor and many had expectations that were not realised. P6 said *"I actually thought that he would be coming in his whites and helping out on the fish counter with me for the day and showing me his skills, and I was actually looking forward to that. Instead, he came out and he looked at my counter and didn't come in behind"*. Referring to the mentoring, P3 said *"I didn't find that useful because it was the same thing"*. P3 went on to explain that their shop was an award-winning shop and had previously received mentoring sessions so there was very little else the mentor could do, in her opinion. P2 reported that the mentor had visited briefly but like P3 he felt he did not really learn anything new as the counter was already very good having previously received mentoring visits. P5 was highly critical of the mentoring session stating that he *"didn't benefit from it"* and felt that the mentor had spent the time highlighting issues that were not of most importance to a fish counter *"Nobody's counter is going to be perfect"*. When asked if he found the mentoring session useful, P7 said *"No I don't think so...I didn't really get it...from he came out until when he left, I didn't really feel any difference...when I came out of the course, I felt I learned something but when he came out I didn't get any benefit"*. P7 went on to suggest that *"some shops could do with his guidance, but I think we are fairly alright here"*. This view was echoed by P3 *"For everybody else it would have been more useful"*. P1 stated that he didn't have the mentoring session due to scheduling difficulties. P4 had a visit from the mentor but as he is not currently working in seafood retailing found it of limited benefit.

It is not surprising that there was some dissatisfaction and confusion among participants as the mentor himself (TM1) reported that he was under extreme time pressure to get the mentoring completed on time *"I was in panic stations trying to get the job done"*. He was also unaware of the programme learning outcomes reporting that *"I may have been shown them... they were probably made available, but I don't believe they were"*.

When it was suggested that the trainer from the skills unit might potentially have a role as a mentor in the future, P3 responded negatively asking *"What is Hal going to say to us?"*. P6 however responded positively *"Absolutely, I would love Hal to be the man.... Oh wow...Oh my God that would be amazing...."*

imagine having Hal down here". P5 also responded positively "Hal behind the block...Yes I think Hal is great at everything he does".

Category 5: Assessment

There were three assessments in the pilot programme; a written assignment based on unit 1 with a weighting of 20%, skills demonstration based on unit 2 with a weighting of 30% and a project based largely on units 3 to 5 but also incorporating the seafood industry study trip and mentoring session. In addition, participants had an opportunity to bring in learnings from the overall programme into the project. One of the main issues highlighted was the fact that participants were not aware of how the programme was going to be assessed when they initially booked a place. P3 said *"If we had been told straight out that we had to do two, that would have been fine but the fact that we had one and then another one -none of us knew that we were going to have a second one, that wasn't on the brief that we were going to have a second one thrown at us".* P5 said *"We didn't think we were going to have to do a 1,000 word assignment and then a 3,500 words... If I had to have known that there was going to be that much to it.....do you know what would have put me off thinking that I wouldn't be up to it."*

The first written assignment while challenging for some, did not cause undue stress compared to the longer project. Referring to the first assignment, P7 said *"I actually enjoyed doing it"* and saw the benefit of learning through assessment *"I did learn because when you write things down it will stick in your head a little bit more"*. P6 also reported the benefits of learning through assessment *"Oh definitely it is like revising that is exactly what it is, you are revising, you have learned something and then you go back over it"* while P3 said *"it made you sit down and actually look through the course material that you gave us"*. P5 however did not see the potential for learning through assessment stating that *"the only way for learning is hands-on, I learned a trade."*

The volume of work required outside of the classroom in particular for the project was exceptionally challenging for some with P7 stating *"when you are bringing it home and trying to find time to do it with kids and work etc. in general people don't want to do homework that's just how it is people don't like doing homework"*. P6 said *"I had never done an assignment in my life and I didn't even know if I was doing it properly, the assignment was one of the hardest... the worst bit of the course was definitely having to try to come home knowing that you have to write 3,500 words.... I actually googled what an assignment is"*.

P5 spoke about particular challenges he faced when doing the written assignments *"I'm not the type that can sit down and learn out of a book to be honest so when you handed me those things (assignments) that was a disaster for me.* P1 also had similar issues *"writing and reading is just not my*

forte, I'm more hands-on like if there is paperwork to do I will do it, but it is not one of my fortes". P5 went on to speak about particular challenges he experienced with the written assignments "I'm dyslexic, I could physically sit in the room and give you the answers, but I couldn't write them down for you". P5 stated that he had left school early "I left school at 16 so I wouldn't have achieved that much at school, I done my junior cert and I left after that". He questioned the benefits of including large volumes of theory and assignments in a programme for fishmongers stating that "the majority (of fishmongers) have left school early, this game is that type of people, -people that are good with their hands and good with chat".

Interviewees were shown a project template (see appendix 7) that could potentially be used for the project in the future and this received a largely positive response, particularly from those who found written assignments most challenging. P6 said *"That's brilliant.... It wouldn't be as scary"*. P2 said *"that is a lot better it is a lot nicer, it is laid out a lot better..... it's far better. P5 stated that "this would still not be easy for me"*. However, P3 felt that it would be too easy stating *"that seems to be really easy, I think you are getting way too much there"* suggesting instead *"that is the sort of stuff you should be doing at the end of the day at the end of the module and just kind of going over it refreshing the brain, yes if they got that at the start and then put it into a block essay"*. P6 who had found the assignment challenging having had to google what an assignment was, developed her own strategy for doing the project *"I approached it in a way that I was telling a story.... I didn't worry about the 3,500 words... I picked each section and I wrote what I could about it"*.

None of the participants had any significant issue with the skills demonstration element of the assessment. The skills demonstration with a weighting of 30% was carried out at the end of unit 2. Only one interviewee had an issue with the video recording of the skills demonstration. P1 stated *"that was just a turn off when you were doing the filleting, you were there with the camera.... I kind of just froze with that...it put you under pressure"*. When other interviewees were asked about the video recording none had any issue with it and they understood the importance of obtaining evidence of assessment. P3 stated *"no issue with that... how else are you going to assess it"*.

Both TM1 and TM2 felt that there should be a greater emphasis on skills when assessing the programme. TM2 said *"somebody that is really good with their manual applications might not reflect that in their written or oral skills"*. TM1 said *"it's a vocational skill.... instead of a project, a counter assessment"*. TM2 spoke about the *"fear of education"* as a reason why they are doing a manual application job and suggested that the weighting for written assignment and skills should change *"I would say for this introductory course possibly 50:50 or 60:40, yes I would say 60% for your manual application and then 40% written"*.

Category 6: Certification

When asked why they had chosen to take part in the fishmonger training programme, interviewees gave a variety of reasons. For some, it was to improve their technical skills; Having been told about the programme from her manager, P3 researched the course further; *"I saw technical filleting skills, so I knew that was definitely the one for me"*. P4 booked a place because he *"wanted to learn about filleting more than anything else and the culinary skills"*. P6 not only wanted to improve her technical skills but also wanted to improve her knowledge for the benefit of her customers; *"I get asked different questions from people, some I would never have been able to answer...and I just thought I need to learn more about things"*. Others attended the course largely because their employer had recommended it and paid for it. P1 stated that the company had already paid for an employee who was unable to attend, and he took their place; *"the company paid for it, so they had to send somebody anyhow"*. P7 said that his manager had put his name forward while P2 said *"I was just signed up for it"*. P5 said that he wanted to get more filleting time but interestingly he was the only one of the interviewees to refer to career progression as a reason for doing the course *"I did the course because I wanted to further myself"*.

None of the interviewees referred to obtaining a certificate as a reason for doing the course, however many did recognise the importance and potential benefit of obtaining a certificate in fishmonger skills. P6 said that a BIM certificate would be important to her employer, but she felt that a qualification in fishmongering such as a QQI certificate would be crucial to driving fish sales and professionalising the sector *"You are a qualified fishmonger, there are your papers.....You wouldn't go into a hairdresser if they weren't qualified"*.

P2 initially reported that a BIM certificate wouldn't matter to him personally *"I'm just going to do what I always do"* however he went on to explain that because he is not classed as a fishmonger he is earning less money and on reflection said, *"at least it would be something I could take with me"*. P1 discussed the potential benefits of a QQI certificate for people that might move to another country in the future. P4 believed that the skills were more important than a qualification *"It's always nice to have the piece of paper but the skills would be more important to me"*. P5 said it would matter to him personally, however he didn't feel that the certificate would make him a better fishmonger *"You are either up to the game or you're not, a piece of paper won't make any difference"*.

P7 discussed the benefits of accredited training in terms of motivating participants to complete assessments *"what is the point in doing these essays and assignments if at the end of it it's not going to stand to you if it's not a qualification"*. P3 expressed a similar view and highlighted the importance

of qualifications to professionalising the sector *"all of these butchers have qualifications, it is more recognised that they are trained; they are a professional.... If anything, it would attract more people to the job"*.

While the opinions amongst participants were varied about the importance of accreditation both the trainer and mentor were strong advocates of accredited training. TM1 said *"I feel that it needs to be accredited, they need to get a badge after it - a tangible award... a piece of paper is no use, it has to carry some weight"*. TM2 highlighted the importance of accredited training to the individual as well as in professionalising the sector *"somebody holding a QQI certificate- they are obviously going to get a job above somebody with no qualification or with a lesser qualification...the more certified and the more qualified that people are the better it has to be for the industry"*. While acknowledging that a BIM certificate would carry some recognition within the industry, TM2 believes that QQI accredited training is essential to grow the sector *"when you start going down the route of QQI then our industry is actually going to be taken seriously"*.

Category 7: Blended Learning

While blended learning was not utilised in the pilot programme, it may be incorporated into the fishmonger training programme in the future as discussed in the Introduction section. Therefore, it was decided that it was important to obtain the views of interviewees on blended learning.

Most participants had not heard of blended learning and when it was explained they initially reacted negatively to its use in this programme. However, when examples were described in more detail some participants reflected that it might indeed have a potential role in the programme in the future. When asked about incorporating video clips of the filleting unit, P5 saw potential benefit saying, *"Oh yes if you had a video to watch it over...if you were able to look back that would be great"*. P5 proceeded to illustrate various video clips of filleting techniques from YouTube on his phone. P6 also reported using her phone to look at video clips of fish preparation techniques however she did not believe that there would be any benefit in incorporating this into the programme saying; *"you can do that anyway because you can just google it"*. P7 suggested using interactive videos, but then reflected on their appropriateness for this course saying; *"but again it is a more practical hands-on kind of stuff rather than sitting there typing or writing"*. Referring to the culinary skills unit, P6 said *"I think you need to be there in the classroom, the smells and the essence and everything about it makes it real"*.

The lack of computer skills might also be another challenge with most interviewees reporting that they did not own a laptop, those that did rarely used it and most relied on their mobile phones for internet

access. P4 said *“me personally I’m not one for computers, if I was doing a course I would prefer to go into the classroom.... computers and me...no... a complete no”*.

Motivation was raised as another concern with P6 questioning the challenge of self-motivation in a blended learning environment *“would you put it on the back burner and say I’ll do it tomorrow whereas if you are actually in the classroom or going to a course you have to do it now”*. P3 felt that people wouldn’t engage *“Oh people wouldn’t look, no they won’t look”*. P6 also saw blended learning as particularly challenging for those who have been out of education for some time *“getting back to education you have to be in the classroom”*. Other interviewees raised the issue of difficulties encountered in doing work outside of the classroom as discussed above under Category 5 Assessments.

TM2 believed that the practical nature of the programme did not lend itself to blended learning *“personally I don’t think that the manual application could be done online”*. He also felt that it might not be the most appropriate learning mechanism for this cohort of students *“I would say that they will use their mobile phones to look up some things that they’re not that sure about or a query on a specific point but whether the interest would travel right through into taking a course online I wouldn’t be that sure”*. TM1 was more critical of the prospect of introducing blended learning to this programme and did not believe that it would add to the programme or benefit the learners. Controversially he suggested that its potential introduction would be to suit the training provider and not the learner *“they are vocational people... they are hands on operators, if you try and change that, you are trying to change it to suit an administrative body”*.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

The key purposes of training programme evaluation according to Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2015) is to improve the programme. The purpose of this study was to evaluate a pilot fishmonger training programme and recommend changes that could feasibly be introduced to produce an improved programme. Elements of the pilot programme that worked well and should remain unchanged were also considered.

There were many positive aspects to the pilot fishmonger training programme. Participants enjoyed taking part in the programme, gained significant knowledge and skills, and have applied some of the learning in the workplace. Many intangible benefits of participation in this programme such as networking opportunities and a motivation for workers were recognised. Networking opportunities should be encouraged and promoted where possible throughout the programme in the future. While many elements of the programme worked well and should remain unchanged, significant modifications are required to produce an improved training programme for fishmongers.

The fishmonger profession typically attracts early school leavers who have an aptitude for manual skills and good customer service. Many are drawn to this work because it does not require excessive reading and writing ability. While it is recommended that all units in the pilot programme should remain, significant changes must be introduced into how the learning is assessed. In the pilot programme, the two written assignments were particularly challenging for many participants. Written assignments may not be the most appropriate way to assess learning outcomes for a programme that is largely skills based. The weighting of 70:30 in favour of written assignments should change to 60:40 in favour of skills assessment.

It is recommended that the first written assignment on hygiene and food safety in seafood retailing remains unchanged with a weighting of 20%. The skills assessment carried out on the technical fish filleting unit with a weighting of 30% should also remain unchanged. The 3,500 word project with a weighting of 50% should be discontinued and replaced with a learner record and a second skills assessment. The learner record could be based on the project template shown to interviewees (see appendix 7). It is suggested that the learner record should be worth 20% of the programme. The second skills assessment should make up the remaining 30% of the overall assessment. This should consist of a practical assessment of the participants ability to set up a fish counter display based on learnings from all aspects of the programme. Formative assessment should be incorporated into the programme where appropriate and feed-back should be provided to learners in advance of final summative assessments.

The inadequacy of pre-course material made available to the participants as well as the trainers and mentors was highlighted by many interviewees. This was particularly evident from participant's expectations of the mentoring process which were often not realised. Participants also highlighted issues concerning the lack of information received in advance about how the programme would be assessed. Pre-course material that is informative, clear and precise should be made available in advance of learners signing up for the programme. This should include information on programme aims and objectives, scheduling, assessment, certification and entry criteria. Potential learners should complete an application form and should have an opportunity to declare details of any access issues or learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The programme leader should then ensure that all reasonable supports are in place for the learner in line with legal requirements and the training provider's policy and procedures.

A student handbook should be provided at the start of the programme providing further information to learners. Information in the student handbook should include the programme schedule, learning outcomes, assessment schedule, marking rubric, contact detail for programme leader and administrator and an indicative reading list. It should also include specific details for the individual units and mentoring session. An induction to the programme should take place on Day 1 to give further details to learners and provide an opportunity for them to seek clarity on any aspect of the programme.

As well as a student handbook, it is clear from the research that a trainer/mentor handbook should also be provided for all trainers and mentors on the programme. This is necessary to ensure that the trainers and mentors have a clear understanding of their role, the programme and unit learning outcomes, the assessment strategy and their role in provision of formative feed-back to learners. This is particularly important for the mentor, who on the pilot programme was given no clear guidance as to his role. Consequently, learners had expectations that were often not realised. Overall there was a high level of dissatisfaction with the mentoring process. This may partly be due to time constraint issues encountered by the mentor as well as a lack of clarity about the role. Participants were unanimous in their view that there should be more time spent on the technical fish filleting skills (unit 2). The programme schedule would not allow additional time for this unit to be extended. Consideration should be given to extending the role of the trainer from this unit to include a role in on-site mentoring where learners need additional support in this area. This would also free-up time for the current mentor and allow him to concentrate on learners who had not received any mentoring sessions prior to commencing the programme.

The Seafood Quality and Freshness unit is a crucial element of the programme, but the teaching methodology employed needs to have a greater student-centred focus. Hicks (2015) found that adult learners are motivated when they are involved in the instruction process, where they can solve immediate problems and are involved in the decision-making process. Rather than the trainer engaging in continuous talk and demonstrations, learners need to be given an opportunity to practice their fish quality assessment techniques. The trainer for this unit too will benefit from having a trainer/mentor handbook available to him. A clear lesson plan for this unit should be devised in consultation with the programme leader. The lesson plan should outline how the learning outcomes for the unit will be achieved as well as giving a break-down of teaching methodologies and the time allocated for talk, demonstration and practice during the session. The trainers on all units should provide a written lesson plan and this should be agreed with the programme leader in advance. Opportunities for incorporation of experiential learning should be utilised, where possible, in all units.

An application to QQI to have the programme validated should be progressed as a priority. The level of knowledge, skills and competencies associated with the programme suggest that a level 5 special purpose award would be appropriate for learners who successfully complete the programme. Many of the participants on the pilot programme were early school leavers with little or no qualifications. Some learners failed to complete the assignments as they felt there was no incentive for doing so. The prospect of achieving an award on the National Framework of Qualifications would be a motivating factor for learners. While some attended the programme primarily to enhance their technical skills there is no doubt that a QQI qualification will benefit the learner as it would provide formal recognition of those skills. The lack of professional qualification is hindering the progression of fishmongers in Ireland and throughout Europe. Programme validation by QQI is crucial for professionalising the fishmonger sector in Ireland and is in line with the training providers strategy to provide accredited training and career progression opportunities for those entering the sector.

Blended learning was not utilised on the pilot programme, however, its potential use in enhancing the programme in the future was considered in this study. Blended learning is now used in a variety of training situations on a broad range of programmes. The training provider has introduced an e-learning platform with a view to delivering training programmes in a blended learning environment in the future. Feed-back from both participants and the trainer as well as the mentor was extremely negative about incorporating blended learning into the fishmonger training programme. The practical nature of many elements of this programme would not lend itself readily to blended learning. There was some interest in the potential use of video recordings of demonstrations, however, these types of demonstrations are currently freely available on platforms such as YouTube and therefore would

not provide any added benefits. The participants on this programme may not have the computer skills and self-motivation required for engaging in blended learning. Future research is needed to explore the uptake and engagement in blended learning programmes among early school leavers undertaking programmes at the lower levels on the National Framework of Qualifications. The research should also review blended learning use in skill-based programmes. Blended learning should not be incorporated into the fishmonger training programme until more research is carried out and there is evidence of its potential benefits to this type of programme.

The conclusions and recommendations in this study draw primarily on the evaluation of the pilot fishmonger programme. The researcher also reviewed some existing fishmonger training models in the UK and Europe. Much of the content on the pilot programme outlined in Table 1 was similar to the content in the UK programmes offered by the seafood school at Billingsgate and Seafish as outlined in Tables 2 and 3 respectively. The key difference was that both UK programmes included an element of marketing while the Billingsgate programme also covered sustainability. The pilot programme included units on hygiene and food safety, consumer information and nutrition which were not addressed in either of the two UK programmes. Another key difference in these programmes was the duration, with the pilot programme delivered over seven days. The Billingsgate programme is delivered over just two days while the Seafish programme can take up to one year to complete.

The E-FishNet proposed training model for fishmongers in Europe is the most comprehensive in content including all aspects of the pilot programme as well as the content covered in both UK programmes. In addition it includes topics such as fishing gear and economic management. However, this is just a proposed training model with no time frame for delivery specified. Indeed, it is envisaged that much of this content will be available on an e-learning platform rather than face-to-face delivery. Given that the feed-back from interviewees in relation to blended learning was largely negative, it is questionable if the aspirations of this proposed model will ever be realised.

It would not be possible to add additional units to the pilot programme without increasing the length of the programme or excluding existing units. The duration of the pilot programme as well as the learning outcomes were determined in consultation with industry. Feed-back from participants was in favour of retaining all units and largely in favour of the seven-day duration. Therefore, it will not be possible to include additional material such as marketing and sustainability in the programme.

This research aimed to establish what elements of the pilot fishmonger programme needed to be modified to produce an improved training programme for fishmongers as well as determining the feasibility of introducing these modifications. The researcher concluded that all units on the pilot

programme should be retained, while blended learning should not be introduced until there is more evidence of its potential benefits for this type of programme. Certain modifications to the pilot programme will lead to a significantly improved programme that will benefit the learner and bring a high level of professionalism to the fishmonger sector. The recommended modifications that can feasibly be introduced to the programme include;

- more opportunities for experiential learning particularly in the seafood quality assessment unit
- significant improvement in the content and quality of pre-course material made available to participants, trainers and mentors
- implementation of learner supports where required
- changes to assessment with a move away from written assignments to a greater emphasis on skills demonstrations.

Accreditation will add significant value to the programme and benefit to learners, therefore, the application for programme validation to QQI should be progressed as a priority. Implementation of the recommended changes should ensure that the application to QQI will be successful. This would put Ireland at the forefront of fishmonger training; becoming the first European country to have a fishmonger award on the National Framework of Qualifications. A summary of the key recommendations is given in Table 5 below.

Evaluation is a crucial step in the systematic training cycle and it is recommended that the evaluation process continues after the roll out of the improved programme. The purpose of this would be to introduce further improvements to the programme and to examine in greater detail the transfer of learning and application in the workplace. Another important aspect of further evaluations should examine the impact of the training on the business and ROI for employers which will be crucial to the long-term success of this programme.

Pilot Fishmonger Programme		Recommendations for Improved Fishmonger Programme
Pre-course Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic pre-course material that lacked clarity - Disability issues were not considered 	New: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application form: learners will have an opportunity to declare any access issues or learning difficulties - Clear and precise pre-course information - Lesson plans agreed with programme leader
Induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No formal induction 	New: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Induction session on Day 1 - Student handbook - Implementation of additional learner supports where required
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seven days 	No change
Unit 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hygiene and food Safety in seafood retailing 	No change
Unit 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical skills: filleting, skinning, removing bones 	No change
Unit 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seafood quality and freshness 	Amend teaching methodology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More opportunities for experiential learning
Unit 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seafood culinary skills and nutrition 	No change
Unit 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumer information and customer service 	No change
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No clear instructions for the mentor or the mentoring process provided 	New: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trainer/Mentor handbook - Appoint a second back-up mentor, ideally the trainer from unit 2
Study Trip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seafood industry study trip 	No change
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Written assignment (20% weighting) 	No change
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills demonstration (30% weighting) 	No change
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project (50% weighting) 	Discontinue
		New: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learner record (20% weighting) - Second skills demonstration (30% weighting)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No formative assessment 	New: <i>Formative assessment incorporated into programme</i>
Blended Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not utilised 	No change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should not be incorporated until further research is carried out that demonstrates potential benefit
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-validated programme Participants received a certificate of attendance 	New: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress application for programme validation - Once validated by QQI, successful participants will be eligible for a level 5 award on the NFQ

Table 5: Summary - Comparisons Between Pilot Fishmonger Programme and Recommendations for Improved Programme

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Ethics Approval

Ethics Approval



ETHICS COMMITTEE Approval - 14th December 2018

Student Name: Eileen Soraghan

Student Number: 2960773

Supervisor: Peter Gillis

On review of your amended ethics submission The Master of Arts in Training and Education (MATE)
*Faculty Ethics Committee (FEC) has approved this proposed study you may proceed.

Peter Gillis
Dissertation Module Lead

Pilot Fishmonger Training Programme Study

Information Sheet for Participants

Introduction

My name is Eileen Soraghan and I work as a food training instructor with Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM). I am also studying part-time for a master's degree in Training and Education in Griffith College.

Purpose

I am conducting research on a pilot fishmonger training programme in part fulfilment for my master's degree in Griffith College. The purpose of the research is to identify the necessary modification to the pilot programme in order to produce the ideal training programme for fishmongers.

Description

You have been invited to take part in this research because you either took part in the pilot programme or you are a programme mentor or a trainer who taught some of the units on the pilot programme.

Interview with participants

I am interviewing participants who took part in the pilot fishmonger training programme. I will ask you about your overall opinion of the programme, including the content, how it was taught and how assessments were carried out. The findings from these interviews will be analysed and will form the basis of two further interviews with will take place with course trainers/mentors.

Interviews with course trainers/mentors

I am interviewing two course trainers/mentors who taught units on the pilot programme or was involved directly with mentoring participants. I will ask you about your overall opinion of the programme as well as views on feasibility of suggestions that have emerged from the previous interviews with participants and employers.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you wish to withdraw from the study at any point prior to the analysis phase of the research, please feel free to do so.

Confidentiality

You can be assured that all information you share with me will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and your comments/contributions will be anonymised both in terms of your name, and the business you work in. With your permission the interviews will be video recorded, and I will then type up what was said. Recordings will be securely destroyed following submission of my work

The research ethics committee at Griffith College has granted permission for this research to be carried out. Please feel free to contact me at eileensoraghan@gmail.com or +3531 2696913 at any time if you have any questions regarding this study.

Thank you for reading this information leaflet.

Researcher's signature

Appendix 3 Interview Sheet for Participants on Pilot Programme

Semi-Structured Interviews with Participants

Question 1, Overview:

Tell me about your experience of the fishmonger training programmes

(Prompt: Did it turn out as expected/ What did you expect before starting the programme?)

Question 2, Learning Outcomes:

Were the learning outcomes for the programme made clear to you at the start and were these achieved?

(Prompt: Did the programme achieve the objectives)

Question 3, Pedagogy:

How did you feel about the methods used to teach the various units within the programme?

Question 4, Assessment:

How did you feel about the various forms of assessment that were used?

Question 5, Mentoring:

Tell me about your experience with the programme mentor.

Question 6, Seafood Industry Study Trip

What did you think of the seafood industry study trip?

(Prompt: Did it add value to the programme)

Question 7, Application of training in the workplace

Have you changed anything in your work practices as a result of your participation on the programme?

Question 8, Improvements

How could we improve this programme?

(Prompt: Is there anything you would change?)

Question 9, Technology

How would you feel if some elements of the programme were delivered in a blended learning environment?

Appendix 4 Interview Sheet for Trainer/Mentors on Pilot Programme

Semi-structured Interviews with Trainer/Mentors on Pilot Programme

Question 1, Overview:

Tell me about your view of the fishmonger training programme:

Question 2, Participation:

How did you feel that participants engaged with the programme?

Question 3, Assessment:

Do you think the teaching methods and assessment were appropriate for the group of learners on the pilot programme? (And for achieving the learning outcomes)

- Did you know what the learning outcomes were for the programme?
- Tell me what you believe were the key learning outcomes?

Question 4, Improvement:

What would you change to improve the programme, particularly in relation to the unit that you taught?

Question 5 Overview of the role of the mentor/trainer

Tell me about your role as a mentor/trainer

Question 6 Guidance from BIM on mentoring/training Process

Were you given any guidance from BIM about your role as a mentor/trainer?

Question 7 Biggest Challenge

What was the biggest challenge for you as a mentor/trainer?

Question 8 What were the main benefits for participants

Question 9 How could the mentoring/training be improved?

Question 10 Discuss the seven categories that had emerged from the interviews with participants and the feasibility of implementing changes

Pilot Fishmonger Training Programme Study Participants Consent Form

I have read the **Pilot Fishmonger Training Programme Study Information sheet**, which explains that the purpose of this research is to identify the necessary modification to the pilot programme in order to produce the ideal training programme for fishmongers. It also explains why I have been asked to participate in this study.

I understand that all the information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, transcripts will be anonymised, and that my name and the name of the business where I work will not be included in any reports.

I understand that this interview will be video recorded and that recordings will be securely stored until the study is complete and will then be securely destroyed.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time up until the data analysis phase.

I understand that this research will be published in the form of a master's dissertation and, where possible, in appropriate journals, or presented at appropriate conferences.

I understand that the research ethics committee at Griffith College has granted permission for this research to be carried out.

I understand that the interview will last no more than 1 hour.

- I AGREE to taking part in the above research
- I AGREE that I have not been coerced in any way to take part in the above research

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please feel free to contact me at eileensoraghan@gmail.com or +353 87 2696913, at any time if you have any questions regarding this inquiry.

Pilot Fishmonger Training Programme Study Debrief

Thank you very much for taking part in this research study. Your contribution is very much appreciated. The study in which you just participated was designed to identify the necessary modification to the pilot programme in order to improve the training programme for fishmongers.

Please be assured that your data is confidential and if published the data will not be in any way identifiable as yours.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or you have any questions in relation to your participation you may wish to contact me, and I will do my best to answer your questions. Alternatively, you may wish to contact my supervisor in Griffith College, Peter Gillis.

Contacts:

Researcher: Eileen Soraghan

Email: eileensoraghan@gmail.com

Phone: +353 87 2696913

Supervisor: Peter Gillis

Email: peter.gillis@griffith.ie

Phone: +353 872620411

Thank you again for your participation

Name and signature of the researcher

Print Name: Eileen Soraghan

Signature:

Date:

Fishmonger Training Programme

Project - Template

Name..... Date.....

1 Introduction

Write about the seafood business (shop or counter) where you work. You can include a photo of your counter if you wish.

2 Seafood Quality and Freshness

2.1 List 3 causes of fish spoilage

1

2

3

2.2 Describe why temperature control is so important to keeping fish fresh:

2.3 List 3 reasons why fish might reach unacceptably high temperatures in storage and /or on display:

1

2

3

2.4 Examine current practices in your workplace and list any practices that could lead to fish reaching unacceptably high temperatures (either in storage or on display):

1

2

3

2.5 Describe the organoleptic characteristics of very fresh fish, good fish and poor fish by completing the following table:

	Eyes	Skin (Appearance and Texture)	Gills (Appearance and odour)	Other freshness criteria
Very fresh fish				
Good fish				
Poor fish				

3 Seafood Culinary Skills

3.1 Describe suitable cooking methods for cooking fish by completing the following table:

Cooking Method	List 3 fish/shellfish that each method is suitable for	List 3 fish /shellfish that each method is not suitable for and reason why it is not suitable
Bake		
Fry		
Steam		
Grill		
Microwave		
Steam		
Simmer		

3.2 Design a family menu based on seafood

Dish	Name of Dish	Briefly describe how to prepare and include names of different fish that could be substituted
Adult Starter		
Adult Main Course		
Child Starter		
Child Main Course		

3.3 Give two reasons why it is important to give customers the correct advice about cooking seafood

1

2

3.4 Describe the current practices in your work place in relation to provision of recipes, advising customers on how to cook fish and staff training in culinary skills.

4 Nutrition

4.1 List 3 nutritional benefits that will apply to most seafood.

1

2

3

4.2 List 3 species that are high in omega 3.

1

2

3

4.3 List 2 nutritional benefits of one of the dishes you have described in 3.2 (above).

1

2

4.4 Give the name of one EU Regulation that sets out requirements regarding provision of nutrition information to consumers.

4.5 List 2 requirements in the legislation regarding provision of nutrition information to consumers.

1

2

- 4.6 Describe the current workplace practice in relation to provision of nutrition information to your customers (e.g. do you provide nutrition information? / how do you make sure that any information given is correct?).

5 Consumer Information (Labelling)

- 5.1 List the labelling requirements outlined in EU Regulation 1379/2013 for sale of seafood from a seafood counter.

- 5.2 Give the name of one other EU Regulation that sets out requirements in relation to the provision of food information (labelling information) to consumers.

- 5.3 How should allergen information be displayed and why is this important?

- 5.3 Describe two reasons why it may be difficult for a fishmonger to comply with the labelling requirements

1

2

- 5.4 Describe the labelling practices where you work or in another other retail outlet that you are familiar with.

6 Customer Service

- 6.1 Describe what is meant by good customer service and explain how this can be applied in the shop where you work.

- 6.2 Describe the current customer service practices where you work.

7 Seafood Industry Study Trip

- 7.1 Outline 3 things that you learned during the seafood industry study trip

1

2

3

7.2 Describe how this knowledge (from the industry trip) can be applied to your shop/seafood counter

7.3 List 3 areas where the seafood industry study trip could be improved and explain why you think this would improve the trip.

1

2

3

8 On-site Mentoring

8.1 Outline 3 things that you learned during the on-site mentoring

1

2

3

8.2 Describe how this knowledge can be applied to your shop/seafood counter.

8.3 List 3 areas where the on-site mentoring could be improved and explain why you think this would bring improvements.

1

2

3

9 Conclusions and Recommendations

List 8 recommendations for potential improvement in the retail operation where you work and give a brief explanation as to why/how the recommended changes will improve the business.

This should include at least one recommendation from each of the following units:

- Seafood Quality and Freshness
- Seafood Culinary Skills
- Nutrition
- Consumer Information (Labelling)
- Customer Service

Recommendation 1 (Seafood Quality and Freshness)

Recommendation 2 (Seafood Culinary Skills)

Recommendation 3 (Nutrition)

Recommendation 4 (Consumer Information -Labelling)

Recommendation 5 (Customer Service)

Recommendation 6

Recommendation 7

Recommendation 8

10 References

Include details of any publications, hand-outs, web pages used in completing this project.