Young adult development in hospitality management schools which offer craft based learning

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John C. Niser.

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July 1999
Acknowledgements.
My research is dedicated to those who believe that developmental psychology research can contribute to making education the key to a peaceful and prosperous new millennium for mankind.

This piece of work would have been impossible to accomplish without the support and understanding I received from my wife Judith and the skilful guidance of my supervisors Nick Johns and Rob Fiddy. But I also owe a lot to my godmother, Lucienne Plisnier, who gave me intellectual inspiration in my childhood and adolescence which has encouraged me to study throughout my life.

Thus family and friends played an essential role, by providing the emotional and intellectual environment that helped me day by day. This thesis was very demanding on all of them, especially my children Edward and Beatrix, whom I thank for their understanding. I would also like to recognise and thank M. Francis Clivaz for his support over the last years, without which this thesis would not have been materially possible.

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Abstract

This research set out to examine the role of craft based education in hospitality management schools from a developmental perceptive. The first exploratory study found that craft based learning could not be isolated from the total learning environment in which students were developing adult thinking skills. The second investigation examined students from the same institution in the light of young adult development literature. Relativistic thinking was identified as a general area of agreement in the literature but the underpinning structural unity of this thinking skill could possibly be challenged.

In the first school I conducted my study, interviewees did not provide evidence of using relativistic thinking as it is described in literature, however they did use relativism within the context of their learning environment which I called ‘local relativistic thinking’. These findings indicated that the learning environment had a profound effect on the development of relativistic thinking and showed that interpersonal relations were critical in this process. A third set of interviews were carried out in a different learning environment which nevertheless included craft based learning in its curriculum. The findings in this institution indicated that students developed a more generalised form of relativistic thinking which was consistent with the schools’ ethos.

This thesis has shown that craft based learning offered grounding that helped students’ contextualise theories and gave them a setting for their first experiences of industry. Craft based learning also provided complex situations that helped students develop awareness of relativism. However the two schools in which I conducted my study used craft based learning within a different educational ethos. It was the learning environment as a whole that held forms of cultural knowledge such as specific forms of relativistic thinking. In both schools I noticed that different forms of relativistic thinking existed.

The transmission processes of these forms of relativistic thinking were critical to the students’ development. This support was not the same throughout the four years of college life in each one of the two institutions I studied. In both schools, lecturers played a key role in so far as they provided instances when students could assimilate
knowledge and receive emotional comfort. I have referred to these instances as transgenerational development.

In the second institution I studied there was evidence of support being specifically designed to make students progress towards a more generalised mode of relativistic thinking. The structure and nature of this support was similar to scaffolding as it is described in literature. It appeared a novel observation that a scaffolded programme helped students develop relativistic thinking. My investigations revealed that the lecturers’ own relativistic thinking helped them provide students with a support which was matched to their needs. Students benefited from instances when the pressure to move ahead was replaced by an effort to understand, translate and relate to them.

The philosophical stance I took implied that my work did not have the pretence of offering an exclusive all encompassing theory of development. Transgenerational development and scaffolding were concepts that I compared to search lights, their function was to provide valuable insights into specific aspects of the young adult development processes for practitioners and researchers.

Finally, this study questions the structural unity of relativistic thinking by showing that the socio-cultural environment in which it develops can profoundly influence this form of thinking. Furthermore some evidence is presented which indicates that relativistic thinking could be a particular context sensitive case of formal operations.
Preamble

This chapter describes the way the reporting structure and style of this thesis was developed in relation to the philosophical stance I adopted. In the first instance I discuss the recommended reporting style for a thesis and describe the underpinning philosophical framework associated with this structure. I found that this approach presented some difficulties related to the object of my inquiry and associated research methodology. This chapter eventually sets the philosophical stance and outlines the reporting style I adopted. Thus the reporting style of this thesis presents the research in the way it took place, respecting the iterative nature of the inquiry I pursued while also structuring the text in an acceptable and readable fashion.

The recommended way of writing a thesis

The subject of this thesis was the investigation of young adult development in hospitality management studies. Therefore, the principal underpinning research framework was psychology. The American Psychological Association (APA) proposes clear indications concerning the reporting style to be used in a dissertation/thesis (American Psychological Association, 1996; Cone and Foster, 1996). Most universities in the United States recommend using the APA standards, that are also commonly used by researchers world-wide in the social sciences. The APA guidelines are similar to those recommendations made by a number of authors (Coolicaln, 1996, chapter 16; Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall, 1996 p.164; Sternberg,1988, p.48; Malim and Birch, 1997, p. 143). Table 01 presents a general pattern that these authors advocate should be used when reporting scientific investigation. This reporting structure is closely related to the way in which these authors suggest the research process should be conducted.

Some authors assert that this is ‘the’ proper way of doing research, for example (Breakwell, 1995b, p. 10): “If you build theories, you should make them genuinely testable and you should provide evidence that you have tested them at least minimally
(that is, deduced propositions which you have failed to show were incorrect but which could have been shown to be incorrect!). If every psychologist who wanted to build theories did this, it would save every other psychologist a lot of time and effort”. In order to follow these recommendations, a researcher’s informed question must give rise to a hypothesis that is then tested (Coolican, 1996; Johns and Lee-Ross, 1998).

In this case the report should effectively review current literature, setting the scene for establishing the hypothesis by showing its relevance in relation to previous research and future knowledge. Having done this the researcher writes the hypothesis and elaborates a suitable method and design. This section should be followed by presentation of the results and a discussion that relates these to the hypothesis. Theoretical and practical implications as well as new questions should bring the thesis towards its conclusion.

Table 01: Reporting structure for the purpose of publication and written academic requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Previous research leading to the research in question</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The contribution of this research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interest of this contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hypothesis, the Research Question</td>
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<td>• How is this contribution going to be made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Apparatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presentation of data (statistical and/or qualitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How data fits the original hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Statement of conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion of theoretical and practical implications of results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New questions raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writers whose reporting style follows this structure will necessarily present their piece of research in a way which suggests that the investigation was designed with the purpose of revealing or discovering the findings which are being presented. This style suits the positivist experimental research model implied by the APA’s (1996) recommendation. Cone and Foster (1996) report that virtually all dissertations written
in view of obtaining a PhD are based on empirical research which follows the hypothetico deductive model.

The purpose of scientific writing of this kind is to share research results with the scientific community (APA, 1996). A number of authors say that the guiding principle for this is that a report should allow a complete stranger to replicate the investigation in every detail (Coolican, 1996; Malim and Birch, 1997; APA, 1996; Cone and Foster, 1996). Therefore it is important to follow Coolican’s (1996) advice to “tell your readers just what you did” in order to allow reproduction or duplication of the research.

This reporting style and its associated research strategy carries assumptions concerning, for example the neutral role of the researcher, that are fundamental to the positivistic model. Much Anglo-Saxon psychology has been conducted from such a positivistic stance (see Burman, 1996). Meacham (1996) notes that young researchers often continue to conduct their research according to the assumptions of “logical positivism” despite the fact that there are reasons to question this approach when conducting studies in developmental psychology.

**Problems with this approach**

A number of authors (Parker, 1989; Harré and Secord, 1972; Reason and Rowan, 1981) contend the emergence of a “new paradigm” opposed to the behavioural, dehumanising and often mechanistic approaches associated with positivism. A brief outline of the foundations of this model will help situate this critique and define the philosophical stance which I adopted.

Positivism is associated with the concept of rational inquiry that has dominated western philosophy for centuries. Aquinas (1274-1964) separated faith from reason, which he describes as the source of truth based on evidence, experimentation or demonstration. Thus he was the first modern philosopher who effectively opened the way to rational scientific inquiry, by separating it from intuition and belief. Descartes (1637-1966) codified this freedom in a research methodology for investigating the foundations of knowledge. The method he proposed revolutionised (some would contend started) scientific inquiry, basing it on linear causality inspired by mathematical reasoning. Descartes’ (ibid.) method is based on 4 rules:
1) Consider nothing to be true unless there is evidence to support it, so that no room is left for preconceived ideas

2) Divide difficulties into as many parts as possible, making problems easier to handle

3) Proceed from explaining simple phenomena and work up towards the more complicated

4) Enumerate: count things so that nothing is left out.

Thus Descartes established the foundations of systematic, rational inquiry, but he based this method on the pre-existence of ideas born from the observer’s mind (Descartes, 1641-1984). Bacon (1620-1986) was concerned with potential sources of error that found their origin in the mind. For Bacon, scientific inquiry must be based on positive evidence collected through observation and experiment. Thus he established the foundation of experimental method. Comte (1830 to 1841-1989) established the foundation of positivism by recommending the use of objective natural science research methods for investigating human and societal phenomena. For Comte (ibid.) the objective of science was to explain how, rather than why phenomena exist. Bernard (1865-1992) formally introduced the hypothetico deductive method that rests on a linear system comprised of observations leading to a hypothesis that is tested and eventually may lead to further hypotheses. It is however interesting to note that for Bernard (1992, p.260) experimentation is “the art of provocing phenomena using appropriate means in conditions chosen and determined by the objective that one sets” (my italics). This quotation illustrates the way in which the experimental method may ultimately limit the object and field of inquiry. Furthermore, the object of science is itself linked to the experimental method by Popper (1963), who defines science as those theoretical systems that could potentially be refuted or proven wrong though experimentation.

Thus it can be argued that scientific inquiry has progressively refined the experimental method and associated it with the object of scientific inquiry. This model has been successful in terms of accounting for formidable advances in the natural sciences. To a

____________________________

1 Translated from French by the author.
certain extent this strength has also come from a unity in the scientific community, which identified itself through the experimental and hypothetico-deductive method. At the turn of the 19th century psychology also adopted the experimental method and Wertheimer (1970) notes that early psychologists construed their discipline in terms of a science of mind and experience. Wundt is considered as the founder of experimental psychology (Hunt, 1993) and Cosnier (1998) contend that Wundt effectively heralded the birth of psychology as a scientific discipline, separating it from philosophy. For Cosnier (ibid.), Wundt’s success in creating this distinction comes essentially through his empirical approach and not necessarily through the object of inquiry he pursued. James (1890) introduced experimental psychology to America and it was in this country that Watson (1919), criticising the mentalism of his contemporary researchers, redefined the object of psychology by introducing behaviourism. Beyond the important influence of behaviourism Humphreys (1994) notes that the scientific method was prominent in psychology until the late 1950’s. Cosnier (ibid.) alerts us to collateral developments in psychoanalysis and psychometric testing but also agrees that universities essentially relied on experimental methods until the 1960’s.

However Hunt (1993,p.431) says that the experimental model has inherent limitations in the social sciences. He illustrates his argument with the critiques raised in the 1970’s towards Milgram’s (1963) obedience experiments. Hunt (ibid.) notes that Milgram’s results were only valid within the confines of his experimental situation. Hunt (ibid. p.232) remarks that an important objection stems from the fact that subjects’ reactions cannot be compared to real life situations. Humphreys (1994), quoting the same experiments conducted by Milgram (1963) notes that this kind of study would not work if the participants were aware of the purpose of the investigations.

In many cases like this self-imposed simplification created in a laboratory limits the external validity of the results. This validity, that Fife-Schaw defines with the question “Just how generalisable are the findings” (1995b, p.87), is one of the central tenants of the experimental method. It proceeds directly from the atomistic principals that underpin Descartes’ approach, mentioned above. De Rosnay (1975) challenges this approach, suggesting that social phenomena do not lend themselves to this reductionist technique. To illustrate his conception of scientific inquiry, he compares
problems that lend themselves to be studied through a microscope with those more appropriately studied with a ‘macroscope’. De Rosnay (ibid.) contends that social science phenomena lose their meaning when they are divided up, because the object of study is the system that holds the parts together. When teaching this concept, I have often used the example of the difference between studying the characteristics of a woollen jumper by:

a) Analysing a strand of wool taken randomly from the jumper.

b) Directing the inquiry towards the jumper as a whole.

Similarly, Cosnier (1998) notes that the change of paradigm I referred to earlier has accompanied a number of other changes that have divided the field of psychology. He identifies their sources as the development of psychopharmacology, novel research methods such as ethnology, computational models such as those proposed by Chomsky (1957), developments in medicine such as PET scan imagery of the brain and research in artificial intelligence. Cosnier (ibid.) says that these factors have profoundly changed the field of psychology and have effectively changed the object of inquiry, creating two strands that he names: neuro-psycho-cognitivism and interactionism. Researchers from the first strand are essentially interested in how the “machine” of the mind is built whereas the interactionists are concerned with performativity (ibid.).

Cosnier (ibid.) remarks that the heuristic value of describing the way the “machine” is built is limited and that this approach has little relevance to studying developmental phenomena such as those I proposed to investigate. Reading Cosnier’s work I was struck by the fact that both groups can also be characterised by their methods of inquiry and subsequent reporting styles. Typically, Cosnier (ibid.) notes that interactionists use a “naturalist” approach that describes phenomena by taking into account the widest possible range of characteristics from the environment and modes of interaction. Similarly, Sanger (1996) suggests that the post-modern model is better suited to research in the social sciences, because this philosophical stance allows a researcher to take into account the complexity of each research situation as well as the political and historical setting of the investigation.
The Sophists conceived truth to be multiple and relativistic (see Dupréel, 1948), 2000 years later post modern writers have profoundly challenged modernist methods of inquiry in an attempt to approach multiplicity, immanence and complexity. Historically the postmodern movement came as a reaction to modern rationalism (see Rose, 1991). Cahoone (1996) traces the movement from modernism to postmodernism noting that “five prominent themes can be distinguished; four are objects of its criticism, and one constitutes its positive method. Postmodernism typically criticises: presence or the presentation (versus representation and construction), origin (versus phenomena), unity (versus plurality), and transcendence of norms (versus immanence). It typically offers an analysis of phenomena through “constructive otherness” (Cahoone, 1996 p.14).

More specifically, the post-modern movement has given rise to critiques that are of particular interest within the field of social sciences. French philosophers in the 1960s such as Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard point our attention to a number of issues discussed below. Specifically they note that there are no benchmarks to measure from, and they question the relationship between form and function of writing and even the object of social science research. Deleuze and Guattari (1977) critique psychoanalysis saying that mental sickness may be caused by social rapport rather than being a characteristic of the person. These authors say that the self cannot be unified or rationally controlled because it is a derivative entity. For this reason researchers in the social sciences should be cautious about limiting the study to the person and should instead consider the constitutive and relational nature of the environment in defining the self. Beyond simply defining what constitutes the self, these authors also encourage researchers to open the field of study to an unrestricted world of interrelating influences. They themselves take a novel approach to studying psychoanalysis by criticising the negative approach that it takes. Instead Deleuze and Guattari (ibid.) propose affirmative language such as immanence, multiplicity, becoming and flux. By using a language that philosophy has rejected they give a multiple image of the self. A strictly scientific approach would have failed to offer the necessary wide field of vision that these authors use. Furthermore Deleuze and Guattari (ibid.) depart from the traditional philosophical style of writing, so that their style itself participates in the message. Thus medium and message become
indistinguishable and the reader’s access to and participation in the information may also carry meaning through a reporting style (Barthes, 1957). Derrida (1981, 1982) turns the attention of philosophy from what is being demonstrated to how it is being reported, commenting “The passage beyond philosophy does not consist in turning the page of philosophy, but in continuing to read philosophers in a certain way”. Norris (1987), in an authoritative analysis of Derrida’s work, says that he has shown that: “all attempts to keep philosophy separate from literature - to maintain it as a privileged, truth-speaking discourse, immune from the vagaries of writing - are bound to run up against the salient fact of their own textual constitution” (p.22). Thus Derrida shows that the dissemination of ideas has direct implications, one of which is the impossibility of isolating the origin of the ideas from the medium in which they are conveyed. Form and function are linked and the structure of scientific reporting may consequently be considered to be a fundamental statement that cannot be distinguished from the message it is carrying.

Foucault (1969) using his concept of ‘archaeology’ attempts to shed some light on the occurrence of certain ideas and activities at a particular time and place in history. By focusing on the shape of activities, and on the monuments instead of the events he effectively eliminates the subject (Foucault, 1963) as well as any authentic fundamental concepts (Foucault, 1966). For Foucault, all scientific knowledge is essentially situated in the conditions that constitute its coming into existence, and therefore never independent from the context of production and reading.

Lyotard (1979) also digs into the heart of scientific inquiry by questioning metanarratives. He asserts that inquiry into the world does not necessarily imply producing grand stories if one focuses on describing what is happening instead. Lyotard’s work questions and eventually shows that modernist values such as proof, unity in science and justification systems are no longer necessary because these forms of legitimation can replaced by “performativity”.

These ideas have profoundly changed certain researchers’ views about how social scientific work should be conducted. A number of authors (Gross, 1992; Valentine, 1992; Breakwell, 1995b) note that formal experimental processes of research, associated with a positivistic stance, are inappropriate when one is seeking to explore psychological phenomena, especially those related to areas such as development.
Parker (1996) argues that in the case of psychology, exploration should respect the specificity of each case and explore the particular meanings that are being produced. Cone and Foster (1996) recognise that legitimate PhD research work may be carried out using non empirical alternatives and moving away from the positivistic stance. Therefore the hypothetico deductive model described in the previous section was not the only model of research I had to choose from. Johns and Lee-Ross (1998, p. 6) point out that an alternative is an inductive methodological approach where: “The anecdote alerts the researcher to the field of interest, after which careful observations are made. The data is examined and analysis enables the researcher to extract a hypothesis”.

In this case observations would lead to establishing a hypothesis and therefore the structure presented earlier (Table 01) would not describe the order of events followed in the research process. Should one nevertheless choose to use the proposed structure (Table 01), the ontology of the research situation would neither have been made explicit nor differentiated from the particular order of events portrayed in the reporting style. The structure of the report would therefore need to be adjusted to a research method that might even be more complex than a single inductive loop. In this respect Johns and Lee Ross (1998) remark that researchers often use a cyclical model where successive hypotheses generate new questions which themselves lead to new observations and eventually new hypotheses.

A model of this kind appeared relevant for a PhD study, where it has been noticed that changes in design and direction are nearly always needed to ensure a satisfactory outcome (Haydn and Gale, 1993). Colbourn (1993, p. 60) also notes that PhD “research work rarely runs smoothly and rarely follows the structured logical progression that one encounters in other theses, monographs and journal papers”. Thus it was reasonable to assume that a thesis conducted this way should report a succession of observations, hypotheses and questions which progressively build towards a conclusion (which may be a relatively arbitrary cut off point in this case).
Features required for writing this thesis

The cyclical model (Johns and Lee-Ross, 1998) was adapted to the exploratory nature of my investigations because it allowed me to progressively take on board results and modify my perspective as I understood, read and penetrated my field of inquiry. As progress was made, I investigated several different situations and reconsidered my interpretations in the light of further reading and new findings. This sequence of events had an impact on the redefinition of the research question, which evolved in the course of my work. To quote Vygotsky (1978), method has been “simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tool and the result of the study”.

It was therefore important to report the gradual redefinition of the problem. This way I hoped to offer the reader contextualised questions, readings and findings while showing relevant shifts in my points of view. This format of reporting was designed to allow the reader to access the ontogenetic process of discovery. The use of the word ontogenetic is meant to stress the idiosyncratic nature of an investigation process which needs to be reported. Ontogeny is “the entire sequence of events involved in the development of an individual organism” (Collins, 1991). The use of this term is to be considered in opposition to the idea of Phylogeny which is “the entire sequence of events involved in the development of a species” (Collins, 1991). Communicating the ontogenetic process will help emphasise the particularity of the route which has been taken.

This effort to report the ontogenetic process of discovery should not result in a messy account of a personal pathway towards discovery. Writing clearly is an accepted principle which is very often recommended (Calvert, 1993; Sternberg, 1988; Malim and Birch, 1997;). This also includes the necessity for presenting clearly relevant tables (Calvert, 1993) and identify the sources of any material which is being used (Calvert, 1993; Sternberg, 1988; Malim and Birch, 1997; APA, 1996). The reader must be able to distinguish between what are the authors’ ideas and those previously developed by others (Johns and Lee-Ross: 1998).

Following these widely accepted principles did not however tie me to forms of reporting designed to give the appearance of ‘objectivity’ (e.g. writing in the third person passive). This piece of research did not have such an ambition, it was an investigation carried out by a particular person who necessarily participated in the
setting of the problematic, method of inquiry, collection and decoding of results. For this reason I chose to use the first person. Doing this, I have followed Banister (1996, p. 161) who recommends this style in reports where one wants to emphasise the philosophical stance underlying the research.

**Conclusion, the philosophical stance I took and the way this thesis was written**

In the previous sections I have outlined the philosophical and practical reasons why a positivistic research model was not appropriate for the study I conducted. These same reasons encouraged me to choose postmodernism as an underpinning philosophical stance for this piece of work. This approach has influenced the design of my investigations, the method of inquiry and the reporting style.

As a result this thesis presents a network of theory, data and interpretation which interrelate and build towards the findings and questions presented in the last chapter. For this reason, the epistemological position I took did not seek to emulate a strictly scientific method of inquiry and the associated reporting style that would have inscribed itself within a positivistic stance.

However Silverman's (1993) recommends the novice researcher not to fall in the trap of the "anything goes approach". For him, social science researchers must seek to address issues of reliability and validity. From a positivistic standpoint Davis (1995, p.56) defines reliability as: “the consistency or stability of an experimental effect”, but there are differing views concerning reliability. Marshall and Rossman (1989) point out that the social world is always changing and that the concept of replication implicit in the positivistic definition of reliability is problematic if not impossible to satisfy. Furthermore Silverman (1993) points out that, for example, interviews cannot be treated as reports on reality, thus complicating any attempt to satisfy a strict criteria of reliability. Since little can be done to solve this issue, Tindall says “replication in qualitative research has more to do with reinterpreting the findings from a different standpoint or exploring the same issues in different contexts…”(1996, p.143). Thus it becomes essential to record and document the process of research as thoroughly as possible, in order to give other researchers the opportunity to understand and critique the findings. Silverman (ibid.) advocates letting readers grasp the pathway an author
has taken towards the presentation of results by making the research process transparent. This recommendation is distinct from the search for the origins of a phenomenon, which postmodern philosophers would argued to be pointless (Cahoone, 1996). Similarly, current debate concerning the validity of research in the social science argues that researchers should trade in classic concepts of robustness, rigour and generalisability for notions such as responsiveness, fairness, trustworthiness and accuracy (Sanger, 1996). Hammersley defines validity as: “…truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers” (1990, p.57). The same author has addressed the issue of validity by recommending what he calls a “subtle form of realism” that involves confidence in knowledge, but not certainty, coupled with the idea that the researcher’s account represents reality but cannot reproduce it completely (Hammersley, 1992, p.50-51).

For this reason my methods of inquiry and data analysis set out to represent a reliable account of what my respondents and I constructed, the frames of reference and theories I used and interpretations I made. Thus I have exposed in detail the pathway I took respecting the chronology of my investigations. Most importantly, from a heuristic point of view, the value of this work was meant to be its ability to reflect the successive reframing of concepts and theories I visited, while also presenting valuable insights for other researchers and practitioners.

The iterative nature of my research is purposefully reflected in my reporting style, which is meant to show the gradual sophistication of method and the evolution of relationships between data and theory. However the reader will find some markers to help them understand my own thoughts and anticipate the critical moments which led towards my findings. In no way do these ideas born from hindsight suggest that any teleonomic process was followed. They are but a superimposed story. For this reason the reporting style I have chosen deliberately avoids introducing a “voice” that would lead the reader conveniently towards the conclusion.

The structure of this report was chosen to convey investigations, data gathering, readings and discoveries as an open system which expresses the relationships between ideas and events and the gradual refinement of the “problem”. It was this notion which inspired me to present this thesis as a succession of problematisations. I borrowed this word from Foucault (as cited in Gutting, 1994,p. 37) who defines problematisation as
“the ensemble of discursive and nondiscursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and the false and constitutes it an object of thought”. Thus by using this term I wanted to keep the reader aware that the report is itself an interpretation which finds its meaning in: the order I have given to previous research, the data I gathered, my interpretations and the process of writing itself. Problematisations are numbered so that readers can construct their opinion and their own interpretation as the reading progresses. Specifying the outcome of each problematisation in the title would have suggested a positivistic model.

The first chapter presents the background to the first problematisation. It also sets the scene for understanding some of the choices and orientations I took during my investigations. From then on each chapter depicts a problematisation. The first problematisation describes the exploratory investigation. The results of this study made the research question evolve and gave rise to the second problematisation. Further reading, data gathering and interpretations led me towards new questions that prompted the third and fourth problematisations. Finally a postscript offers some meta-reflections on the research process and my experiences.
Background

Introduction

This chapter presents elements of my past which have influenced and set the framework for this piece of research. MacIntyre (1996, p. 537) says that: “We cannot characterize behaviour independently of intentions and we cannot characterize intentions independently of the settings which make those intentions intelligible both to agents themselves and to others.”

Several aspects of my background influenced the curiosity which animated the whole thesis and some particularly contributed to setting the first problematisation. Both are present in this chapter, but my professional and academic development set the environment within which my initial questions arose concerning the role of craft based learning in hospitality management education and it also prepared me for using certain research techniques. On the other hand theoretical and methodological perspectives taken from the hospitality research and psychological literature helped me set the initial problematisation and provided a frame of reference from which I explored the first data and developed new problematisations.

Professional and academic development

My professional and academic development may be divided into three significant periods. The first was spent in the international hospitality industry, the second at Geneva University as a student in Psychology and the third carrying out curriculum development work for a hotel management college in Switzerland.

Experience in the international hospitality industry

My career in the Hospitality industry lasted 14 years and was principally built on practical experience. Nevertheless it started with a formal learning process offered by a structured 3 year management training programme which I followed in the mid 70’s in Belgium, the United Kingdom and France. In relation to this particular piece of research three aspects of my professional career were of importance.
In the first place I had noticed that a person’s potential to think and behave was heavily determined by the environment in which they were living. I came to thinking this way as a result of observing different work cultures within hotels and countries, I noticed that in many cases “intelligent” or “competent” behaviour within one group or department could be totally inappropriate in another context. For instance, a chef may think it appropriate for customers to wait for their food because he assumes that they will appreciate the fact that good food takes time to prepare. However, a receptionist performing a check-in for a guest will consider it always necessary to be expedient, assuming the guest does not want to waste time. Both employees are correct within the culture of their own field. The chef assumes that customers will be prepared to wait for him because time and quality are perceived as proportionally increasing together (up to a certain degree). In the case of the receptionist, the logic is different, too much time spent checking-in the guest will result in a fall in the quality of service. In either case an employee must take into account the particular “logic” associated with the context.

For this reason I did not favour models which present a static image of adult thinking or methods of inquiry which do not take into account factors such as time and the relationship between a person and the environment in which they are living. I had also noticed that managers needed to take the different perspectives of their employees into account and therefore work out a thinking strategy which took several logical systems into account.

When I was working in managerial positions, this perspective helped me unravel interpersonal problems by appreciating the underlying reasons for misunderstandings. For example in union negotiations, I would look for the underlying logic which each group would be following. There was no right or wrong party in my mind, there were simply incompatible logical frameworks within which people saw things very differently.

This approach influenced the way I studied young adult development by making me look for hidden meanings in interviews which might reveal relationships between the person and the context in which they learn. Originally the context I studied was craft based learning situations, but later on in my investigations I broadened my outlook. This also influenced my capacity to look for my own biases because I, myself, am also
working within the parameters of the context I have chosen. In the original proposal I envisaged that I would look at the research questions from different theoretical perspectives, but as my investigations progressed and my reading became broader, I became aware of a strong structuralist bias in my choice of theories and initial interpretations. In the later stages of my research I became more interested in post-modern writers such as Foucault, Derrida or Pragmatists such as Rorty which helped me recontextualise the data and questions which I was developing.

My professional career also planted the seeds for my interest in learning processes because it was important to understand how and why people acquire skills and learn in professional environments. This interest found its origin in the necessity to train staff members. There was a shortage of skilled labour in many of the countries in which I worked, and when competent staff were available their skills often did not match the relatively new operating habits of the modern hotel company I worked for. In the eighties, when I was dealing with these issues, it was generally recognised that introducing training programmes for all levels of staff would be an effective answer to the shortage of skilled labour.

At the time, the company I worked for favoured what they referred to as a “task analysis” approach to training. Tasks were decomposed into small elements enabling the trainer to teach the skill, component by component, showing the logical links between them. In this way staff members were meant to build up a repertoire of skills to apply in prescribed circumstances. For example one would decompose order-taking into greeting the guest, offering the menu, suggesting an aperitif etc. Each sub task would also be broken down, so that employees were instructed to greet the guest by decomposing the task into: approaching the table, making eye contact and talking. Detailed instruction went further, for example in the case of “approaching the table”, the distance from the table, the posture and the way that the client was addressed were defined. The ultimate goal of this practice was uniformity and consistency in service quality obtained thanks to staff performing in the prescribed way. Without knowing the theoretical origins and limitations of this way of proceeding, I was dissatisfied with its results.

These training programmes were only appropriate for teaching very simple tasks associated with predictable circumstances. For example, they were suitable for
teaching relatively mechanical tasks such as using cash registers and reservation systems. However the same training techniques were not effective for teaching people how to deal with problems, cope with unexpected circumstances or work appropriately with unpredictable customers. In these more complex situations employees confronted with alternative choices had to choose an appropriate course of action taking into account and prioritising a number of factors which changed from one circumstance to another. From an operational point of view these situations were often critical because they usually directly affected the quality of service (Lockwood and Jones, 1989). Mechanistic approaches to training could never prepare employees adequately for every situation or equip them with every appropriate response.

These difficulties and challenges made me look at staff development from a wider perspective. The questions I had at the time were merely operational and centred on how one could teach a person to act appropriately in a wide variety of circumstances. Besides this, budgetary constraints made it necessary to reduce the time spent on training to a minimum and we were pushed to find ways to train people on the job.

The “practical” professional development I myself had received prompted me to ask what made professional environments a learning situation. My hunch was that certain naturally occurring circumstances could be exploited. For this reason I turned my attention towards “train the trainer” programmes which relied on key members of staff acting as “on the job” trainers with their employees within everyday work environments. The positive aspect was that, in many cases, employees learned much more than simple operative skills. For example, a head waiter training restaurant staff would impart professional and organisational values and culture by talking about “the way things are done here” instead of teaching “what is to be done in the restaurant”. The learning that occurred in these circumstances often went beyond skills and competencies, so that employees learned how to make choices in the particular organisational culture which they were working in. The down side was that less control could be expected on training content.

Several ideas and options I have taken in my research are directly related to these experiences in staff training. At the onset of my current investigations I asked myself whether students were developing management skills while engaged in craft based learning situations, because I knew that it was possible to exploit practical learning
environments to teach generic thinking skills. Within the structuralist stance I had adopted at the outset, these observations led me to believe that practice in relevant contexts participated in the development of more elaborate cognitive structures. However I had observed during my career that the “train the trainer” model worked well within the trainer’s particular area of the hotel, but were not very effective when a person was asked to train someone outside their direct area of competence. People speak and act differently in different areas of a hotel, their work cultures are different and these micro cultures transmit operating and thinking habits to those who work within their environment. Because craft based learning takes place in very specific work environments, later in my research I turned my attention towards the influence of the particular culture of hotel management schools.

Another way in which my professional experience has affected my investigations came from comparing my reading of Schön with my own experiences. For instance he says that: “Many practitioners, locked into a view of themselves as technical experts, find nothing in the world of practice to occasion reflection. They have become too skilful at techniques of selective inattention, junk categories, and situational control, techniques which they use to preserve the constancy of their knowledge-in-practice. For them uncertainty is a threat; its admission is a sign of weakness. Others, more inclined towards and adept at reflection-in-action, nevertheless feel profoundly uneasy because they cannot say what they know to do, cannot justify its quality or rigor.” (Schön, 1991, p. 69).

I think it is fair to say that the focus of management development which I received in the hospitality industry was directed towards improving the “skills component” of the job. Critical thinking and reflective analysis were not encouraged. Nevertheless my experience suggested that people used reflective thought when choosing appropriate courses of action in relation to contextual criteria. From a personal perspective it was obvious that I took operational decisions based upon reflective thought. I acted in relation to the way the environment expected me to act and I noticed that there was little regularity or logical coherence to be found from one environment to another. Hence I adapted to individual situations and, as a result, I was aware of inconsistencies in my overall behaviour. It is therefore difficult for me to agree with Schön when he says that few circumstances elicit reflection. I am even more dubious
about his concept of “constancy of knowledge in practice” simply because, in the field of hospitality at least, practice is just the thing that usually needs reconsidering. I cannot remember any instances when these “reflection in action” moments were linked with any kind of uneasiness such as those described by Schön. This contradiction opened some interesting questions about the nature of the reflective thinking which I had experienced? Although these questions were not central to my initial problematisation they eventually influenced the way I read articles which explored adult thinking in terms of relativistic thinking.

The experiences I had in the industry in attempting to develop people had puzzled me and I wanted to know more about development processes in general. I believe that this underlying interest has remained to this day. For this reason and because I felt locked within the confines of my profession I chose to return to studies. Hence after many successful and rewarding years in the hotel industry I chose to study psychology at Geneva University where I earned a “Licence en Psychologie” (Licentiateship in Psychology).

**Studies at Geneva University**

The study programme obliged students within the first two years to acquire a broad base of knowledge. Particular emphasis was given to research methodology, both qualitative and quantitative, statistics, formal logic, physiology of the nervous system, epistemology and the study of four key areas in Psychology namely: behaviourist, constructivist, psychodynamic and systemic literature.

During my studies I was encouraged to look at research questions from different theoretical perspectives. This approach helped me understand that complex issues in the field of psychology may not be reduced or understood through one theory alone. In turn this stance helped me approach my own work aware that theories themselves are the product of scientific inquiry. Understanding this fact helped me question and change my own choices of approach and the theoretical tools which I used to interpret my findings.
After the first two years I was awarded the “Demi Licence”. The second half of the 
programme, also two years of study, required students to choose three areas of 
specialisation, I chose clinical, developmental and occupational psychology. All three 
of these areas provided me with important basic knowledge and practice which served 
as a background to my research. Clinical psychology taught me to practise some 
clinical interviews (see Droz and Rahmy, 1987 p. 20). This learning experience was 
derpinned by several theoretical models which helped me become aware of the 
enormous depth and wealth one could find using clinical methods of inquiry but also 
of their limitations. From a researchers’ perspective, the loss in terms of possible 
generalisation and external validity is compensated by the depth and detail one may 
receive from individual’s account of their experience. Furthermore this method of 
inquiry also makes it possible to uncover and explore processes rather than merely to 
test a previously formulated hypothesis.

Developmental psychology provided me with a variety of models of cognitive and 
emotional development which informed my choice of reading and the theoretical 
frameworks used. My interest in developmental processes, combined with my 
professional experience, influenced my choice of problematic i.e. studying young 
adult development in hospitality management programmes.

Occupational psychology provided me with a conceptual framework that I could relate 
to my previous professional experience. In relation to this present piece of research, 
this area of study has directed my attention towards investigating the relationship 
between organisational cultures and individuals. Being aware of this, I took into 
account the relationship between a school’s culture and its students’ development.

From a human point of view the period in Geneva University gave me an unique 
opportunity to meet people who had worked closely with Jean Piaget. He died in 1980 
and I entered ‘his’ “Faculté de Psychologie” in the university of Geneva in 1988. All 
but one of my professors had worked with the famous man who was still 
affectionately known as “le patron”. In this context I had opportunities to complement 
my reading with personal contacts. It was important for me to set alongside the 
theoretical understanding I was gaining, the concrete experience I gleaned from 
listening and talking to people who had worked and shared Piaget’s investigations. It 
is within this context that I had a chance to understand the spirit of inquiry that I
believe is one of the important legacies of Piaget. His approach to research was to uncover processes by being alert, listening and probing. For him, research questions and investigative tools are always to be put in question and therefore always in the making (to capture some of his stance see interviews done by Gorreta, 1979; Bringuier, 1977). Although Piaget’s theory is often equated with “equilibrium” he definitely sees progress as a function of disequilibrium, a property he believed only existed in children and some “investigative” adults (Ducret, Grzeskowiak and Perruchoud, 1997). It is in this sense that one may see Piaget as a researcher for whom a constructivist approach also meant seeing that question and answer are just as inextricably linked as subject and environment in the development process.

To conclude, the period of my life spent at Geneva University as an adult student was particularly thought provoking and challenging and I believe that I came out of the four years of study with a fundamentally different outlook on life. I developed critical thinking skills, the ability to search and find relevant information and became more humble and forgiving towards myself and others. In turn this experience made me aware of the important cognitive and emotional turmoil experienced by students attending higher education.

Curriculum development work

In 1992, after graduating from Geneva University I was employed by a Swiss Hotel Management School to advise on curriculum and institutional development. It was during this time that I acquired in-depth knowledge of the Swiss and Anglo-American hospitality education environments and developed an interest in the role of craft based learning in hospitality management studies.

The first two years of my employment were spent analysing various hospitality programmes in Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. I reviewed in detail a total of 19 schools in these countries (see Table 02 for list of schools studied). To choose the institutions I asked each country’s leading association (Hotel & Catering International Management Association in UK, Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education in USA and the Association of Swiss Hotel Schools in Switzerland) to select a sample of schools which represented the diversity and quality
of hotel management education offered in their respective country. I visited most of the schools/universities which had been proposed and in each case I interviewed key members of faculty and departmental heads and often had a chance to meet students. The visits also permitted me to receive and examine each programme of study in detail. In the course of this work I observed important differences between Swiss and Anglo-American educational cultures.

Table 02: List of schools and programmes reviewed in relation to hospitality management curriculum (1992-1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Switzerland</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne</td>
<td>Culinary Institute of America</td>
<td>Brighton University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHTTI Neuchâtel</td>
<td>Cornell University</td>
<td>Surrey University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIM Montreux</td>
<td>University of New Hampshire</td>
<td>Thames Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre International de Glion</td>
<td>Johnson &amp; Wales</td>
<td>Bournemouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Bouveret (Hotel Mgt. School)</td>
<td>Endicott College</td>
<td>Nottingham Trent University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecole hôtelière de Genève Vieux Bois</td>
<td></td>
<td>City College Norwich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig (U.Mass)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brighton Polytechnic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Swiss Hotel schools teach their students in a different way to their Anglo-American counterparts. The Swiss schools focus on teaching technical knowledge and rely a lot on craft based learning, typically they assess students’ ability to remember content rather than to demonstrate their ability in processing information.

Institutions offering hotel management studies in Britain and in the United States had a totally different educational ethos. Their programmes also had vocational relevance and specificity but in addition provided a broad range of subjects putting a great deal of emphasis on the teaching and learning of generic management skills and critical thinking using analysis and evaluation. Through classroom and tutorial based teaching, vocationally specific project work and practical work in kitchens and restaurants, students were encouraged to participate in the construction of their own knowledge. Assessment methods used in these programmes measured the ability of students to find relevant material and discuss possible options for a given case. In this way, the Anglo-American programmes placed the emphasis on processing information rather than merely retaining it. As a result, the prevailing educational ethos of these
schools was closer to a philosophy of “cultivating the mind” than of “producing professionals”. Interestingly both the Anglo-American and Swiss systems of education seemed to be appreciated by industry because neither found any difficulty in placing students in the industry after they had graduated.

Having noticed these differences I was interested in discovering why Swiss schools such as the one for whom I was developing the curriculum, adopted the practices they did. To understand the predominant educational culture which existed in the major Swiss hotel schools, one needs to recognise the particular status of hospitality education within the provision of higher education in Switzerland.

The status of hospitality education in Switzerland is influenced by its situation within the wider context of higher education. Responsibility for providing education from early childhood to university programmes, rests with Cantonal education authorities which have full authority in this domain, and run the state-sponsored programmes of their choice. None of the cantons in Switzerland offer studies in hospitality management. For this reason post secondary education in hospitality management is solely provided by private institutions. Swiss law requires private schools to receive authorisation from their Cantonal education authority which does not depend on any validation process nor any quality assurance of the educational content. Thus the qualifications delivered by private institutions are not officially “recognised” and Swiss hotel schools operate outside the jurisdiction of any higher education authority. For these reasons they are free to operate alone and develop their own curricula in isolation from the standards and ethos of national or international academic communities.

To recruit students in the international market, all of the Swiss schools try to take advantage of the reputation and image of Swiss hospitality. For many years, Swiss professional bodies, such as the Swiss Hotel Association (SHA) and the Société des Cafetiers Restaurateurs have offered schools the credibility and image they sought by administrating or accrediting their programmes. By doing so, these professional bodies also set the parameters of Swiss hospitality education. One should note that these professional bodies are closely associated to each other which explains why similar programmes were offered by all of the principal Swiss hotel management schools in my review.
One particular school, the “Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne” (EHL) has had an important influence on the ethos of Swiss hospitality management education in general because of its long history and central role within the SHA. The EHL was founded in 1884; and claims to be the oldest hotel management school in the world (see publication used for marketing in 1994). To put this in perspective, the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University started in 1922 (Edmondson, 1996). Over the years, the EHL has enjoyed a very high reputation supplying industry world-wide with many of their key personnel (see past issues of their alumni newspaper “La Marmite”). The school is a foundation which kept a privileged relationship with its founding body the SHA which is represented in its administration. The school’s governing body is, by statute, made up exclusively of representatives from the hotel industry members of the SHA, many of whom are themselves graduates of EHL, a factor which has certainly contributed to the stability of the institution.

Unchallenged by any outside force due to the statute of private education in Switzerland and brought up in a traditional mode of learning which favours practical studies, these administrators have, over the years, maintained the underpinning values of the programme intact. A key feature of this programme has been its vocational specificity and its focus on teaching operational issues in craft based learning environments. The EHL enjoyed considerable success with this formula which appeared to meet industry needs. In this way, the EHL gained a world-wide reputation, envied by many competitors.

Over the years, other major hotel schools entered the market, notably those in Geneva, Luzern, Glion, Thun, Le Bouveret and Bluche. The schools in Geneva, Luzern, Thun and Bluche had direct relationships with either the SHA or the Société des Cafetiers Restaurateurs and therefore offered programmes which were very similar to the one in EHL.

The specificity of the prevailing educational culture of these programmes could be seen in four areas: the proportion of craft based learning, the use of text books, the faculty background and their concept of a managers’ role.

These schools devoted a considerable amount of time to practical training within the school and during in-service training periods. To take a specific example, the Swiss Hotel Association Hotel Management School “Les Roches” (SHA HMS
“Les Roches”) was located in Bluche, a small village some 2 miles away from the international ski resort of Crans-Montana. At the time I started my curriculum development work for this institution, the students who completed the three-year programme received a “SHA Hotel Management Diploma” the same qualification that is offered by the EHL (EHL takes 3.5 years). In the SHA HMS “Les Roches”, practical learning accounted for one third of the time spent in learning situations controlled by the school (Table 03). This percentage increased to 73% of the programme if one took into account the compulsory training periods spent working in the industry. It should, however, be noted that, at the time of my study, none of the Swiss schools mentioned attempted to control or evaluate in-training periods.

Table 03: Outline of the SHA Diploma programme of study of the SHA HMS “Les Roches”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Weeks on campus</th>
<th>Weeks Didactic learning</th>
<th>Weeks Craft based learning</th>
<th>Weeks In-training</th>
<th>% of time in craft based environment</th>
<th>% of time in craft based learning situations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>59 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>73 %</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The particularity of Swiss hotel schools’ educational culture could also be noticed in their general lack of text books or any recognised scientific knowledge base, as a foundation for students’ studies. In 1993, when I visited the major Swiss schools (EHL, IHTTI Neuchâtel, Centre International de Glion, Le Bouveret and the SHA HMS “Les Roches”), libraries were practically non-existent and certainly not used by students. None of them had more than a couple of hundred books on their shelves and most of these were cookery books. The students studied from syllabi written or compiled by their teachers and printed within the school. In the SSH HMS Les Roches these manuals did not identify the sources of articles and other materials they used (see teaching manuals from 1980 to 1994 used in the SSH HMS Les Roches).

The credentials and experience of faculty members was another factor which had an important impact on the prevailing educational culture found within Swiss hotel management schools. When I visited these schools in relation to my curriculum development work I found that the SHA HMS “Les Roches” presented a typical example of the kind of credentials held by faculty. Table 04 shows that in 1994 at the
SHA HMS “Les Roches” a total of 36% of the teachers had undergone a Swiss apprenticeship and a further 28% of the teachers had been educated at a practical level in Swiss hotel schools.

Swiss apprenticeships and hotel school educational programmes put considerable emphasis on teaching operational skills. Hospitality apprenticeship programmes in Switzerland last 3 years starting at age 16. They require students to attend a mixed programme, spending 2 days a week in school and 3 days in work placements. As in the Swiss hotel management schools the theoretical and practical subjects learned are entirely focused on operational issues. Thus those who receive this education experience craft based learning focused on taught technical skills and it was reasonable to assume that they would favour this approach themselves, when they became teachers. The overall teaching/learning culture of the school would therefore be affected especially if 64% of the teachers were in this category, as was the case in the SSH HMS Les Roches. A quote from Mr. Aeschlimann, director of the EHL illustrates this influence: “Every piece of knowledge received in theory must immediately be put into practice.” (E.E., 1993)\(^2\). This perspective should incidentally be contrasted with the constructivist ideas I shall present later which propose the opposite view that practice precedes theory. During my curriculum development work I noticed that the educational ethos in both the SSH HMS Les Roches and the EHL was heavily influenced by the teachers’ own educational background. This was particularly visible in the way they essentially only taught technical competencies in the first two years of study. Students were asked to perform prescribed tasks in Food and Beverage and Front Office operations, and to learn recipes, wines, human resources, management and marketing techniques by heart.

Table 04: Educational credentials held by faculty in 1994 at the SHA HMS “Les Roches”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credentials delivered in:</th>
<th>Swiss</th>
<th>Swiss</th>
<th>Swiss</th>
<th>Swiss</th>
<th>Total US &amp; UK</th>
<th>US &amp; UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Credentials held by Faculty</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>Apprenticeship Hotel School post secondary studies (under 4 years)</td>
<td>Post secondary studies (under 4 years)</td>
<td>Swiss Hosp. Education Bachelors Masters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total faculty</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) Translated by the author from French.
Another feature which characterised Swiss hotel schools, is the ideal of a manager’s role as it was conceived by educators in this country. M. J.L. Aeschlimann, director of the EHL, summed it up saying that: “A hotel manager will not be credible in front of employees if he does not master their work skills” (E.E., 1993). During my review I noticed that this argument was constantly used to justify the high proportion of craft based learning in Swiss hotel management programmes in each school I visited.

In contrast with the Swiss educational ethos, the Anglo-American academic communities I encountered exhibited educational values which had different roots. All the American institutions I visited were accredited by regional accreditation bodies and in the United Kingdom, the hotel schools I reviewed offered validated programmes validated by universities. Therefore they all had undergone strict quality assurance processes which required them to have explicit philosophies and objectives for the programmes they were offering. Schools also had to provide evidence that the objectives of their programmes met students’ personal and professional development needs. For this reason the programmes were designed to provide sufficient breadth and depth in all the subjects. Schools also had to demonstrate that they had the physical facilities (i.e. libraries etc.), financial means and human resources to run programmes effectively, in accordance with their set objectives. For this reason the faculty in these schools always had academic credentials in the field they were teaching, gained at recognised higher education institutions. The teaching and evaluation methods in these programmes were varied and provided evidence that students were learning how to learn, doing personal research as well as acquiring the necessary skills to perform in their future employment.

The accreditation (USA) or validation (UK) of a programme always involved peer review of the school’s educational practice in the light of current thinking and practice. Thus the programmes offered by American and British hotel management schools reflected current trends within the academic community. Besides these commonalities, I was able to distinguish two broad categories of hospitality programmes in Britain and the United States. The first was made up of schools which favour a “business studies approach” while the second favour a “hospitality-oriented approach”. The “business studies approach” programmes paid little or no attention to

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3 Translated by the author from French.
teaching practical vocational skills through craft based learning. Two examples illustrated this approach. The first was the University of New Hampshire (UNH) which required Bachelor degree students to complete 400 hours of practical work and 35 academic courses over 4 years. Typically each academic course involved 45 hours of contact time and about double that amount for personal research and study (i.e. a total of 3150 hours). Therefore hotel management students attending the UNH spent 13% of their time learning in practical situations\(^4\). The second example was the Bachelor degree programme in Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management of the University of Delaware where students earned 9% of the required 129 credits in craft based learning situations.\(^5\)

“Hospitality-oriented” schools offered considerably more craft based learning, a typical example of which may be found in City College Norwich (CCN) Hotel School. In this school, Higher National Diploma students engaged in a three year programme\(^6\) shown in Table 05, typically spent 22% of their contact time in craft based learning.

Table 05: BTEC HND in Hotel, Catering and Institutional Management in City College Norwich Hotel School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Hours classroom teaching</th>
<th>Hours craft based learning</th>
<th>Weeks In training (converted into hours)</th>
<th>% of time in craft based environment</th>
<th>% of time in craft based learning situations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>725</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, the educational ethos of “hospitality-oriented approach” and “business studies approach” programmes were similar in many ways. The programme directors and members of faculty I interviewed while reviewing hotel management schools in


\(^5\) Information taken from the course description book of the University of Delaware, College of Human Resources, academic year 1993-1994.

\(^6\) A comparison between the programmes run in CCN Hotel School and the SHA HMS “Les Roches” is appropriate since the “Les Roches” 3 year SHA Diploma programme has been credit rated to HND level.
the United States and Britain paid a great deal of attention to fostering critical thinking skills and providing a broad knowledge base to their students. The programmes of study offered by British and American universities put the emphasis on the student’s acquisition of processing and methodological skills as opposed to a simple accumulation of inert knowledge. For example, in CCN Hotel School this emphasis was already present in the craft based learning elements offered in the first year of studies. Students in this programme were asked to participate in the creation of the menus they were preparing; choose the decoration of the restaurant, work within budgetary constraints and market the final product. To do this, they had to refer to existing literature, work in teams and learn to select appropriate solutions to particular situations. In this way these students were laying the basis for the development of complex adult thinking within craft based tasks. In contrast, the Swiss schools did not allow such freedom, they prescribed the behaviour and knowledge to be learned at this stage of the studies.

At the onset of my research I did not pay a lot of attention to the importance of the different educational ethos present in the Swiss and Anglo-American schools. I viewed craft based learning as a generic activity which would probably have roughly the same meaning and purpose for students whatever the school. As successive problematisations developed, this original view changed. The background knowledge presented here eventually served to show how educational cultures may give totally different meaning to craft based learning.

**Work of specific authors, initial literature review**

Reviewing current hospitality research literature has allowed me to contextualise and deepen my understanding of the observations I made in my professional experience concerning the place of teaching operational skills in hospitality management programmes. Concepts taken from the field of psychology allowed me to revisit these questions using developmental and clinical perspectives. The following section examines how a combination of hospitality research and psychology literature inspired the setting of my first problematisation.
My literature review I carried out revealed two opposing views expressed by the academic community interested in issues related to the question of teaching operational skills to hospitality management students.

A number of authors discuss the skills and competencies used by management in the hospitality industry. Peacock (1995) reveals that 35.7% of managers see themselves as successful because of their financial management skills. In comparison only 16.4% thought that operational skills contributed to their success. Durocher (1983) finds that people management, communication and interpersonal skills are the most important contemporary management skills and Baum (1990) suggests that essential management competencies are found in areas such as: understanding the need of the guest, hygiene, communication, legal issues and employee relations. Gamble et al (1994) discuss the results of a comprehensive research programme conducted in six European countries. They note that managers use a variety of skills, most of which have no direct relationship with managing operational concerns.

These findings have encouraged academics to contest the necessity of teaching operational skills. For example Luke and Ingold (1990) argue that Food and Beverage (F&B) operational skills will not be important for the success of future graduates in industry and Umbriet (1993, p. 11) says that: “Overemphasis on the teaching of technical skills may place future hospitality professionals at a disadvantage in the age of service management. Instruction in leadership, service management, and marketing principles is what is needed”.

Thus some hospitality management educators opt to teach generic business management skills rather than operational skills as they were taught in craft based learning environments. Umbriet (1993) sums up this view by saying that “some institutions teach their graduates to do things right, while others teach them to do the right thing”.

The counter argument is held by researchers who, like Baum (1990) examine the skills and knowledge which industry is expecting of young trainees. From this stand point he finds that the right balance between operational and generic management is provided by Higher National Diplomas (HND) programmes in the United Kingdom.
which, as mentioned earlier, use craft based learning in their curriculum. Similarly, Peacock (1995) observes that the HND students are more operationally motivated than their counterparts following degree programmes who receive less craft-based teaching. Other researchers plead in favour of craft based learning arguing that the “food service lab” is a better way of teaching operational skills which cannot simply be reduced to “teaching cooking” (Powers and Reigel, 1993, p. 306). Jones (1992) maintains that present-day courses given in British universities lack vocational relevance, both practical and operational. As a result of this he says that students are not capable of performing effectively in the work place until additional training is given by the employer.

Nevertheless within the hospitality research literature there is little or no information available on how practical instruction is related to learning management skills (Nies, 1993; Powers and Riegel, 1993). Outside the field of hospitality management studies, I have found research within industrial psychology (James, 1986) and within the health service (Saunders, 1990) which strongly supports the view that practical/work experience helps students acquire successful managerial practice. Moreover the relationship between practice and learning theory has been demonstrated in the sciences (Queen, 1991).

In the studies presented so far operational skills and knowledge are seen as one of a number of managerial skills that might be needed for hospitality industry managers to succeed. We have seen that some researchers question the necessity and importance that is given to teaching operational skills because they found that managers no longer rely on operational knowledge to be effective. Other researchers consider that operational skills and knowledge are useful and recommend teaching them to prepare students for the industry, especially for entry level employment.

This debate reveals the reductionist approach which underpins both sides of the argument. Subject areas and teaching methods are associated with the discrete learning outcomes for which they were designed. Craft based learning is therefore necessarily associated with learning technical competencies and teaching generic management skills with these same skills. Both sides of the argument fail to explore the possibilities of interrelated and generic learning outcomes. However these appear to be relevant considerations. For example, O’Halloran (1995) argues that to prepare
students for the hospitality industry they should learn to think and exercise critical analysis and Graham and Stewart (1995) say that hospitality employers prefer students who have developed transferable skills as a result of deep learning.

In the light of these arguments one may need to consider students’ development towards more complex forms of adult thinking as part of the development of skills which are needed for themselves and industry. In the present study, my background in psychology and my interest for development processes invited me to explore what could be the role(s) of craft based learning in relation to the development of adult thinking skills. My background in psychology had introduced me to authors interested in developmental processes which have influenced the setting my first problematisation.

*Psychology authors*

Previously, I mentioned that in the course of my work in curriculum development I noticed that students engaged in the SHA HMS Les Roches received a considerable amount of craft based learning. In practical terms this meant that young adults were learning to cook, wait on tables and operate a front desk of a hotel in the school. Taking a developmental perspective one could question the relationship between this hands-on approach and the development of more sophisticated thinking skills.

Two authors I had studied influenced the way I initially approached this question, Piaget because his model of development puts a lot of emphasis on the role of activities in the development process (Dolle, 1973, p. 75) and Winnicott because he mentions the relationship between the particularity of the context and the passage from adolescence towards adulthood. Winnicott (1971) says that young persons becoming adults must commit themselves to particular socio-organisational context. A third author Bateson (1977) inspired some reflection on how students could learn something in one situation and transfer this learning to other more complex circumstances.

It would be wrong to say that these authors set the first problematisation because in reality they opened my mind and prompted reflection. However by referring to them
in this chapter I hoped to present the reader with the background they offered to this reflection.

Piaget’s constructivism

In an interview Piaget points out that “Each time we teach something to children we prevent them from inventing it” (Ducret et al., 1997) because for him activities are central to the construction of knowledge. Piaget, writing about active methods of learning says that: “The child’s activity at certain levels necessarily entails the manipulation of objects and even a certain amount of actual physical groping, insofar as elementary logico-mathematical notions, for example, are derived not from the objects manipulated, but from the actions of the child and their co-ordination. At other levels the most authentic research activity may take place in the spheres of reflection, of the most advanced abstraction, and of verbal manipulation…” (Piaget, 1970).

Underpinning this extract one finds a fundamental theme in Piaget’s constructivist model which he introduces to find a middle ground between two opposing conceptual frameworks attempting to describe development. Constructivism aims at superseding both the ‘inneist’/apriorist and the empiricist explanations of development (Piaget, 1970). Piaget’s constructivist model of development affirms that new, more complex, cognitive structures come to replace previous less sophisticated forms of thinking thanks to the physical and mental activities deployed by the individual in the development process (Piaget and Inhelder, 1966). The constructivist model encouraged me to think that there could be a relationship between students’ activities and the construction of knowledge which was not directly associated with the activity.

Constructivism describes an adaptive process which Piaget says is characterised by the equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 1977 p. 12). Assimilation occurs when the individual incorporates properties of the environment into existing structures and accommodation occurs when the individual modifies internal structures in response to properties of the environment (Piaget, 1936; for

7 Translated from French by the author.
8 See innate (Collins, 1991): “present in the mind before any experience and knowable by pure reason”.
9 See “tabula rasa” concept where learning occurs through interaction with an environment
reviews see Dolle, 1973; Droz and Rahmy, 1987; Ducret et al, 1997). This model offered some interesting perspectives concerning the possible role of craft based learning in so far as students were confronted with activities which were new to them and might offer them assimilation and accommodation opportunities. For this reason I thought that craft based learning could possibly be offering students opportunities to experience situations which were new and challenged their thinking skills.

My original proposal took a very structuralist view of development which was my interpretation of Piaget’s constructivist theory. Gruber and Voneche (1995) draw attention to “logical determinism” in Piaget’s thinking, because he proposes that each stage is characterised by a logico-mathematical structure which determines the structure of the stage which follows. In this way the order of the stages is more important than the actual age or conditions under which a stage may or may not occur. It is for this reason that Piaget’s theory is associated with structuralism.

However by limiting the reading of Piaget to a structuralist stance one would lose one of his important contributions which is helpful in understanding developmental processes. Structuralism is, for Piaget, a method and not a doctrine (Piaget, 1968 p. 123; translated version Piaget, 1970). He says in an interview that structures do not exist in children, they are only present in their activities, and researchers use the notion of structures to group activities which have commonalities (Gorreta, 1979). With this in mind one gains further insights reading Piaget when he says that: “….to the extent that one opts for structure and devaluates genesis, history, and function or even the very activity of the subject itself, one cannot but come into conflict with the central tenets of dialectical modes of thought” (Piaget, 1968. p. 101 translation taken from 1970 edition). For Piaget, development is a complex process of equilibration involving mental and physical activities which unfold in time and which are necessarily difficult to describe in the linear form of language. Therefore he favours explanations which take into account the ‘diachronic’ process of development (Piaget, 1970).

Inspired by this approach, my study has constantly looked at the process of development and has attempted to describe the dynamic nature of the developmental process. This stance also guided me to choose the clinical interviewing method (Droz and Rahmy, 1987, Ducret et al. 1997,) of inquiry.
Winnicott

Winnicott (1971) talks about the passage from adolescence towards adulthood saying that: “… we must accept that healthy individuals depend, in respect to their mental and personal accomplishment, on a loyalty towards a limited area of society, if only that of a local club (ibid.)”. In relation to the present research Winnicott’s ideas made me consider the possible impact of a social context on students’ development. Craft based learning could be seen as limiting the horizon of students by showing them particular circumstances and problems. Yet Winnicott’s ideas suggested to me that adult development naturally went through this phase and that it did not necessarily impose limits on adult thinking. In fact Winnicott (1969) says that this integration helps to set the adolescent idealism into motion within the pragmatic constraints of ‘real’ situations, therefore it helps open new opportunities. Originally I thought that craft based learning contexts offered relatively similar experiences to students, later in my investigations I have come to question this uniformity.

A further source of inspiration came from Winnicott’s idea that trial and error opportunities are necessary within each development period. For this author, these activities should take place in a ‘safe enough’ environment which permits full exploitation of all the opportunities offered by experimentation and practice (Winnicott, 1971). I found these ideas interesting because they offered an insight into what could be a raison d’être for craft based learning. One could imagine that practical learning environments offered more than training in vocationally specific skills such as, for example, cooking omelettes or table side service. The simulation these situations created may have offered students a place for trial and error in sufficiently safe conditions for practice to be beneficial.

Within these environments, the nature of the social interactions experienced by young adults were also of great interest. Winnicott (1971) says that each development period is associated with a struggle between the person’s desires and a ‘sufficiently good’ world which does not offer access to all these desires. For Winnicott, the meeting between the adult representatives of the ‘sufficiently good’ world and the young adult, should take the form of a personal confrontation. He writes for example that:
“…death and personal triumph are inherent to the process of maturation and the acquisition of adult status…”. I understand this confrontation of strength as a kind of resistance offered by the adults and the social context in which the adolescent is living. Furthermore Winnicott (1969a) sees development automatically making individuals live the trauma of disappointment. In the case of young children, they must be disappointed by a mother who is only ‘sufficiently good’, this way she curbs the child’s natural desire for omnipotent control. Likewise Winnicott suggests that the young adult must be disappointed by his ‘local club’ to curb the idealistic desires which characterise this period of life (ibid.).

In the context of my employment in the SSH HMS Les Roches I noticed that many young adults experienced this form of trauma and disappointment when they first entered the structured environment of craft based learning. These cases drew my attention to the emotional turmoil which might be involved within this period of life and which could obscure or at least colour the interpretations young adults have of their daily experiences. More generally, this concept provided me with the idea that the college world might be seen as an intermediary world, which put in play some space for idealism with some ‘real world’ features, provided by instances of practical education.

In the first problematisation I viewed the relationship between craft based learning environments and further development in structural terms. I thought that practical learning environments elicited certain activities creating the necessary conflicts and new experiences which fed the development of new, structurally different, levels of thinking and living emotions. Within this perspective I looked for a possible progression from the particularity of certain kinds of activities associated with craft based learning towards the generalised qualities of thinking associated with adulthood. My interpretation of Winnicott was that being ‘member of the local club’ eventually made you become a member of the adult family.

As I progressed in my investigations my ideas about Winnicott’s work also changed and I paid more attention to his notion that young adult development is inextricably linked to the environment in which it is happening. Influenced by this perspective, I later considered development towards adulthood as an expression of the particular way a socio-cultural environment envisages adulthood.
Gregory Bateson

Gregory Bateson is considered as the founder of the Palo Alto school which applies a systemic approach to the field of psychology. His seminal texts are found in “Steps towards an Ecology of the mind”, where Bateson (1977) distinguishes five categories of learning which encouraged me to consider young adult development from a different perspective to the ones described earlier. Bateson’s categories go this way: learning “zero” is characterised by the specificity of the response; learning “I” by changes in the specificity of the response; learning “II” by a change in the process of learning; learning “III” by a change in the process of learning type “II” and learning “IV” by changes in the learning type “III”. His typology is interesting because it departs from a vision of learning which is based on the acquisition of skills or levels of cognitive competence. His reference to learning types, inspired by the logic of types (Russell and Whitehead, 1903), invites us to view development from a procedural perspective which examines the individual’s ability to learn and not necessarily to know. Originally it was this aspect which attracted my attention because I saw in it an opportunity to understand how students transferred learning mechanisms acquired in craft based learning situations to other situations.

There are however more implications to Bateson’s approach. The five learning types are categories of transformation which do not necessarily have to be associated with any cognitive structure. He observes that individuals may hop from applying one category of transformation to another i.e. from one type of learning to another. Strategic use of these categories of transformation is made in relation to context and other variables. This non-teleonomic view inspired me to look at development as an adaptive phenomenon which takes shape within personal, social and physiological circumstances. These ideas led me to reconsider adult thinking skills, making me look for the adaptive role they have in helping adults evolve and learn within complex and often contradictory environments.
Summary and impact upon 1st Problematisation

In this chapter I have reviewed some significant aspects of my initial background and reading which had an impact on my successive problematisations. My interest in psychological development processes found its roots in my career within the hospitality industry. It was during this period that I first noticed that practical situations within ordinary working environments could offer rich learning opportunities.

More precise questions concerning the role of craft based learning in hospitality management education arose while I was developing the curriculum of the SHA HMS “Les Roches”. During this period I noticed that craft based learning was not used by all hotel schools. The rationale for those schools who offered craft based learning was that it helped students acquire operational skills which were necessary and appreciated in industry. Some schools such as those in Switzerland focused their entire programme on teaching technical skills and a considerable proportion of the curriculum was given to craft based learning. Other schools such as those in the United Kingdom had different learning objectives and offered a more diverse programme where craft based learning was coupled with teaching generic management competencies.

However a number of authors question this approach and recommend reducing and even, in some cases, doing away with craft based learning because they have collected evidence which supports that mastering operational skills is no longer an important factor for the success of managers.

Both arguments rest on the assumption that craft based learning teaches only operational skills, and fail to recognise that other useful learning outcomes might derive from the students participation in craft based learning. Some research findings suggest that hospitality management students need to develop broad adult thinking skills and my background in psychology made me think that it was possible that students’ activities performed within craft situations could contribute to the development of broader competencies which go beyond the acquisition of operational skills.
Therefore I asked myself the question “What is the role of craft based learning in Hospitality Management Education?”. I approached this question from a developmental perspective within a constructivist frame of reference inspired by Piaget. Although this stance initially led me towards thinking in structural terms it also provided me with the fundamental idea that development is a diachronic process which cannot be seen or described through isolated snap shot instances. Winnicott’s ideas encouraged me to look at the relationship between the specificity of the context and the development of adulthood and this author also provided a conceptual framework which allowed me to see craft based learning as an opportunity for young adults to practice in preparation for their roles in adult life. Bateson’s model describes successive steps in learning to learn, helped me realise that learning outcomes were not necessarily associated with a particular competence or knowledge. His views on development also helped me consider possible ways in which young adults might transfer thinking skills from one learning environment to another and brought to my attention the fact that adults may choose thinking skills to suit the problem they are facing.

With these questions concerning the role of craft based learning and insights into young adult development I planned an exploratory investigation. As I mentioned, earlier authors such as Gamble et al (1994) produced a comprehensive description of current managerial competencies in which operational skills were but one aspect. I thought that it would be interesting to ask students what had prepared them in school for these competencies. If the students spontaneously talked about instances of craft based learning I thought that I could shed some light on the relation between this form of learning and learning outcomes, which were not necessarily related to operational skills.
Introduction

My background in the hospitality industry and professional interest in curriculum development within the field of hospitality management education prompted me to examine the role of craft based education within hotel management schools. The previous chapter explored current views concerning the teaching of vocationally specific technical skills in hotel management schools. The arguments for and against craft based education focus on whether or not there exists a relationship between craft based teaching/learning strategies and the desired learning outcomes i.e. hospitality management skills. There exists a general agreement concerning these desired learning outcomes in terms of the professional competencies required within the industry (Gamble et al, 1994; Baum, 1990). Gamble et al (ibid.) present a list of ‘Categories of Management Competencies’ (see Table 06) which represent professional competencies they found European managers were currently using.

The developmental theories in psychology described in the previous chapter inspired me to examine the relationship between craft based education and these professional competencies in developmental terms. This approach is also suggested by Case and Edelstein; (1993, p. 6) who recommend that researchers pay attention to the situations that confront individual students. Thus my investigation aimed to explore students’ perceptions of how craft based education contributed to their acquisition of management skills.

Methodological considerations

At this point in my research I sought a possible link between activities performed by students in the context of craft based learning and the development of cognitive competencies that were relevant to hospitality managers. The methodology I chose had to serve these broad research objectives and also take into consideration a number of theoretical and practical issues that will be examined in this section.
Bannister (1996) recommends combining observations and interviews, which are both considered to be well suited for exploratory research and an inductive approach. However, to a certain degree, the method I chose also needed to take into consideration the access I had to the institution at the time. Maruyama and Deno (1992) point out that this is relatively common in educational settings and needs to be "managed" as part of the research process.

When I planned this research I had just developed, with the help of colleagues in the United Kingdom, a degree top-up programme. This was offered in Switzerland by CCN on the campus of the SSH HMS Les Roches and I also had the role of course leader for this programme. The degree top-up course was technically and physically separate from the Swiss school’s main 3-year Diploma Programme and for this reason I had limited access to the school itself. My intended programme of research work had the full support of the owner of the school, but I nevertheless needed to take into consideration the sensitivities of managers and teachers. They were somewhat apprehensive about the degree top-up programme because it was perceived as a potential threat to the status quo of the existing programme. I would have been greeted with hostility at this point in the organisational history of the institution had I asked to explore in detail educational practices within the Diploma programme. Whatever I did in the exploratory phase needed to be carefully chosen not to jeopardise the further data gathering I knew I would need to conduct. For this reason direct access to students in the 3 year Diploma programme was, at this stage, not possible.

However I was also hopeful that by sharing my results with my colleagues in the SSH HMS Les Roches and making my research relevant to them I would gradually open the doors for further work in their institution. This progressive strategy bore fruit because I eventually gained free access to respondents in each year of the Diploma programme.

Nevertheless at the stage of this exploratory phase, it seemed wise to limit myself to the total population of 10 students who had just enrolled in the degree top-up programme, who had all recently completed their 3 year Diploma Programme at the SSH HMS Les Roches. The potential respondents were therefore students under my responsibility and I realised that I needed to take this into account.
In the light of the research setting outlined above I could expect a small number of respondents for this exploratory phase. Low respondent numbers do not necessarily compromise a study, providing the research method is chosen and adapted to provide rich data as well as contextual information (Yin, 1994). In addition to the practical constraints outlined above I also needed a method of inquiry adapted to the inductive approach I had chosen and one which could possibly serve in the future data gathering I would need to conduct.

In these circumstances, a number of authors recommend using interviewing as a basis for data gathering (Allan and Skinner, 1991; Banister et al, 1996; Johns and Lee-Ross, 1998). However interviewing may take a variety of forms, ranging from structured to unstructured techniques. Within this wide choice I needed to choose a method that took into consideration issues raised in literature concerning interviewing. Some basic choices were possible from the outset, as a result of the philosophical stance I outlined in the preamble and the consequent inductive approach I chose. Structured interviews which, in principle, would have ensured easy quantification and comparability (Breakwell, 1995\textsuperscript{a}) were not appropriate because I did not want to use any approach which relied on \textit{a priori} assumptions against which experimental data would be gathered and compared (see: Johns and Lee-Ross, 1998).

For this reason techniques such as the repertory grid (see Kelly, 1955, 1986) appeared inappropriate. With hindsight this proved to be a salutary decision. The personal construct theory that underpins this method presupposes concepts such as "constructive alternativism" where different ways of "construing" are regarded as equally valid and possible within one person (ibid.). This theoretical baggage could have concealed certain aspects of young adult development that turned out to be important in this thesis, such as relativism, discussed in Problematisation 2.

I also discarded the idea of focused interviews, which are more appropriate for generating facts than for generating fresh data (Yin, 1994, p. 84-85.). As an alternative, Johns and Lee Ross (1998) suggest that unstructured interviews could provide qualitative data that would be well suited to my research objectives. Unstructured interviewing sacrifices comparability and quantifiability, but it had a better chance of providing the rich data and the personal relevance (Breakwell, 1995\textsuperscript{b}) that I sought.
While unstructured interviews presented identifiable advantages I knew from current literature that I would need to address a number of difficulties associated with this technique. The first consideration I needed to take was the small number of respondents that I could expect.

The positivistic stance which argues that interviews provide facts about the world is being challenged (Silverman, 1993). It is argued that the interview is not just a direct source of information concerning a respondent’s inner thoughts and process of (ibid.). For example, researchers need to be sensitive that circumstances of the interview are speech events which fundamentally shape the context of what is being said (Briggs, 1986) and that the interviewee and interviewer construct together a version of the world appropriate the them at that time (Baker, 1982). Furthermore interviews impose particular ways of understanding interviewees’ responses (Cicourcel, 1974), and Maning (1967) points out that the interviewer is unavoidably part of the interviewee’s production of data. Nevertheless unstructured interviews are typically sensitive to the interviewee’s understanding and experiences and attempt to situate these within biographies and agendas which are pertinent to the respondent (Sanger, 1996).

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) propose an attractive approach to unstructured interviews that addresses these issues by involving the respondent and the interviewer. In his argument for taking notes during, rather than audio-taping interviews, Sanger (1996) also points out the advantages of reaching a consensus with interviewees about their responses within the interview session. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) stress that interviewees are not merely a "vessel-of-answers", they are actively engaged in the production of knowledge with the interviewer. For this reason they recommend techniques which give life to the person behind the respondent based on the idea that interviewee transforms facts and details to make meaning as the interview progresses.

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) argue that although "creative interviewing" attempts to discover a respondent’s deep experiences, it also presupposes a passive subject insofar as interviewees remain creatively emotional fonts of experience. As an alternative they propose active interviewing that recognises that interviews produce meaning from the moment a topic is chosen to the final interpretation phase. The image produced by the respondent is for these authors a product, which emerges through the
project of the interview. The interview itself is aimed at "fleshing out" the respondent in a 'give and take' rationale which the interview is seen as constantly developing.

Such techniques have far-reaching consequences. Traditional criteria of reliability (the extent to which questions in an interview yield the same answers whatever the circumstances) and validity (the extent to which the enquiry elicits "correct" answers) (see Kirk and Miller, 1986) need to be reconsidered. According to the point of view taken above, each interview is potentially a unique meaning-making encounter. Thus conventional approaches to unstructured interviews, which emphasise the rational value of what is communicated and focus their analysis on substantive statement lose their appeal.

However, meaning is not constantly reconstructed. Gubrium (1988, 1989) argues that interviewees’ responses reflect enduring characteristics that can be associated with the research topic itself. However, they also reflect biographical and particular ways of seeing and doing things that belong to the interviewee. DeVault (1990) encourages interviewers to explore ways to encourage interviewees to develop ideas which are relevant to their experience. To do this Smith (1987) suggests that one should engage interviewees in a meaningful way that directly involves aspects of their daily world and lived experiences.

At this point it became clear that addressing these issues was all but impossible with pre-chosen “interviewing recipes”. Furthermore the technique I chose would need to be adapted to the context of the inquiry, which included my own experience in handling interviews.

The literature reviewed above drew my attention to dynamic techniques that allowed the interview to be constructed as it proceeded. My studies at Geneva University had familiarised me with the clinical method of interviewing developed by Piaget to investigate developmental processes. I saw in this method a possible way forward because it could address some of the important issues outlined above.

The clinical method was initially designed to explore children’s cognitive processes, but it has also been used with adolescents and adults (see: Bond and Bunting, 1995). I felt that the verbal interaction aspect of the clinical method, developed by Piaget in his early investigations, would be of particular interest (Vinh-Bang, 1966). Piaget later
concentrated his research efforts on less verbal techniques in his search for formal models emphasising stages of development (Gruber and Vonèche, 1995, p. 64).

Critiques have been raised concerning the clinical method, which some researchers have sought to adapt to quantitative analysis. Somerville (1974) working on formal scoring systems for assessment says that criteria established for the assessment of tasks were intuitive and did not provide enough detail. But Nassefat (1963) claims that all it takes is some standardisations of the questions to allow quantification. Similar arguments are also voiced by Laurendeau and Pinard (1968). Lovell (1961) criticises the clinical method on the basis that Piaget and Inhelder do not give enough detail about the design of the apparatus, and that replication is not possible without adaptation and interpretations. Objectivity and replicability of the clinical method are also seen as a critical issue by Wallace (1965) who consequently says that this technique does not lend itself to statistical treatment. More recently this view has been challenged, and Bond and Bunting (1995) have successfully adapted the clinical method, providing data that lend themselves to qualitative analysis. However, Piaget himself had previously argued that statistical precision had a cost which, in his eyes, was unacceptable because it lost sight of the epistemological goals of his work (Piaget and Szeminska, 1941, p193).

Reviewing the critiques mentioned above one will notice that all these researchers focus upon tasks performed by the respondent and not upon the actual interviewing technique itself or, more importantly, the structure of the method. Vinh-Bang (1966) points out in his seminal text on the clinical method that Piaget used several techniques over the years that included observation, interviewing and making children and adolescents perform small manipulative and/or intellectual tasks. Vinh-Bang (ibid.) sees the originality of the clinical interviewing method in its ability to avoid the pitfalls of standardised testing and structured interviews. Piaget (1926) indicates that the clinical method is designed to take observation and interviewing one step further in providing relevant data while avoiding the trappings of standardised tests and structured interviews. He says that the fixed vocabulary used by the latter techniques hamper the researcher from discovering previously unthought-of phenomena. In contrast the clinical method, which proposes a direction to the research rather than a fixed hypothesis, enables the researcher to follow and discover the
interview, observation or task as it is happening. This allows the researcher to respond to situations and even to the vocabulary of the respondent (Vinh-Bang, 1966).

The context-dependant nature of this technique makes it naturally difficult to standardise (Ginsberg, 1982). Therefore it cannot satisfy positivistic ideals such as value-free and objective research. However, it is precisely these shortcomings that have made researchers reconsider the clinical method as an alternative research tool which could provide valuable data when working with interviews and textual material (Honey, 1987; Burman, 1996). Burman (1996) notes that its is through current awareness of the limitations of standardised testing and quantification that researchers are turning back towards discursive approaches such as the clinical method discussed in more detail below.

The clinical method is based on free conversation, similar to unstructured interviews, which follow children’s thoughts anywhere they choose to go (Droz and Rahmy, 1987). In this respect the technique parallels ethnographic interviewing (see Spradley, 1979) since both are concerned with respondents’ lived experiences. Thus the clinical method bears a similarity to other phenomenological research approaches. Furthermore, the clinical method shares with ethology the idea that theories are developed and tested during the research process itself (De Lannoy and Feyereisen, 1987).

The raison d’être of the clinical method is to uncover the patterns of cognition used by a respondent (Piaget, 1947; Vinh-Bang, 1966; Dole, 1973). For Piaget this method is the antithesis of hypothetico deductive techniques, which fix their questions and consequently, in his view, do not lead to any new discoveries (Bringuiер, 1977, p. 46).

Dolle (1973, p. 22-23) defines the clinical method as an open interview with a child on a particular theme, directed by a researcher who follows the child’s reasoning in all its meanderings. Typically, the researcher invites the child to justify and explain his thoughts and actions and makes timely counter-suggestions. Piaget, quoted in Dolle (ibid.) says of this method that: “by following the child in each one of his answers, then always remaining under the child’s guidance, making him talk freely, one ends up obtaining, for each domain of intelligence, a clinical method similar to the one used by a psychiatrist to obtain a diagnosis.” (ibid. p. 22). Piaget used the clinical method to investigate the child’s way of reasoning, learning about how he discovers
new thinking instruments (Bringuier, 1977, p. 46). The method also helps the researcher discover how individuals perceive their interactions with the environment (Droz and Rahmy, 1987, p. 21.) Therefore this method addresses particularly well the issue identified earlier of co-construction in the interview process. The clinical method helps to test and uncover the respondent’s underpinning personal theories. The interviewer may therefore explore the meanings and content of the responses in-situ together with the interviewee. Interestingly Piaget (1947) insists that each interview must be adapted to the respondent and should be designed to allow individuals to develop awareness and formulate their mental ideas.

The clinical method seemed particularly appropriate for the work I intended to carry out. However, I realised that I also needed to take into consideration some critiques which have recently been voiced. These imply that consideration must be given to the fact that researchers are to a certain degree accountable to the respondent and that their agenda should be acknowledged alongside the researcher’s own (see Burman, 1996). For this reason I chose to use a theme which would be relevant to the students in a professional language with which they were familiar.

Language in itself was a sensitive issue that I considered in its own right because it is central to the interview process. Sanger (1996) talks of the "slipperiness" of this medium of communication. In the preamble of this thesis I referred to authors such as Derrida (1978,1981) and Foucault (1966, 1969) who alert us to the importance of situating language in socio-political discourses that carry and modify meaning. Thus it is necessary to pay great attention to the separation that Saussure (1916, 1995) makes between the “signifiant” and “signifié”. This distinction effectively makes words autonomous and arbitrary, and therefore prone to interpretation, but Saussure (ibid.) sees meaning taking shape in the relationship between words. For Barthes (1957), meaning is essentially idiosyncratic and reconstructed by each reader, so that commonality in understanding cannot be assumed. However this distinction applies only to the interpretation. From a production point of view Bakhtin (Morris, 1994) introduces the idea of speech genres and proposes that some culturally acquired commonality does in fact exist. This unity is influenced by other factors highlighted by Foucault (1989) who argues that power, historical development and contextualised biased understanding influences meanings and values. For this author meaning in the
sciences is usually associated with ‘logocentrism’ (dominance of rationality and linear causality). Foucault (ibid.) points out that this is a partial view which often fails to reveal parallel experiences and the subjective nature of meaning.

For these reasons I will argue that interviewing method and data interpretation are essentially linked and to a certain degree happen simultaneously. The clinical method does, to a certain degree, help in this respect because of the importance it gives to the quality of investigative questioning pursued by the interviewer. In this way it attempts to debunk interpretation by centring the interview process on the inquiry about meaning. But as I have already suggested in the preamble, social science research often cannot guarantee any form of unique interpretation that may not be challenged (see: Hammersley, 1992).

The reasons evoked above indicated that the clinical method of interviewing could be an appropriate instrument. The particularity of this method lies in the emphasis it puts on exploration. As I outlined in the Preamble, my intention throughout this thesis was that each step would lead to new formulations of the questions themselves as opposed to answers. Thus the clinical method could serve my fundamental research objectives which were centred on constructing meaningful questions and insights for future researchers and practitioners.

In practical terms, for this exploratory investigation I used the following framework as a starting point for clinical interviews and adhered to the guidelines below during all the interviews I conducted.

1 Propose a theme for the interview.

2 Use the theme as a starting point around which students are encouraged to talk freely.

3 Follow students’ answers instead of guiding the interview with prepared questions.

4 Ask students to explain with examples and elaborate their ideas (propose counter suggestions).

The students were asked to talk freely about their learning experience and its perceived relevance to their future jobs in the hospitality industry. They read the list of professional competencies proposed by Gamble et al (1994) (shown in Table 06) and
were asked to use this as a framework for the interview. I chose this theme because I wanted to try and find a link between students’ perceptions of their education and the desired learning outcomes with which they were familiar.

**Design**

Students were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. They were informed that the investigation’s objective was the exploration of their learning and development process within the three year programme they had just finished. They were told that the interviews served academic purposes only and that their identity would not be revealed. Although I was not formally required to do so, I followed the standards of research ethics in psychology proposed by the American Psychological Association (APA) with one exception. Students were not asked to sign the adult consent form because this is specifically designed for investigations conducted in the United States (Cone and Foster, 1996, pp. 134-144). Furthermore I specifically intimated that the responses they gave me concerned a programme over which I had no jurisdiction and that was considered to be entirely completed. I also indicated clearly that their responses had nothing to do with the 4th year programme of study they were completing at the time.

The students were interviewed between 2 and 4 weeks into a one year bachelor degree top-up programme, run by a British university on the campus of the Swiss Hotel Association Hotel Management School Les Roches (SSH HMS Les Roches Hotel School). The 10 students enrolled in the top-up programme had successfully completed the SSH HMS Les Roches 3 year diploma programme. Four students agreed to be interviewed, two males and two females. All were aged between 22 and 25. Each student was asked to read the ‘Categories of Management Competencies’ (see Table 06) and talk about the way they felt they had been prepared to cope with the situation/competencies described.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 06: Categories of Management Competencies (Gamble et al, 1994)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Operations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day to day operations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to customer requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying potential operational hazards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sorting out operational problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rescheduling operations to match work load</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stepping in to fill the breach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining book-work and accounting procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specialist/Technical Areas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product knowledge related to food, beverage and accommodation products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical knowledge of the operating environment and systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local knowledge related to the attractions and facilities available in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical skills required for the operations of a hospitality business</td>
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<tr>
<td>First aid skills</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Managing a crisis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking charge of the situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finding solutions “on the move”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-ordinating and initiating action</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Managing the Business</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Business Performance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysing data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring and controlling current performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying discrepancies from optimum performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Producing recommendations for action</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Projects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning necessary activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaising and co-ordinating others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making things happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing time schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Strategic Decisions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing policy documents/statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing a business plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing marketing strategies and action plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing new products or service concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing operating standards, systems and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing operational layouts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organising staffing structures and levels

**Managing Legal Complexity**
- Employment legislation and procedures for termination
- Licensing law outside the normal daily operation contract negotiation
- Health, safety and hygiene requirements

**Managing People**

**Managing Individuals**
- Understanding individual needs
- Appraising subordinates’ performance
- Gaining commitment
- Helping individuals to develop their skills and abilities
- Maintaining individual morale and satisfaction

**Managing Teams**
- Making team based decisions
- Introducing new staff into teams
- Gaining the trust and commitment of teams
- Building bridges between teams
- Maintaining team moral

**Managing External Contracts**
- Relationships with:
  - Contractors
  - Suppliers
  - Education
  - Local community

**Managing Personnel Administration**
- Handling disciplinary/grievance procedures
- Dealing with redundancy procedures
- Dealing with staff sickness/absence
- Organising training and development for others
- Knowledge of pensions and superannuation
- Ensuring all procedures are followed precisely
- Dealing with staff contracts, salaries and recruitment

**Personal Management Skills**

**Making Presentations**

- **Presentations**
  - Formal presentations to customers/clients
  - Preparation of written submissions
  - Communicating information to customers or staff

- **Training**
  - Preparation of training packages
Training others in a formal presentation
Training others in informal situations

**Interpersonal Skills**
- Interviewing and collecting information
- Persuading groups or individuals
- Communicating embarrassing, upsetting or sensitive information
- Gaining approval, commitment, initiating behaviour change
- Negotiating business deals
- Handling complaints
- Handling awkward, aggressive or abusive customers
- Resolving disputes between individuals

**Computer Skills**
- Sorting out system problems
- Using packages to achieve results
- Tailoring software or systems to meet individual or organisational needs
- Making decisions on new equipment, suppliers or software

**Self Development**
- Learning from training sessions
- Learning from experiences, subordinates and colleagues
- Keeping up to date with new developments

**Analysis of Data**

*Introduction*

The clinical method which was used for the interviews is associated with its own form of data analysis, with which I was familiarised whilst attending Geneva University. Piaget (1929) and Dolle (1973) give some advice concerning this method warning of the trappings of easy, evident interpretation and encourage researchers to conduct an in-depth analysis of the interviews using as a guide the reasoning and arguments deployed by the interviewee. For this piece of research I was also aware of the fact that I was analysing transcripts which can overlook unnoted recurring features of the organisation of talk (Silverman, 1993) and for this reason I often relistened to the recordings as well as reading the transcripts.

In the introduction and methodology sections I have already pointed out why it is important to take into account the co-construction of meaning that occurs in an
interview process. Content analysis would fail to capture this co-construction process because it relies too much on isolating instances within the flow of conversation. Thematic analysis might have revealed more about the relationship between the research question and interviewees responses (Burman, 1996) but falls short of situating the analysis within its own circumstances of production. For this reason reflexive analysis (ibid.) could have helped me appreciate the context i.e. what constructs the interview process. However all these approaches assume that the person decoding is independent from the data, which I was not because the clinical method depends upon the researcher’s participation in the production of meaning.

The principal difficulty I experienced during the decoding process was to achieve enough independence to differentiate the interviewees’ thought processes. My experience in clinical psychology was helpful because I was trained to listen and appreciate underpinning conceptual and emotional frameworks.

Thus I analysed the interviews, looking for central themes and recurring patterns in the students’ responses. I paid attention to converging arguments within interviews in terms of process, functional and structural elements. I grouped these findings into clusters and created categories. The process was long and I often had to alter the categories I used as new data challenged my interpretations or gave a different colouring to the ones I had already classified. The work I carried out was rigorous in so far as I was systematic and did not stop until all of the interviewees’ responses were accounted for.

However, a voice of criticism could be levelled at the method I used because no “second opinion” was sought. Therefore the interpretation could be considered as limited by my own interpretation. For this reason and in an attempt to be transparent I have included relatively extensive extracts so that the reader may appreciate and critique the interpretations I have made. The quotes from the students are characteristic examples of their responses. These quotes are related verbatim and contain some poor use of the English language. Only one of the students I interviewed was fluent in (Australian) English, the other three were not, respectively they came from: Italy, Croatia, Taiwan. The admission requirement on the Diploma programme for language proficiency was very low (550 Test of English as a Foreign Language “TOEFL” score). Each quote is preceded by an identification coding which follows
the same rules throughout this thesis. The first letter identifies the year in which the student is studying (in the case of this investigation all the students are in their 4th year of study). The second number is an individual ID number given to each interviewee, the letter which follows identifies the gender.

Interview data

Of the four students interviewed, three specifically felt that craft based education had played an important part in their education and development process.

4.1F "...I stressed a lot the practical side because, specially the first two years there is a lot, because hotel management is also that, but without doing those three years of practical work I do not think we would have enough knowledge to understand and put into practice what we are learning in this 4th year."

4.2M "Interviewer: You could have said that these things, you could of read them out of a book.

Student: No you need to do it practically, because once you do it, you know it, you don’t forget it, if you just read it in a book, if you don’t play it you don’t know how effective it is."

4.2M "I believe, I think, that the best way of doing things of learning is by doing it, by doing the task [on] your own, by doing it yourself, by actually doing it is very very important."

One student however, reported having learned more from factual information gathered through lectures and reading.

4.3M " I reckon that the theoretical side of it makes it a lot easier for the practical side".

An informal follow up interview revealed that this student had worked since the age of 14 with his father in the construction business. For this reason, he experienced a “working environment” earlier than his peers. He also ran a small business while he was studying in the SSH HMS Les Roches and had lived through the war in Croatia before entering the hotel management school. In the follow-up interview he explained
how he related his past "hands on" experience to his current understanding of conceptual notions. It is therefore reasonable to consider that he presented a different case than the three other students who had come straight out of secondary education and never worked before starting in SSH HMS Les Roches.

The responses from the other students indicated they had gained more than operational skills while studying in a craft based learning environment.

4.2M "Interviewer: Serving (waiting on tables), what did that teach you?
Student: It teach me that in this industry I have to be able to be flexible, I have to be able to stand, to stand for many many hours, I have to be able to do other jobs that may not suit me..."

4.1F "Well, practical skills required to do the business... well it was basically the reason why I appreciated the first two years, because I really never had a lot of practical experience in my life before and although like stewarding and the ..and cooking was not really the best at the moment, I realised that that was the way to, you know, you learn through the practical experience that’s to one day be able to explain the way to do it you know not just criticise the person without knowing how to do it."

4.2M " Yes, I believe very much because if a manager does not know how to cook, he does not know how to train, he does not know how to schedule, forecast, control his employees.

Interviewer: Surely you do not have to cook an omelette to know how to do that?
Student: No, no but by doing the practical side and stage it gives you commitment.

Interviewer: What gives you that, when you are doing what gives you?
Student: When you are cooking an omelette you know somebody is waiting for this, you have to cook it in five minutes and you have to convince yourself that you have to do this omelette perfectly. It’s money coming in and if you don’t do it well the kitchen chef will come down and shout at you and if you do it twice or three times you will get fired of course. But it is the commitment, the standard of doing the job that works and most important it is, I believe, the background knowledge of that of so many things that managers should know. If you don’t go through all this you don’t realise how difficult all this it is to be an employee."
Interviewer: I would have an extra question, you say that in the practical side you have learned to count.

Student: it is a way of training.

Interviewer: But some people would say that you could do that in class, what was the advantage or disadvantage of doing it in a practical situation?

Student: Hum, the advantage is to react quickly, and to react quickly to do it correctly in real life, because for example, we have a plate of mashed potatoes. How would you serve it? A trained person would take a large spoon to serve and we have, it involves efficiency, that you do not have to run back and forth just to get a spoon. You have to spend time to find ‘underliners’, to count ‘underliners’ and plates to do that in the kitchen side. Practical side is, you have to know how many people are eating, you have to see the measures in proportion to cook that…”

Interviewer: I have another question, you have done three years of studies one in service, one in kitchen and one in management, the examples you have given me are from the practical years.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Why do you think you did not give me answers from the management year? I am not saying you should, I am asking you why you chose those years.

Student: Because in the management year, I have mentioned about accounting, that is obvious, but in the management year we are dealing with the management side, dealing with that part of it.

Interviewer: Some people would argue that this is management [referring to the paper with the skills and knowledge].

Student: Yes but in the first and second year you have the fundamental basis to support you to step further in the management year.
Interviewer: Have you lived this or is it something you have been told?

Student: No, this is my personal experience, I believe that this is, first year and second year is fundamental this is very fundamental basis to us to a step further for management."

These students indicated clearly that craft based learning had played an important role in their overall development and preparedness for industry.

4.4F “... not so much that that [practical classes] prepared us for food and beverage, for example service and kitchen, but just the whole [pause] getting into the habit of organising your work station, hum which is part of daily routine once you get out in the hospitality field."

4.2M "Interviewer: Yes but you could have read a book and gone and applied it in a hotel after you read it.

Student: But you don’t have these ideas this knowledge in your head, I mean this school has shaped us so that we could get into the industry as soon as possible. If we hadn’t, if I hadn’t gone to this school and gone into the hotel industry straight ahead immediately, I would have no clue. I would be like a fly going around and looking for details, I don’t know what to look for ... this school has given us the area, the environment..."

4.1F "Well coordinating and initiating actions, for example when in the kitchen, when we had to do the vegetarian special, it was one person in charge and when you were doing it, it was you had to coordinate with the chef, you had to ask mister B. if he approved of it, but you were initiating, you were using, whatever, your preferences to propose a menu until it was approved."

However the students also reported that craft based learning was but one aspect of a total educational environment.

4.4F “... OK there’s three steps. It’s reading the book and knowing what to do, its seeing someone else do it and then there is doing it yourself, learning from your mistakes…”

The data I gathered in the interviews indicated that it was the total learning experience which students thought played the most important role in their development.
4.4F “Professional knowledge, you get that [pause] it is also from practical but it is also from reading in association with the practical side. I think the school, professional technical areas I learned so much from the school, the teachers, just talking…”

In this way, craft based learning was one aspect of the schools' educational ethos. It may therefore be impossible to separate craft based learning and consider it as a generic isolated educational and learning instance.

4.3M "The thing that most probably most helped me especially in the industry I am in now, having been to hotels and having taken the course here in school. You go through, I don’t know, there like steps that sort of, are thought out before. So they know what the outcome is, I mean they, like a front desk check-in situation, you stand there and you practice your check-in, check-out, you do the cashiering and everything, that sort of stuff… the situation exactly would be, front office operations would be the checking in/out procedure. There is a room upstairs where they do that, they walk you through the steps, basic steps, they don’t cover a lot. That would be the practical side of it. But then for how clients respond there is a lot both in HR [human resources which is taught through lectures in a classroom situation] when you are dealing with people and managing them you know how to treat an angry customer, you know how to treat a customer that is not angry but who is dissatisfied, you know how to treat customers that are very happy, there are a few perspectives They all link in from rooms division classes, to human resource classes they all blend in. We always [are] focusing on people whether they are clients or suppliers or guests or whatever. They basically teach us how to interact with these people."

4.2M "I will give you an example in our kitchen classes… in a traditional kitchen we all have gas stove and electric stove but in this school they have installed the new induction stove that you do not see in any kitchen, and I believe, they believe this is the trend. They have given the investment to the teachers for this new advancement of technology and the computer for example that obviously it is a necessity in the hotel industry and the teacher has told us how to look out for the market trend and they have also taught us how does the experience and the market and how they forecast the changes all this has been told to us by teachers rather than from the text book…"
“Because its all these pieces, these things that you see, what can I say, the movement, the action of teachers...What I am saying is that the text book and background knowledge support you on your practical, you need the practical, you need the knowledge, then you need to see the practical, then you need to practice yourself..."

"Interviewer: At the same time or at different phases? [practice and theory]

Student: I believe in different phases because you learn what made the click, [it] is by doing the task myself, by doing the chicken myself, I realise that the text book is right and I realise that if I skip this step in the text book I wouldn’t cook the chicken."

"...training others for presentation...I can think of a good example, in the 'A la carte restaurant', when before even starting looking at the menu, before starting anything, the teacher trains you to recognise the things, to know what they look like, the cooking procedures, basically training you and making you taste it, what you are serving.

Interviewer: How did that help you, does that kind of thing help you to train people or not?

Student: Sure, because it is really pathetic when you ask a waiter what there is on a menu and what is this thing and the person does not really know what he is talking about and he should, this is your product, you are the waiter OK, you are not the owner of the restaurant, but you should know and we are given the background in that, good experience."

"We have learned this from front office, the teacher has given us the kind of mistakes that personnel will usually make as well as by responding to teachers questions relating to customers request and we also learned that from when we talked to each other, among the students we [are] asking questions and when the teacher [is] asking questions, and the way we respond and the way we react and the contingency that teachers make, that the whole school creates, that makes you [know] how to respond personally..."

"... rescheduling operation and workload [these are management competencies the Student is relating to], in 'practical' we have done that, in the housekeeping
operation lessons... it is a real case study so we are fine with that but [we learn] in our daily lives in Les Roches we have to, for example, do your home work, your assignment to calculate how many hours you have to participate in a project, you have to plan ahead and just by normal way of living, the way we live the way we react in our daily lives."

The students perceived that a development process had taken place which changed them. Student 4.3M talked about feeling that he was "...treated like a kid, ..." in the first years and that although he did not realise it then, he felt with hindsight, that he was acting immaturely at that time. Another student supported that she was aware of the changes which had taken place by saying:

4.2M "...the school, I believe we learn that on our own mostly, I believe the school has changed us each year, how to react with the change, you know new things happen, new fashions, people like that this year, they don’t like that this year, [the] school has taught us that. To react with technology with all the changes in society in the community."

Some of the extracts above reveal that a first stage of these students’ development involved learning through actively participating within very structured socio-organisational environments. These results agreed with those of Kincheloe and Steinberg (1993) who emphasise the situated nature of young adult cognition. The students I interviewed also described situations where their performance had changed substantially due to practice. This finding corroborates McCarthy and Dunne (1993) who say that restructuring of performance is due to the person gaining control over their performance. Craft based education may therefore have fulfilled a confidence building role which set the scene for further development and understanding in a particular field. For example students said:

4.4F “...it’s like at first by doing something you understand it...”

4.1F "Preparing you in a sense because you have to have the history, you have to have the knowledge...a teacher, of course, cannot give you the practical of it, you have to experience it yourself. When you have the experience and what they taught you, then as a manager, I think, you are complete."
Although the school emphasised the need for students to learn technical skills through craft based learning situations, the students interviewed agreed with those findings by You (1993, p. 24) who says that “knowledge is not a copy of a stable reality but the active construction of a dynamic reality” and that “the resulting outcomes of learning do not always mirror the original intent of the specific objectives”.

4.2M “…practice, it helps you to react with contingencies…”

4.1F “I think by second year kitchen, team work was built, it was very important to be a team and you are not working alone…I mentioned before the kitchen aspect where you cannot be thinking only as an individual because you have to be together with your team and the result, what comes out of the kitchen is not only what you have done but what everybody has put something into it and we have gained this, lets say this idea of team building through both years”

4.2M “…because different people have different ways of sorting out things and, for example, if we have a breakage of the coffee machine, I will seek an instant replacement and I will think of alternative ways of making coffees but the other person (with no practical training) they may think like buying a new coffee machine.”

Responses from students suggested that they eventually “generalised” the knowledge and skills they acquired in a craft based education context and that they could readily apply organisational and interpersonal skills to wider contexts and situations of greater complexity. The latter concurs with theories and observations made concerning earlier periods of development (Stremmel and Fu, 1993, p. 337).

4.1F “…planning and schedule for a meeting (a management competency the Student is referring to) is a good example, when you think in a final exams in the kitchen, how before starting to cook actually, before doing anything you have to make up a plan of the steps of which time you are going to start, finish let’s say blanching the potatoes, cutting the meat or whatever, it was very important because it was not only doing something that was important, it was the way you organise yourself, the way you plan it and making these contingency plans, thinking…”

4.4F “Interviewer: how can you justify that practical skills such as, you learn to cook and omelette, help you in managerial tasks?

Student: It is not just making the omelette, OK you learn to make it properly, but it’s not just the ingredient which go in, not just making the omelette, it’s the whole concept of being organised, having your equipment with you, of having things
properly laid out around you, hum of not being caught in a position where you can’t make the omelette and you can adapt that, not just in F&B [Food and beverage] in front office, in any, even if you go and do a desk job…”

4.1F "...it is not only cooking the vegetables or blanching the potatoes, it is before going or having a speech or whatever, or presenting a report, you plan your steps on what you are going to say and how you are going to say it…”

4.1F " Well also in the kitchen and service, all the hygiene procedures for example, they use to check our collars, they used to check our hands, our finger nails everything and this is preparing you to face the eventuality of somebody coming and checking, that you know, you are not contaminating what you are cooking and what you are serving, that you have this proper standard that we had in the first two years.

Interviewer: Explain to me, what is your idea about this... How can you justify that having your nails checked when you were in first and second year has helped you to realise that this was important, that I do not understand the rapport [Making a sign at the point concerning ‘Managers awareness of hygiene issues’ on the list which was in front of the student].

Student: Well you know there is, because it would not have been happening if it wasn’t’ important, because the first case you try to, lets say, correct the behaviour, correct the negative behaviour, if you are always reproached about something, if you always have dirty hands or your collar is dirty it will somehow stick to you, you have a problem with it and I think you will realise it in the long run. I mean if in class you feel ashamed if a teacher...

Interviewer: If I understand what you are saying is that the fact that you are being controlled, you have been told to be clean, that will make you as a manager, a cleaner manager?

Student: But also the standards of the business, those are the set standards and you cannot play around them."

Graeser et al (1993) say that the acquisition of deep causal knowledge (difficult for cognitive systems to assimilate) is linked to the goals, plans and activities of the agent. The students interviewed gave examples which confirmed this finding:

4.1F “To ‘manage a crisis’...well this is something that cannot be taught, I think, and it is up to the manager, he feels the way of dealing with things that gives him the solution to a crisis.”
4.2M "I believe we learn that from school by, for example, the teacher can teach us for example the advantage of certain operations of a certain way, to work and that we can identify the disadvantage, the hazards of an operation or that the teacher can give us examples of his experience or on top of that by doing case studies I think we have learned enormously from that because we can analyse into a restaurant and we can say that this is wrong, that a manager should do that and have many alternatives, sorting out our own answers, our own ideas of how to run a restaurant on how to have many alternatives to sort out the problem or have alternatives to see the problem."

Students reported that the international environment which existed within the SSH HMS Les Roches helped them mature and develop what they considered to be more adult-like thinking and behaving skills. Over 70 nationalities are represented in the student body of the school and this alone was considered to provide a very stimulating learning environment.

4.1F " Student; Basically we have to realise that our school is in a community and that you are living in somebody else’s environment and as soon as you realise that... you have to live with it not try to ...

Interviewer: Where did you learn that this was important?
Student: By some rules they have you know, about noise for example, that you should respect the community that you are living in a bigger world.."

4.2M " I have learned ...it’s more about the school it’s a way of living in the school and how people react in the classes how people discuss in the...how open it is in the school and the teaching style of the school is very open I believe, where you can have a lot of discussion about different nationalities and people how people do different this and ...culturally orientated and I don’t know but just the way I deal with my friend...

Throughout the interviews and in many of the illustrations presented so far, students alluded to the school’s focus on teaching technical skills and competencies.

4.2M "... in first and second year your are told to do that and you of course you learn and try to be proactive and try to be advanced but you are still under a kitchen chef. Interviewer: What has that taught you?
Student: The product knowledge and how to make things, how to arrange tasks in priorities."
Discussion and Reproblematisation

The students reported that craft based education played a significant role in their learning and development processes. Students mentioned that they had been prepared for industry through their experiences in school working in restaurants, kitchens and front office. They also talked about the technical information they gained through the teachers in classrooms. Thus the whole curriculum appeared to be designed to teach operational skills. Nevertheless, interviewees reported that the learning environment, within which craft based education was an important part, had contributed to their overall development.

However craft based learning was not clearly differentiated and it was therefore difficult to isolate it within the total learning environment of the school. For this reason craft based learning was most probably not an isolated set of learning instances that could be divorced from the total learning environment and ethos running throughout the school. This was an important observation because it prompted me to think about the school as a whole. The school’s own mission statement used in all publications reflects reads: “Les Roches is not just a school, it is a way of life”. The data so far suggested that it might be impossible to study the effect of craft based education without considering the students’ perception of the school’s educational environment in relation to their development as a whole. This was a fundamental turning point in my work, since it shifted the object of my research towards studying developmental processes within the specific context of vocational learning environments.

Interviewees indicated that participating in craft based learning taught them more than operational skills. It appeared that the situation-dependant nature of craft based learning engaged students in a structured learning environment within which they developed. The data showed that craft based education offered students a chance to develop broad thinking skills, maturity and preparedness for the industry. It therefore appeared that “context specific” learning situations did not limit development and that they might be a step towards generalisation (i.e. allowed the students to use skills acquired in the context of craft based learning to other professional situations). It
should be noted that at this point I was still thinking of development in very structural terms. This underpinning theoretical framework was not to be challenged until later in my work.

The interviewees also said they had lived a significant developmental period while studying in the SSH HMS Les Roches. The international nature of the student body, the schools educational culture and practical work experience performed in the school were all reported to have helped the students acquire new more sophisticated thinking skills which might be better understood in the wider context of the development of adult thinking. This was a field that I would need to explore further.

Theoretical work carried out on the “post formal” stage i.e. on persons older than 14 to 16, suggests that the development process is far from finished at the age of 18 (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1993). From a psychodynamic perspective, Sanzana et al (1995) suggest that university students undergo a particular process unique to their experience and responsibilities. These studies prompted me to conduct a detailed review of current theories covering young adult development and relate them to the role of craft based learning environments. Thus the next problematisation took shape.

In the first instance I needed to explore current thinking in young adult development. In the light of these theories and concepts I would need to broaden my investigation and explore in more detail the specificity of the development path which students experienced in this hotel management school’s programme. For these reasons I turned away from looking for specific learning outcomes related to craft based education in favour of studying the specificity of the student’s development path within this educational environment.

**Summary**

The students I interviewed in this study reported that craft based learning situations helped them develop a wide range of socio–cognitive skills, directly related to their future work environment. They also said that they had matured and progressed towards adulthood while in the school. Students gained a lot more than operational skills from their active participation in craft based education. However the interviews
also revealed that students considered craft based education in the light of the whole educational ethos of their school.

For this reason it may be necessary to consider that craft based education implicitly carries the educational values and objectives of the school and that it cannot be understood separately from the whole educational environment provided by the school. It was within this context that students reported that craft based education provided them with a foundation from which they appeared to develop adult thinking skills.

Analysis of the interviews revealed that for these students there was no necessary link between desired learning outcomes associated with craft based education and the far broader constructed learning outcomes they reported. Respondents talked about gaining autonomy and becoming capable of integrating the activities and thinking skills gained in craft based learning, moving towards more sophisticated modes of thinking. The idea that certain educational practices were used by students for a limited period of time needed to be explored further. The data gathered in this part of the research also suggested that it would be interesting to explore what the students perceived to be significant aspects of the support they were receiving from the school in relation to their development.

Thus further investigation needed to encompass the whole learning experience of students on programmes which offered craft based education and to relate this specific area of inquiry to current views on young adult development. The overall problematic shifted towards understanding the development processes of students engaged in hospitality management studies which relied on craft based education in the light of current literature concerned with the age group being investigated, namely "young adults".

From a methodological perceptive this exploratory research revealed some limitations which needed to be addressed in the next problematisation. With hindsight the fact that I asked the students to relate their learning experiences to professional competencies was restrictive. The imposed structure meant that students were much too directed in their responses and probably limited the breadth of the data I gathered. Future interviews would probably benefit from being less structured thus allowing students to talk more freely. To a certain degree the method I used in this investigation
was still influenced by a hypothetico-deductive heritage. The limitations of this approach were apparent and I chose to emphasise inductive methodology in the following problematisations. Another limitation came from the student sample I used. The number of students interviewed was small and only represented students who had completed their Diploma course. Since the research focus had shifted towards observing the development process of young adults it would be necessary in the next problematisation to adjust the sample accordingly and interview students at different periods in their studies.
Problematisation 2

Introduction

In the first problematisation my research question centred on the possible role of craft based learning in hospitality management studies. The students I interviewed reported that craft based education played a key role in the development of managerial competencies regarded as important in the hospitality industry. My exploratory investigation also showed that students learned more than technical/operational skills from craft based learning instances. They reported that they had matured and appeared to have developed new and more integrated thinking skills. However craft based learning could not be isolated from the total educational environment of the school which therefore needed to be considered as a whole.

As a result of these findings I chose to focus more specifically upon the development of young adult thinking within institutions which offer craft based education. According to Evans (1994), young adult development cannot be dissociated from the learning environment where it occurs, because an ambiguous post-adolescent stage that marks the transition from young adulthood towards adult citizenship is linked to post compulsory education. This definition of young adults should be contrasted with the one proposed by the APA, which defines young adults as persons aged 18 to 29 (Walker, 1997). The definition proposed by Evans (ibid.) became more relevant to my investigation as it progressed. By situating young adulthood in relation to the socio-organisational context of post compulsory education Evans (ibid.) inspired me to pay attention to defining the role that this environment may play in young adulthood.

The reorientation of the research question prompted me to undertake a further review of the literature on young adult development. From this I found that several authors described developmental processes but that there was little conceptual unity in the literature. There was however an area of agreement in the development of relativistic thinking, a particular mode of adult thinking that is examined in the review that follows. This shows the areas of agreement, but also examines authors who emphasise different aspects of the developmental process such as the relationships young adults have with their environment, the mental/ instrumental activities performed, and the
nature of the problems adults face. Eventually, these approaches played a central role
in my study. For example the discussions concerning the existence and/or definition of
discrete stages prompted me later to reconsider the unity of relativistic thinking.

Young adult development literature review and second problematisation

The search criteria I used were of necessity wide, because the literature relating to
young adult development and adult development contained a diversity of explanatory
models. I have attempted to synthesise these models in the light of the object of this
study.

Although Perry (1970) conducted a specific study of young adult development in the
late 1960s, the main thrust of research in this areas started in the 1980s. At this time a
number of authors started to expose the limitations of ‘formal thinking’ as a general
explanatory model of adult thinking. Formal thinking was first introduced as an
explanatory model of adult thinking by Piaget and Inhelder (1958a). This review
therefore begins by situating formal thinking and goes on to examine alternative
models with a view to understanding if and how a developmental process takes place
between the formal stage and post-formal thinking.

Piaget and Inhelder (1958a) propose that formal thinking is the pinnacle of intellectual
development, reaching its equilibrium point at the ages of 14-15. At the onset of the
formal operation stage they write that: “This new integration allows him (the
adolescent) to bring inversion and reciprocity together in a single whole. As a result,
he comes to control not only hypothetico deductive reasoning and experimental proof
based on the variation of a single factor with others held constant but also a number of
operational schemata which he will use repeatedly in experimental and logico-
mathematical thinking’’ (Piaget and Inhelder, 1955-1995, p. 434). However one must
keep in mind that Piaget and Inhelder consider these structural transformations as a
“…centre from which radiate the various more visible modifications of thinking
which take place in adolescence’’(ibid.) For these authors, ‘formal thinking’ is
‘reflective thinking’ because: “The adolescent is able to analyse his own thinking and
construct theories” (ibid. p. 437) which eventually permits them: “…to escape the
concrete present toward the realm of the abstract and the possible (ibid. p. 438)”.
Ultimately “The adolescent becomes an adult when he undertakes a real job” because
“…the job leads thinking away from the dangers of formalism back into reality (ibid. p. 441)”. Nevertheless, Piaget and Inhelder (1958) consider that from a structural point of view the child’s development is complete from the formal thinking stage onwards.

Commons et al (1984) argue that the developmental model proposed by Piaget does not adequately explain adult thinking. A number of authors put forward critiques of formal thinking as an explanatory model for adult thinking. Kitchener (1983), Khun (1989) and Basseches (1984) suggest that Piaget’s formal operations stage offers an inadequate account of adult cognitive abilities. For example, Gruber (1984) suggests that to understand Darwin’s development of the theory of evolution one needs concepts such as ‘sense of direction’ which are not present in Piaget’s model. Similarly Chinen (1990) argues that formal operations do not describe Alfred North Whitehead’s thinking. Furthermore, it appears that few adults actually score as ‘formal-operational’ on Piagetian tasks (King, 1986; Niemark, 1979). It is also argued that formal operations have little relevance to the problems adults encounter in actual circumstances of adult life (Wood, 1983). As a result, these critiques have challenged the idea that the formal stage is the pinnacle of development and a further stage is suggested, generally referred to as ‘post-formal’ intelligence (Sinnott, 1984, 1991).

Specific studies of young adulthood have given rise to a number of explanatory models that take adulthood as a base-line for comparisons. Some authors propose elaborate models to explain how adults cope with the complexity of the world in which they live and perform. For example, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1993) suggest that the post-formal mind sees the world as a text, connecting logic and emotion. It experiences non-linear holism, attends to the setting, understands the interaction of particularity and generalisation, and uncovers the role of power in shaping the way it sees the world. This model appears to be very descriptive and is criticised by authors who offer more pragmatic approaches, such as Richards and Commons (1984) who suggest that post-formal thinking works systematically within different paradigms and logical types. Sinnott (1991) suggests that "relativistic thinking" is a mode of thinking for working within these different paradigms. Defining adult thinking in terms of relativistic thinking is not new. Kant (1993) identifies a similar form of structural thinking process when he says: “It seems that we usually call someone limited (of a
narrow mind as opposed to a broad mind) if his talents are insufficient for a use of any magnitude. But we are not talking here of a power of cognition, but of a way of thinking (that involves) putting this power to a purposive use, and this, no matter how slight may be the range and degree of a person’s natural endowments, if he overrides the private subjective conditions of judgement, into which so many others are locked, as it were, and reflects on his own judgement from a universal standpoint (which he can determine by transferring himself to the standpoint of others)\textsuperscript{10}.

Since the object of this study is developmental I paid attention to those authors who focus more specifically on the development phases of young adults. You (1993) describes the development towards post-formal thinking as a complex multi-modal development process. This view suggests a non linear process that involves a multitude of parameters. Authors such as Cavanaugh and Stafford (1989) also support the idea that the development process is not linear but introduce the idea that there are stages. Sinnott and Cavanaugh (1991), take into account the complexity of the environment and of the development process, but concur that there are stages in the development of post formal thinking which can be clearly distinguished. These findings are corroborated by evidence collected by Kitchener et al (1993) who have observed “spurts” in development between the ages 18-20 and between the ages 23-26.

The idea that there might be stages in young adult development is not recent. Perry (1970) proposes a model that describes stages of intellectual and ethical development of students in college years. He explains students’ progression from a polarised view of the world towards the realisation that knowledge and values are contextual and relativistic. He proposes that the development process in college years reaches its zenith when students are capable of meta-thinking and can construct their identity by choosing a particular orientation within a relativistic view of the world. At this stage individuals interviewed by Perry (1970) are aware of the uncertainty of their own choices and intellectual positions, which they chose with some courage to adopt. In other words, in the last phase of the development process described by this author, young adults realise that within different possible ways of seeing things they have to

\textsuperscript{10} Translation by Pluhar.
make up their mind and adopt one specific position in order to proceed in life and take on an adult role. As Table 07 shows, a considerable number of authors have since used the concept of progression towards relativistic thinking to describe the development of thinking within young adults.

Although there is no real unity amongst models describing young adults’ cognition, Cavanaugh (1991) argues that there are “pockets of consensus”. Blanchard-Fields (1989) maintains that a substantial number of these models describe a developmental trend from a subjective, polarised perspective (where individuals do not differentiate the product of thinking from the characteristics of the thinker) towards a relativistic point of view. Sinnott (1984) notes that although a number of different models of development have been proposed, there seems to be general agreement on the final stages i.e. the nature of relativistic thinking.

For Sinnott (1984) relativistic thinking enables adults to operate intellectually in situations which have unclear parameters and are sensitive to context. It is a qualitatively higher, more integrated form of thinking because it organises several formal systems. She says that: “Relativistic operations presume subjective selection among logically contradictory formal operational subsystems, each one of which is internally consistent” (Sinnott, 1984, p. 300). Thus adults recognise multiple forms of truth, deal with diversity and changing environments, and choose a committed line of behaviour respecting the relationship between their choices and those of others. Perry (1970) defines relativism in much the same way as a: “…plurality of points of view, interpretations, frames of reference, value systems and contingencies in which the structural properties of contexts and forms allow for various sorts of analysis, comparisons and evaluation in multiplicity” (p. 257).

In a broad sense, relativism allows adults to understand that truth, moral values, opinions and interpretations are not universal or absolute but differ between individuals, cultures or organisations. Relativism for Lee (1991) allows adults to “…view knowledge as ‘relativistically’ true and contextual, and not fixed, absolute or static” (p. 74). This ability is essential for Lee, because he contends that the problems adults are confronted with inscribe themselves in physical and social realities that hold contradictions within them. Table 07 presents an outline of models which support the
view that post-formal thinking develops from an earlier, qualitatively less complex form of thinking towards a more complex form.

Contemporary hospitality management education has an interest in developing these forms of relativistic thinking. For example Gamble et al (1994) and Baum (1990) both stress the importance of managers standing back and considering multiple options in a world of contradictions and complex contextually bound decision-making situations.

Table 07: Authors who support the view that post-formal thinking develops from an early form of qualitatively less complex thinking towards a more complex form of thinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Proposed development model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basseches, 1984</td>
<td>Schemata co-ordinate into an organised form of dialectical thinking that represents a higher level of epistemological equilibrium than provided by the organised formal operations suggested by Piaget and Inhelder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fischer, Hand and Russell, 1984.</td>
<td>3 developmental levels involving the progressive co-ordination of abstractions in more and more complex relations. For these authors the organisation of behaviour undergoes massive restructuring during adolescence and early adulthood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchener and King, 1981.</td>
<td>Reflective judgement model; people change in the assumptions they hold about knowledge itself and how it is acquired and these assumptions are reflected in the way they operate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry, 1970.</td>
<td>Proposes a sequence of 9 positions in epistemological development. Begins with basic dualism; the breakdown of dualistic beliefs results in multiplicity; following multiplicity comes the discovery of relativism, and finally the ability to take stands in a relativistic world called “committed relativism”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richards and Commons, 1984; Richards, 1990.</td>
<td>Three stage model: 1. Systematic operations: operate on sets of operations; abstractly represent the set of relations and operations within each system 2. Metasystematic operations: axiomatization of relations; transforming systems, determining relations between systems 3. Cross-paradigmatic operations: relate and transform paradigms; show how paradigms from one field can transform another (super systems representing knowledge in a given field).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinnott, 1994</td>
<td>The development process involves the progressive co-ordination of logical systems and the relations of those systems to regulated emotional systems and interpersonal systems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cavanaugh (1991) notes that little is known about the actual mechanism involved in the development of adult thinking and therefore in the development of relativistic thinking. Nevertheless in his study, Perry (1970) describes what he perceives as the context within which relativistic thinking has a better chance of developing. He observes that a crucial moment in students’ development happens when they
experience uncertainty and diversity of opinion and consequently, progressively revise their own intellectual position. Perry (ibid.) reasons that the ideal pathway leading towards meta-thinking and relativistic thinking is provided by liberal arts education, the characteristic of which “…is its demand for a sophistication about one’s own line of reasoning as contrasted with other possible lines of reasoning.” (ibid. p. 33). For Perry (ibid.) liberal arts, as they are taught in American universities, provide a context which emulates and compactly represents “…the diversity of the modern world and the contingency of modern knowledge (ibid. p. 176.)”. He considers these to be characteristic of the environment within which adults are called to live.

However Perry (ibid. p33) also remarks that college education and liberal arts may not be the only way to reach the ultimate stage in his model of development. Since 1970 evidence has made it clear that the particularity of the context is an important factor in the debate concerning young adult development. For example Fischer, Hand and Russell (1984) argue that “…because people acquire specific skills tied to particular environmental circumstances, context always plays an enormous role in developing [adult] behaviour” (p. 45-46).

The authors I have reviewed present different forms of relativistic thinking, but all appear to consider this form of thinking in structural terms. For them, relativistic thinking applies regardless of content. This apparent unity concerning relativistic thinking struck me as a starting point that would serve as a base line for my investigation, but there were also reasons to question the unity of relativistic thinking.

For example, the literature reviewed above prompted me to ask whether the specificity of the learning context had an effect on the breadth and transferability of thinking skills developed by young adults. This question was central to the development of my research because it would ultimately open the door to questioning the influence of the context in which relativistic thinking develops.

A number of authors have studied transfer of knowledge in specific contexts. Tanon (1991) demonstrates that young adults, who are learning to weave, develop specific skills that give rise to certain forms of higher thinking, which can be transferred to other tasks. Similar findings are reported in didactic learning situations by Beach and Hynds (1990) who examine how readers and writers develop during adolescence and adulthood. The central tenet of their article is that discourse practices of young adults
directed towards particular social and pragmatic ends (i.e.: specific contexts) help develop the kind of discourses needed in wider contexts. Echoing this perspective Johnson (1991) argues that learning in specific contexts does not limit development, but is a necessary step towards generalisation.

Fischer, Hand and Russell (1984) assert that is through differentiation and generalisation that skills acquired in a specific context produce more integrated, powerful ways of thinking. Therefore some evidence suggests that sophisticated forms of adult thinking such as relativistic thinking can develop within a vocational educational environment rather than one based on traditional liberal arts education. Thus I found some evidence in the literature to suggest that the educational environment might play a role in the development of adult thinking skills. There were also indications that the development of relativistic thinking might be supported by specific learning environments. In the course of my work, these insights would prove to be very important, because they allowed me to challenge current views of relativistic thinking.

There were a number of reasons to question theories that supported the view that adult thinking could be characterised by a generic thinking skill such as relativistic thinking. For example Labouvie-Vief (1990) says that understanding post-formal thinking may require a redefinition of what we mean by the structure of a mature mind. For this author, mature adulthood brings into play a dialectic movement between two modes of knowing which she calls “mythos and logos”. The first is culturally and emotionally influenced and the second emphasises the cognitive aspect of the mind. Theories such as this highlighted the possible influence of culture and emotion that is sometimes overlooked by authors who concentrate on cognitive development. Cavanaugh and Stafford’s (1989) review affirms that post-formal thought might not be a uniform system of cognitive processes, thus saying that it may be difficult to describe the adult mind in terms of structures. Unified theories that attempt to explain thinking processes are also criticised by post modern philosophers such as Foucault (1989) who contends that it is impossible to dissociate thought processes from political, historical and social influences.

The relationship between adults’ thinking and their environment is recognised, albeit in a different manner, by some authors. In Piagetian terms a person reconstructs
thinking skills under “violent pressure” from the environment (Gruber and Voneche, eds., 1995, p. xviii). In the same line of thought, Lee (1991) notes that adults’ post-formal thought can be better understood if one focuses on problems they confront, which he sees as having unclear parameters and being context sensitive. Similarly Schön (1996) shows that transfer of knowledge occurs during instances of “reflection in action” that involve adults working on and critically thinking about specific tasks. Boud et al (1996) note the importance of a school’s social environment. They point to the role of teachers and peers in offering a reflective process which helps learners modify their own perspectives on experiences they are living. These perspectives, which contextualise the activities and relate them directly to the development processes, are noteworthy because they point attention towards the impact of particular activities performed in specific environments. This relationship appears fundamental in the development of adult thinking and inspired me to pay attention to the impact of the school’s culture on the development of the young adults I was studying.

Besides these constructivist models Kramer (1989) sees adult thinking as the development of dialectical, relativistic thought within a life span perspective, pointing our attention towards the development and adaptation that adult thinking skills undergo. The life span movement considers the continual readjustment adults make throughout their lives, and therefore departs from “snap-shot” descriptions of adult thinking offered by the authors mentioned earlier. Life span perspectives such as those of Kramer (ibid.) also draw attention to the plasticity of adult thinking skills and the importance of cultural expectations and pressures at specific times in the development process.

In summary, post formal intelligence has become a subject of inquiry in its own right. Underpinning the models proposed by different authors I found a number of conflicting views that varied from different definitions of the field of inquiry to different theories about the transfer of knowledge. Within this particular problematisation, the development of relativistic thinking appeared useful but the variety of the models I reviewed provided me with insights that would prove to be essential in the later stages of my work.
A combination of the theoretical models reviewed above and the findings from the first problematisation inspired the second problematisation. Findings from the first problematisation indicated that the specificity of a vocational environment might be an important factor in the development of the students I interviewed. In the ‘background’ section of this thesis I described Swiss hospitality management education, showing that it offered students a well defined vocational context which found its roots in specific historical origins, organisational structures and state educational policies. Swiss hospitality management education, of which the SSH HMS Les Roches is a good example, offered a programme which relied on practical based learning mixed with vocationally specific lecture based instruction. As such it is a very different learning environment than the one studied by Perry (ibid.).

Setting this problematisation within the SSH HMS Les Roches, I decided to examine students’ perceptions of their development in the specific context of their hospitality management studies. Furthermore I thought it would be interesting to pay particular attention to indicators concerning the development of relativistic thinking in this learning context. In line with the developmental models outlined in Table 07 I thought that I might be able to identify an initial stage of development where students demonstrated a lack of relativistic thinking and used a mode of thinking characterised by “polarised views”. I kept myself from making any assumptions on the possible and not necessarily subsequent development of relativistic thinking, because the context in which I was studying young adults was entirely different to the ones in which the investigations I reviewed earlier based their findings. My overall intention was to offer the students a chance to describe their development process and subsequently analyse the responses within the context of accepted current young adult developmental theories.

**Methodological considerations**

The methodology and design that I used in the first problematisation were a limiting factor. The small number of students interviewed limited the possibility of generalising the results to a wider population and the fact that I only interviewed students who had completed their ‘Swiss’ Diploma programme made it difficult to
gain insights concerning the developmental processes lived by students from year to year.

In this investigation I chose a different approach which suited the fact that I did not want to assume a hypothesis concerning young adult development in the context of an institution offering a considerable amount of craft based education. The reason for this was that I found no previous research in this particular context and that the literature review revealed that there are a number of possible development patterns. For those reasons I chose to take an inductive stance which would allow the research question to evolve as I explored the data I was about to gather.

This methodological stance also played a fundamental role in choosing to continue using the interviewing technique I adopted in the first problematisation which was inspired by Piaget’s clinical interviewing technique. I gained some valuable experience from this exploratory research and found that the interviewing technique I was using could continue to form the basis for the following investigations. For the same reasons as those described in the methodological considerations of the first problematisation this semi-unstructured interviewing technique would continue to be the most appropriate way of obtaining rich data in a field of inquiry which has remained little explored to date. However I found that in the first problematisation the fact that I used “Managerial competencies” as an interviewing framework limited the scope of the students responses. For this reason I chose not to give such a constraining structure to the students interviews in the investigations I planned to carry out. From a personal point of view I had noticed that I needed to improve and refine my interviewing skills and make sure that my questioning technique provoked more occasions for students to reveal their perceptions concerning their process of development while always being careful to avoid inducing answers, using complex wording, introducing assumptions and using catch all questions. (see Breakwell, 1995a, p. 232).

**Design**

The focus of this second problematisation was set on the study of young adult developmental processes and therefore it was necessary to choose an appropriate
sample of students for the interviews. Two basic designs would have been feasible: longitudinal and cross-sectional.

A longitudinal design could be envisaged because it is adapted to monitoring age related development and offers good insight into development processes (Fife-Shaw, 1995). A longitudinal design would also offer the advantage of following the effect of an educational programme (Coolican, 1996). However in the case of the present research a longitudinal design had some drawbacks and may not have been appropriate. Firstly, none of the researchers’ work presented earlier invokes physiological change or age related developmental mechanisms, therefore I thought that age in itself was not a critical dimensions of young adult development. Secondly, using a longitudinal design makes it difficult to distinguish the development process from the environment as a whole which may change as time passes. Thirdly, Clark and Causer (1993) point out that access to students can itself cause difficulties in choosing a longitudinal design and therefore become a design factor. Alone the latter was determining because the position I held in the institution and the management’s scepticism concerning my research would have made it impossible to conduct a longitudinal design for the interviews.

A cross-sectional design can be carried out within a relatively shorter period of time. Therefore it allows some insight into how individuals live the same overall educational environment at different stages of their development (Coolican, 1996). This design allows the research question to be changed if necessary in future investigations. In the case of this piece of research this was a decisive advantage because I did not want to be committed to a long term research design which could not be changed in the light of my findings.

These reasons made me choose a cross-sectional design and I interviewed students attending each one of the three academic years in the programme of study offered in the SSH HMS Les Roches. I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 11 students enrolled in the 3 years of the Diploma Programme (see Table 08 for sample characteristics).

The students interviewed were asked to talk freely about situations where they felt that they were learning. The questions and interviewing structure I used were inspired by Perry (1970, p. 18-20). My objective was similar to that of Perry i.e.: “Obtain from
students their own reports of their college experience, in their own terms (ibid.).”

However Perry (ibid. p18) notes that addressing students appropriately in the early minutes of the interview encourages them to abandon stereotyped expectations about the researcher’s own expectations. For this reason the beginning of each of my interviews was the same and used some of the same wording as the one used by Perry (ibid.). I also followed Perry’s (ibid.) interviewing recommendations encouraging students to use personal examples and always engaging students so that they refer to their actual experiences. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Table 08: Characteristics of student sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic year</th>
<th>Hotel operations I (Service)</th>
<th>Hotel operations II (Kitchen)</th>
<th>3 (Management)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>22.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard dev.</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of data

I performed a qualitative analysis of the interviews, searching for references students made to instances where they reported to be learning and developing. I was mindful about what they thought about the learning context and their developmental experience. I also paid attention to the kind of argumentation they used in the interviews, searching for occurrences of non relativistic and relativistic reasoning. These findings are grouped in central themes which characterised the students’ responses. In addition to the observations I found concerning the development of relativistic thinking I found that students reported the importance of interpersonal interactions with peers and adults. This finding was analysed separately because it prompted me to review some further literature. For this reason the analysis of the data is presented in two sections which examine:

- Section1: The development of relativistic thinking.
• Section 2: Interpersonal relations in relation to the development of relativistic thinking.

The identification of interviewees follows the same structure as in the previous investigation, the first letter identifies the year in which the student is studying, the second number is an individual ID number and the letter which follows identifies the gender.

Analysis of the data section 1: The development of relativistic thinking

As in problematisation one, students reported that they appreciated an environment where they could learn through a combination of physical and mental activities linked to a particular context. Being actively involved, learning through doing, is the preferred mode of learning for all the students interviewed:

2.1M: “I think you learn a lot more when you are actually doing something”

3.1F: “I think practically, I tend to learn a lot more than theoretically”

The interviews also revealed great differences in relation to what a student considers to be a practical experience.

Interviewees in year one seemed to need “clues”. These students were clearly not familiar with their new environment and their responses indicated a craving for visual and proprioceptive information:

1.1M “It's really important sometimes words doesn't say a lot but a picture, or what you do directly on the table or whatever…it just gets inside”

1.3M “First, if I put it into practice that's when it begins to make sense to me”

Although these students spent half their time in learning activities involving practical skills they did not specifically mention the skills or competencies which they were supposed to be acquiring. They tended to speak in general terms:

1.1M “…if you're taught the stuff and you don’t practice you won’t be able to do it”

1.3M “…the practical part is the most important actually…the practical aspect, maybe for some time I have taken the practical for granted, that we’re doing the practical to help us understand the theory part”
The preference for learning through doing persisted in year two:

2.1M “The actual fact that you do the things like I said earlier, I mean, because you are doing it you, for me I remember things easier if I do that, I think it’s that way for a lot of people and it’s also a lot simpler to see it if you do it”

Interestingly student ‘2.1M’ referred frequently to precise learning situations which involved activities, implying that learning went beyond the boundaries of the activity itself:

2.1M “I’m just thinking it’s a practical example, is maybe why something has burnt sometimes, like why has butter burned sometimes or whatever, or another example, clarified butter, simple example. When I first came here, I had never seen it used before, and I thought why is it so special clarified butter, or whatever, and then it was explained to me how they make it, why it’s done and what the advantages are, what the disadvantages are… so I think for me learning is more understanding it”

The interviews revealed some differences in the responses of students from year to year. It was possible to demonstrate polarised views in years 1 and 2 of the programme where the students displayed non relativistic thinking. These findings were consistent with early stages of the developmental models referred to in Table 07. Year one students demonstrated that they held a subjective perspective where individuals were not differentiated from the product of thinking. For these students there seemed to be a right/wrong answer to each situation. Authority held the key to these answers and the student was merely expected to reproduce the right answer in the right situations.

1.1M “what you hear when the teacher speaks that’s one thing that is really important”

1.2F “So I just believe the teacher”

These students also revealed a limited understanding of the complexity and changing nature of dynamic environments:

1.2F “Yes like the book that tells you how to deal with the people, you read it and say ‘OK if I meet these kind of people, I have to talk like this and I deal like this’ ”

1.3M “I have learned basically what the hospitality industry expects of us”
In cases when it would have been possible to use relativistic thinking, the students typically chose to think in terms of right and wrong:

1.1M “Sometimes with the subject you have different ideas or you just, you have the possibility to say your point of view if you make conference with the point of view with the teacher and this way you will see the middle way, maybe or you will see that your way is not the right one, or it’s not a good one, or he or she (the teacher) will explain to you what’s the point, why, and what you have to do. In this way you will catch quite well and you have to write down all the things inside yourself, OK it’s better this way and now you know why”.

Another aspect of this phase was that it made students inscribe themselves into “a world”, allowing them to try out their mind in a set socio-organisational environment.

1.3M “It’s reality, people have to face reality…yeah in a way, really it gives you maybe the true concept of the real life outside”

Students then faced new constraints, imposed by the well defined contextual situation offered within the school. This situation seemed to require them to reassess their way of thinking in the light of their increasingly complex and integrated perceptions of the world, for example:

1.3M “..you get to learn more because of that reality, that is not always what you think it is…life is contradicting so you can’t only stick to one thing”

In this statement this young adult realised that physical and social environments held contradictions within them. The first examples I used showed that a first stage could be distinguished as a “no questions asked” thinking pattern. Nevertheless, immersed in the school’s educational environment, students encountered problems because the world they were faced with could not be adequately described and dealt with using a polarised framework.

2.1M “…probably some of it’s [pause] a lot of it is understanding the actual thing, a lot of the time it’s something you don’t really understand or…”

2.3F “I never had any dealings with people or whatever out of high school, you don’t know what’s happening.”
Students thus faced difficulties to do with the relationship between parts (physical and social realities) and their progressive realisation of the complex nature of their environment. The individuals I interviewed found that these relationships did not fit well with the logical, well defined and sometimes mechanical view developed in adolescence: they no longer fitted as well their inner world of thoughts.

1.3M “I thought at the beginning, I assumed that a good hotel school and everything first of all would be mostly classroom situation, we’d get to do management skills and studies related to management first, straight away, like business management and something like that and maybe if you go for your in-training, you’d get a post, maybe walk around as a manager and you don’t really have to work that hard, but I think it’s a totally different concept now…”

The progression is however slow. In the second year the arguments used by students often remain “one sided”:

2.2M “I think there’s not real sense in having to identify them or to be able to identify them by their taste because I think we are just learning it to have a test and I’d say that eighty or ninety percent of the people after one week won’t know it anymore. So I think that many of the things they are only on a short term basis especially when it just comes to learning certain amounts of things.”

There was little sign of students challenging ideas and attempting deep learning:

2.4F “So, when the time comes that I have to study, the notes are so detailed it’s easier for me to just remind myself of what it is, really like the whole subject, the entirety of whatever it is that I’m studying and so I just read over my notes, page through and repeat them kind of and page through again and that usually makes me retain whatever it is that I have to study”

To summarise, the findings so far were consistent with those of previous research, in that students attending years one and two of the programme show:

• Unquestioned deference for authority (see Perry, 1970)

• Limited understanding of complexity (see Sinnott, 1984 and Fischer et al, 1984)

• Belief in absolute reality (see Perry, 1970)
• Reassessment of internal models in the light of their developing perception of the world (see Labouvie-Vief, 1990)

In the light of the developmental theories referred to in Table 07, I expected the students interviewed to demonstrate some progression towards relativistic thinking. Students attending year 1 confirmed that the vocational context provided situations that made them consider different perspectives.

1.1M “…today I learn about the French service and tomorrow I go into the dining hall and practice and learn how to do it, then I will know the uses, the advantages and disadvantages”

In year two a student put his own aspirations into perspective when he talked about the scale he would use to measure learning:

2.1M “I don’t think there is one, I think it’s each person’s scale. For myself I would like to learn as much as possible this year, including my stage, so I would like to be able to study the simple things to be able to cut and to learn how to do it properly, to more complicated things like baking, making things nice…”

Students in year 2 and 3 showed more signs of movement towards relativistic thinking. However students showed signs of developing a relativism which nevertheless remained constrained by the context in which they are learning:

2.2M “…in the kitchen, basically you are learning by doing, you learn something while you are doing it, you can practise it one by one, whereas, if in marketing, [the teacher] would say, ’if that happens, you would have to apply this marketing method’ you would probably know it on a theoretical basis but she, I don’t know it would be more difficult to apply the actual situation”

3.1F “Whereas before, if there was an argument in class I’d take it very personally. I think that has changed a lot in me, this year, I don’t take things so personally”

From my own experience of working close to the school, its learning environment was extremely prescriptive and the programme of study was so dense that students had little chance to practise student based learning and develop a spirit of inquiry. Interestingly this did not appear to necessarily limit them greatly, some third year students analysed the learning context in a relativistic way:
3.4F “I’ve been here for a purpose to learn something, about people, about being international, to learn something about broadening my horizons not just thinking like only from my culture, only from my point of view, but to incorporate other peoples’ point of view and relating to them…It’s helped me to listen to the instruction of my superiors and not to take the way that I think is right, it doesn’t matter whether you see the way they do it is wrong, or whether it doesn’t make sense to you or you didn’t understand it, ask a question”

Given the appropriate circumstances and activities, generalisation of post formal thinking may occur in areas which are contextually more distant and abstract. Year 3 students say for example:

3.2F “…in a discussion with a group of people, it helps me because I get other ideas, I can input mine but I can see how they think, what they think of my ideas as well…”

3.1F “I had a very narrow way of looking at it, it was I used to look at things and I used to go ‘I’m right, this is my way, I’m right about it and if I feel it’s OK then it’s right, you know, for me it’s OK I don’t care what other people think’ but now I look at it from other peoples’ point of view as well and I think maybe I’m not right. Maybe that’s just a personal change, not just from school, it’s just me that’s changed a lot. I can see that change from service to management”

This example gave a hint of the complex link which appeared to exist between activities, context and the emergence of relativistic thinking.

In year three, students talked about visualising contextual situations and understanding a little better the abstract world of hospitality management, which can sometimes be built on experiences lived by themselves and by others.

3.1F “…I really find it helpful if they tell about their experiences you know ‘This happened to me when’ and so on.”

This is an important movement since it would suggest that the activities performed in context allowed the students to understand the world the “others” were living in:

3.3M “I picture the situation so then I’m reading and then I think ‘OK so this .... this is what he does’ and I see him in his office and I see him writing down things that he has to do and then he goes in different areas of it, the managerial bit of it, controlling
things I see a big workshop, and lots of nails and all sorts of screw drivers and he has
to control all this or there wouldn’t be anything left in the store so I have to think OK
so how does he control it, he has to do, he has to have inventories and I can imagine
inventories”

3.1F “I have to relate it to something that I have done usually and if I can’t, then I
have to relate it to somebody else’s experiences…”

This development suggests that students related their own knowledge of the
hospitality context to construct a relativistic point of view:

3.1F “I just think I listen a lot more which is not what I used to do and I listen a lot
more objectively now a lot more. I can actually see two or three points I can take
something and say ‘OK’, I don’t just look at it very one way, I can think about it more
in many different ways.”

Students in year 3 reported two apparently contradicting periods of their life in the
college; they felt that they specialised (limiting their scope) but also reported that this
phase seemed to lead to widening of their view during the third year of studies.

3.1F “I think I’ve learned, it did restrict me but in the long run right now, I don’t
think it has restricted me, a contradiction, I don’t know but… It did restrict me but
right now I don’t feel that way, I feel very happy the world I’ve chosen. I just feel I
was not too young at eighteen I just don’t think I was sure of what I was doing at that
time.”

3.4F “ (the specialisation of the school)...It’s opened opportunities to me I think”.

Interviewer: “ is there a contradiction there ?” Student: “Yes there is.”

The interview data presented so far showed that the context had an impact on the
development of relativistic thinking. The extracts I chose to illustrate year 3 students
pointed out that on some occasions one out of eight of Sinnott’s (1984) criteria of
relativistic thought was met in so far as multiple solutions or views were equally
acceptable. However there was not enough evidence to show that these students had
fully developed generalised relativistic thinking. The examples and the arguments
students developed remained close to the circumstances of their learning and life.
This led me to propose that early forms of relativistic thinking, closely related to the
context within which the person was developing, might precede relativistic thinking. This appears to be a novel observation and I would like to call this ‘local relativistic thinking’ because this form of thinking is very closely related to its point of origin, i.e. the context. The data provided evidence of students using ‘local relativistic thinking’ which was closely related to situations they lived in the context of their studies. This research found instances of ‘local relativistic thinking’ in each group of students however one out of three students used ‘local relativistic thinking’ in year 1, two out of three students in year 2 and four out of four in year 3.

**Discussion section 1: The development of relativistic thinking**

Interviewees reported that practical learning experienced in the vocationally specific learning environment of their school, provided them with opportunities to develop. They appeared to value learning instances where they were actively involved in relevant situations which were in turn associated with theory. The preference for active participation provided by practical learning experience persisted in the second year of the three year programme. The data collected in this problematisation suggested that practical learning experiences, as a component of a curriculum, were not merely a way of acquiring basic vocational skills. This finding confirmed the results I found in the first problematisation and also those from other studies of young adult development for example: Tanon (1991), Beach and Hynds (1990) and Johnson (1991).

These interviews also provided evidence that the Swiss hotel school I used in this study was a specific socio-cultural environment which allowed young adults to ‘try-out’ their thinking and behaving, offering occasions for combined intellectual and practical experiences. Initially students applied polarised (right/wrong) thinking patterns. Progressively the students appeared to use a particular form of relativism which remained close to the frame of reference provided by the school’s vocational environment. I have called this ‘local relativistic thinking’.

The more abstract and generalised forms of relativistic thinking sometimes used by students attending year 3 of the programme. This development of ‘local relativistic thinking’ appeared to come about when students participated in situations which
confronted them with complex issues such as interpersonal relations, differences in logical reasoning required in various professional contexts as well as problems which had unclear parameters and no "right/wrong" answers. Faced with a world where polarised views were inappropriate, the students questioned and revised their own positions and thinking patterns.

This part of my investigation was limited to one institution, and as such the findings I made should be considered with due restraint. However, and most importantly, the results I obtained started to suggest that relativistic thinking could be profoundly influenced by the educational setting in which it developed. There were nevertheless questions that remained open regarding the medium of transmission of these thinking skills. The analysis of the data I have just presented only accounts for some of the students’ statements. The interviews provided a considerable amount of data dealing with interpersonal relations. Hence I conducted a further literature review dealing with interpersonal relations within young adult development.

Interpersonal relations in relation to the development of relativistic thinking: literature review.

Saidla (1990) describes post-formal development as the movement from the “freedom” of adolescence though the “normative” period of young adulthood towards the “performing” role of adulthood. The descriptive quality of this theoretical framework does not take into account the complexity of the interactions which my interviewees mentioned were part of their development process. Therefore I turned my attention to authors who had specifically studied this aspect. Forman, Minick and Stone (1993) show that interpersonal relations play an important part in the development of young school aged children. The students I interviewed made many references to the role of the socio-cultural environment and their interactions with adults and peers, which they saw as helpful in their learning process. These observations are consistent with Vygotsky (van der Veer and Valsiner eds. 1994), who describes the movement from the social to the individual, recognising the structuring nature of a socio-historical environment in which development takes place. The
relationship between particular social context and post formal thinking is supported by a number of authors (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1993; Sinnott, 1991; Kramer, 1989).

Johnson (1991) says that the growth of a post-formal thinker is characterised by conscious self-referential thinking, in which formal truth and logic systems are selectively ordered and their use depends on a given socio-cultural context. Thus she suggests that the environment has a structuring role in terms of the performativity of adult thinking. One may therefore question the relationship between thinking skills such as relativistic thinking and the environments in which they develop.

Beach and Hynds (1990) argue for their part that the specificity of the institution in which young adults develop plays an important part, saying that growth occurs through participation in those practices valued by certain institutions. The importance of the socio-cultural context in the development of adult thinking is also supported by authors such as Irwin (1991) who notes that within an educational environment, the “social experience” factor has an important role in stimulating dialectical thought and experience in young adults. The same author suggests taking insights from Vygotsky’s work on the role of the socio-cultural environment, when addressing the educational dimension of young adult development. The heritage of Vygotsky may also be found in Lyddon (1991), writing within the field of social psychology, who supports the socially constructed nature of knowledge in general.

These authors drew my attention to the role of the structure of the educational institution and the possible importance of social interaction for the development of relativistic thinking as it has been presented earlier in this thesis.

A number of authors interested in young adult development stress the importance of the role of interpersonal relations. For example, Saarni (1993) suggests that the emotional development of young adults is altered if the socialisation process goes wrong. More generally, Slage (1992) points out that social development, from infancy into the adult years, essentially takes places via relationships with other persons. It may therefore be difficult to describe adult development separately from the social context, a point which is specifically suggested by Meacham (1991) who talks about the ‘social mind’ perspective which he sees as providing a powerful explanation of adult cognitive development.
Johnson (1991) shows that the interactions at a post-formal level between teacher/facilitator and learner help the learner develop generalised post-formal thinking. Lee (1994) and Johnson (1991) both support the view that the teacher’s own post formal stage of reasoning allows for the presentation of multiple, contradictory views of truth which help in the learner’s developmental process. It is worth noticing that a similar idea is used by Perry (1970) in relation to the role of liberal arts subjects in the development of relativistic thinking, although in his case he did not specifically explore these interactions. Sinnott (1994b) for her part, asserts that the movement of students construction of relativistic thinking is helped by the teacher’s understanding of the dialogic quality of reality. Irwin (1991) discusses the role of affect in specific social experiences, particularly that of education, in stimulating dialectical thought in young adults, thus making socially conceived information an important dimension in the development of adult thought.

The plurality of factors which influence and participate in the development of adult thinking are described by Sinnott (1994a) who argues that the development of relativistic thinking involves a gradual construction of social, physical, or personal reality by the ‘knower’ as reality becomes known. A similar view is adopted in the “reflective judgement” model proposed by Strohm-Kitchener and King (1990) who argue that changes occur during development in the way adolescents and young adults understand the process of knowing. The idea that the nature of relationships change as the development of adult thinking progresses is also supported by recent research, Roghaar and Vangelisti (1996) report that adolescents (16 yrs) anticipate fewer supportive responses from their peers than young adults (up to 25 yrs). These studies suggest that young adults’ understanding and participation in social interaction changes over time and that these changes maybe affected by the extent and quality of the person’s own relativistic thinking. These studies agree that interpersonal relations play a role in the development of adult thinking and therefore possibly, of relativistic thinking. The students I interviewed made many references to interpersonal relations, and consequently I set out to examine these in the light of theoretical perspectives reviewed above.
Analysis of data section 2: Interpersonal relations in relation to the development of relativistic thinking.

In line with the theoretical and practical implications of these theories, I revisited the interview data, identifying instances where students had mentioned that interpersonal relationships had played a role in their development. I found that the students interviewed confirmed that interpersonal relations played an important part in their developmental process.

Students, at the beginning of the 3 year programme said:

1.2F “Oh, talk to me, talk and do it with me. You have to talk to me and give me an example like do it with me, so I know how to do it.”

1.3M “…the teacher is the one who motivates my learning and saying this I mean how interesting he or she is…”

1.1M “What I think is a really important thing is the contact with the teacher all the time, speaking is much better than just staying there and look and say nothing”

In the second year students reported:

2.3F “…I’ve learned a lot this year, from the people, from the classmates, from the chefs…”

In the third year students continued to consider the relationship as a learning environment.

3.1F “…I have to relate it to somebody else’s experience. That’s why I say speaking with teachers really helps me”

The first year students put a lot of importance on the quality of the relationship with their teachers. Good relationships were perceived as the ones where teachers talk students’ language making information understandable through humour:

1.2F “Interviewer: What makes it interesting?

Student: The way he teaches, if he makes it a lot of fun like Mr X.”

and examples which the student could relate to:

1.3M “Interviewer: Carry on talking about what makes it interesting.”
Student: In class especially, maybe if the teacher understands the age group in which he or she is teaching and if possible give relevant examples of day to day of what can happen for example, if young people like going out a lot, maybe to disco's or for activities like sports, so if we are learning something about service and they talk about something maybe you can find in some restaurant or disco and maybe make a joke about it, it will stick in more than...”

Students reported a preference for information received from teachers, as opposed to other sources because they say it was more understandable

1.1M “…I don’t like when we have to read the things, it doesn’t get in, it’s like passive teaching, you read but you don’t understand all the words and you can’t understand maybe something, even in my mother tongue, Italian, sometimes. You can’t understand all the things.”

These examples confirmed the important place interpersonal relations took in the students’ learning experience. The other person became part of and participated in the developmental process. For example a student said that “experiencing it through another person while explaining it” (M3) helped him learn. This extract reminds me of some instances described by Vygotsky (see chapter 4 in Newman and Holzman, 1993) who introduces the concept of "the zone of proximal development" (ZPD) that helps us perceive the potentiality of a child which realises itself in the context of a relationship with an adult. However in this case I believe that a different reading is possible by looking at how the students seem to be sharing conceptually and emotionally their learning experience with adults. In the observations I made, instruction did not necessarily move ahead of development, the underlying idea of ZPD (Newman and Holzman, 1993) it moves together with it. This appears to be a novel observation which I shall call “transgenerational development”. Further investigations are necessary to look into this interpretation in more detail.

Besides these points, the changing subjective nature of the interpersonal relations emerged from these interviews as being a noteworthy aspect. The interviews revealed how students’ perception and use of the relationships changed as relativistic thinking developed. Initially students indicated that they were assimilating information, in the Piagetian sense of the word, within the space provided by the relationship. In simplified terms, Piaget (1977) talks of assimilation when elements from the
environment are incorporated within a structured system which does not change in the process. He talks of *accommodation* when changes occur within the individual while incorporating features of the environment. In this piece of research, I observed that initially students remained relatively rigid at the assimilation stage. The relationships they engaged in did not seem to have a considerable effect on their views and ways of thinking. As the development process continued the relationship with others involved both assimilation and accommodation, making it a privileged ground for growth and exchange because ideas and new modes of thinking emerged from the interactions. This process seemed to contribute to changing the young adults’ views and thinking processes. The following examples illustrated this changing perspective using two interpersonal dimensions which I identified earlier in the literature review, the interaction with adults (post-formal thinkers) and with peers.

The development of relativistic thinking affected the interpretation students made of the relationships with adults. In the first year the student saw the teacher as an authority which holds “the truth”. These findings were similar to those of Perry (1970). Students in the first year say:

1.1M “…it’s easy when they (teachers) write on the board…when the teacher speaks with the class and explains something…”

1.1M “… in practical they (teachers) explain everything and they even ask you what do you think sometimes…. They show you before, you know how to do it and you can repeat it quite easily”

In the second year conformity remained central to the learning process:

2.2M “…you just listen to the teacher…”.

However the next example shows there are signs that students recognised that adults were using relativistic thinking:

2.1M “…they (teachers) can explain it to you in technical terms, it’s their ability to explain clearly in a way that everyone will understand I mean, I think they can pick up each student’s level…”

At this phase students started to recognise the role of the learner in the process, a key stage in understanding the subjective nature of truth (Sinnott,1994a). The
‘transgenerational development’ perspective was also present insofar as the learning was reported as a shared experience which existed in the relationship the young adult is experiencing with the adult.

2.4F “For me I think it’s when they talk about their…personal anecdotes or something that applies to whatever topic…it’s the personal experience that they’ve had, so that it makes me understand the subject more”

2.3F “…we interact with our chefs and they give you the chance… they have so much experience, you can even just sit and talk to them, you can be having fun, they tell you one thing in the middle of it that makes a lot of sense to you which you will probably apply in the pastry tomorrow”

2.3F “you have more experience than me and if I would never talk to you then I would never know, how you look at life…”

In the third year students did not just accept the teacher’s view, they considered it as “a” view which is necessarily individual and therefore not “the truth”.

3.1F “But I feel that just by sitting down with the teachers and talking to them, finding out about their experiences, I learn a lot through that. I know their mistakes or what they have done really well…”

3.3M “…I ask people, they explain things and I write it down in my own words.”

Development of relativistic thinking also appeared to influence the students’ understanding and use of peer group relations. A student in her second year said it in these words:

2.4F “…it’s challenging to get along with some of your class members, at least for me it’s been more of a challenge this year than last.

Initially the peer group was used as a data base which provided the right/wrong answers which are being sought by student at this period of their studies. Talking about how the peer group may help him a first year student said:

1.2F “…Yes from the students that last year did it and passed the test and they are still in the service. Yes they teach us a lot, we say we don’t know this and they show us when there is no teacher.”
In contrast to this statement which concerned help received from students further ahead in the programme, the same student said about the help received from his fellow students working in the same class that:

1.2F “you get confused then, this person says this and this person says this, it gets worse, just believe yourself”

In the second year the students were less isolated and started using and building the peer group as a learning environment. Students in their second year said:

2.3F “I think I learn a lot from people, a lot. I’ve learned, I never used to. I was very different before I came to this school…”

2.1M “… in different classes there are different groups that work together and I think you’ll find in one group, there will normally be a group of people who are interested in and want to learn… it’s not so much competition… you want to try and do it better, so that you can show people that you can do well and also show yourself”

In the third year students appeared to use a more relativistic outlook, recognising the inherent biases of each point of view, balancing opinions and considering multiple perspectives including their own.

3.1F “…it’s just easier to deal with people in class. If you don’t take things personally, it’s just easier to deal with the class… I think listening to people, I’ve started to listen more, I used to do all the talking, I talked a lot but I find just by listening to people they have so much to give…”

3.2F “…I find the best way that I learn is if I discuss the matter with my friends…”

3.2F “ If I’ve reviewed my notes and I get together with a bunch of friends and we all reviewed our notes and we discussed the material and make up questions, things like that I think I learn a lot that way.”

3.4F “I often find I learn when I study in groups, with my friends…I learn from other people from their body language, how they react and I listen to them a lot… I try not to make judgements.”

Amongst other important contributions to the development of relativistic thinking, the changing use and perception of peer groups opened the door to more complex and integrated relational interaction.
In this study I also found evidence to suggest that relativistic thinking may, in a first instance, be a cultural knowledge. Analogously with Vygotsky’s (1978, 1981) theory of psychological development, relativistic thinking should, at least partly, be acquired as individuals internalise this cultural knowledge. Thus relativistic thinking should first be present at the ‘inter-psychological’ level and then at the ‘intra-psychological’ level.

In this way the role of interpersonal relations is in effect a “mediating tool”, a concept inspired by Vygotsky and developed by Wertsch (1991), which facilitates the acquisition of relativistic thinking. A student in second year said:

2.1M “…in school relating with other people getting to know how to live with people, adapting, I think is a big thing we have to learn here…”

The socially constructed relational system offered a structural and dynamic setting within which the individual may internalise certain relativistic characteristics, much in the same way as Vygotsky (1978) suggested psychological development proceeded in earlier stages of life.

An early form of this internalisation was present in this first year students’ statement:

1.1M “…the way I learn is to speak with adults, people who are more adult than me, and speak about everything I try to speak maybe if I don’t know even a lot, but I will try to speak with this person anyway… I always do it like go with friends who are older than me…”

Early forms of the restructuring process internalised from socially constructed relational systems were found in a student’s comment about learning human resource management skills from the craft based studies environment:

2.2M “…how to work in a team the tolerance, and talk about things that come up, how to handle different situation, what can come up, what situations can occur when you are working in a kitchen and I don’t think they (teachers) want to make us cooks they just want us to …understand people working…”

Working in the kitchen, the student was evidently an active agent in the learning process with the social context offering important developmental queues:
“... when you meet different people, from different categories from like different backgrounds, different cultures, you learn a lot and not only in kitchen... I meet people from so many different cultures, so many different places and everyone’s view is so different.”

“I think it’s also relations, your relationship with other members in your class as well as with your supervisors. You have to be able to phrase things right, you have to know what to call that person, you know, chef, M, some people prefer one thing, other people prefer other.”

Students interviewed seemed to be internalising the socially constructed relational system taking its relativistic properties as developmental ‘fuel’ for their own progression.

Discussion section 2: Interpersonal relations in relation to the development of relativistic thinking.

Thus evidence I presented showed that students regarded interpersonal interaction as an important factor in their learning process over the three years of their studies. They reported that the quality of the relations was an important factor.

In some cases interpersonal relations offered a space for a shared learning experience with adults. Students revealed that in these instances, relations with teachers were helpful when the teacher adjusted to the students’ level. I called this transgenerational development because it refers to developmental processes that are only noticeable within the relationships that exist between two generations. Transgenerational development can be differentiated from ZPD insofar as it appears that adults and students seem to move together in the development process. It should be remarked that the concept I am proposing is meant to highlight certain aspects of development. Thus it is not a model, and offers no pretence of explaining development exclusively in respect to other theories. In this way transgenerational development is like a beam of light turned upon the phenomenon. Other light sources are possible, just as valid, and each may show different aspects of the developmental process. Furthermore, there may be some overlap between different light beams. In other words there may be some aspects of ZPD which are included in transgenerational development and vice
versa. The heuristic value of this approach lies in its ability to offer relevant and multi-modal information about the development of young adults from a new conceptual stance.

The interviews conducted revealed that development of relativistic thinking affected students’ interpretation of their relationships with adults and peers. In the third year the opinions of adults were no longer perceived as being the one, right way. They were a view amongst other possible views that a student could take in relation to a particular subject. Peer group relations were also reported to have changed, students initially sought ‘comfort in numbers’, looking for right/wrong answers and moved progressively towards considering the opinions of others as a valuable source of alternative points of view. In the process some students relinquished their need for absolute truth. Thus relativistic thinking may be a cultural knowledge which students internalised through interpersonal relations which could be compared to a mediating tool.

**Summary, section 1 and 2, and Reproblematisation**

The literature review I made at the beginning of this chapter revealed that adult thinking could only be understood if one took into consideration both the nature of the environment they are living in and the kind of problems they are confronted with. This perspective is relevant because the world adults live in and have to cope with, harbours different logical systems which coexist and sometimes contradict each other. Furthermore adults must contend with different value systems which could be seen as paradoxical for a person who would rely solely on formal operational cognitive skills. Although there is no real unity in the theoretical models which attempt to explain adult thinking, many authors refer to relativistic thinking as characteristic of adult thinking. The development of relativistic thinking is described by many authors as a movement from a polarised view (right/wrong) where the person sees themselves as the centre of the world towards a relativistic position where individuals develop the capacity to consider multiple views, value systems and perspectives. In his study of college students, Perry (1970) points to two important features in this development process. The first is that the final stage should be characterised by commitment to a
particular point of view while also holding a relativistic view concerning other possible opinions. This is necessary because otherwise the young adult remains in a kind of limbo, never being able to decide which course of action should be taken or which opinion defended. Perry’s second observation is that the development of relativistic thinking appears to be induced by teaching liberal arts subjects which intrinsically do not offer right/wrong answers.

Some authors note that elaborate adult thinking skills are developed in practical learning situations. These findings encouraged me to study the development of relativistic thinking in the environment of a Swiss hotel school which did not offer liberal arts education such as that described by Perry. However it did offer practical situations in which the students lived and worked.

However, a number of theoretical models of development in the literature that I reviewed emphasised different aspects of the process. For example, some authors questioned the idea that development occurred in stages. Others highlighted the influence on the development of adult thinking of the context and activities performed. These conceptual ideas were helpful in questioning the structural perspective that construed relativistic thinking as a unified mode of thought occurring independently from the context of learning and environment in which it was used.

I conducted my investigation in the SSH HMS Les Roches, interviewing students in each of the three years of their hotel management diploma programme. I hoped that this would allow me to gather some insights into the development process and more particularly the possible development of relativistic thinking. The analysis of the interviews I carried out confirmed the findings from the first problematisation in so far as practical learning instances were valued by students and offered more than merely vocational skills.

As expected, in the first year of the programme I observed that students used polarised views, seeking right/wrong answers and viewing the world only from their own perspective.

In second and third year students I came across what appears to be a novel observation. Some students used a mode of thinking which bore some characteristics of relativistic thinking but was limited to the context of their learning and social
interaction. I have called this mode of thought ‘local relativistic thinking’. In the third year of the programme of study some students displayed more integrated forms of relativistic thinking.

However analysing the interviews solely in terms of the development of relativistic thinking left a considerable amount of data unaccounted for. Students made many references to the role of interpersonal relationships entertained with peers and teachers. For this reason I explored further literature that focused more specifically on the role of interpersonal relations in the development process. A number of authors discuss the role of the social environment and interpersonal relationships in young adult development. Thus I found some reasons to explore the relationship between the socially constructed learning environment and adult thinking skills.

I found many references in the interviews that highlighted the role of the social environment and interpersonal relationships. I noticed that students’ perception and use of relationships with peers and teachers changed as they developed. Furthermore I also found evidence suggesting that relativistic thinking itself could be considered as a cultural knowledge which is internalised by students. This observation would prove to be pivotal in my later investigations because it allowed me to explore more specifically the relationship between the nature of the learning environment and the development of situated forms of relativistic thinking.

The findings reported above are to a certain degree consistent with those observed by Perry (1970). However they appear to be of interest because they were found in a very different learning environment and showed that students in this environment did not provide convincing evidence that they had developed generalised relativistic thinking. Perry questioned students in a traditional university setting. He emphasises the role of liberal arts education in fostering relativistic thinking while also recognising that other routes could achieve comparable results. My investigation was carried out in a vocationally specific learning environment that relied on a considerable amount of craft based learning. At the closing stages of this two step problematisation I thought that the results I had obtained were promising. However nothing was clear because the school I used as a host for my study was a very unique environment, therefore it was difficult, at this stage to understand how this uniqueness influenced the findings I had made so far. The emphasis students put on interpersonal relations helped me to
understand some of the socio-cultural dimensions of the development of relativistic thinking however these may be a particularity which existed in the Swiss schools I chose. The same results in terms of transgenerational development, local relativistic might not necessarily exist in a vocationally similar learning environment where the ethos was more academic.
Problematisation 3

Introduction

The interviewees in the two previous investigations reported that craft based education could only be understood as part of an overall educational environment. Students mentioned social, organisational and cultural dimensions which all participated in the development of adult thinking skills. There is little unity in the literature concerned with young adult development. Nevertheless relativistic thinking emerges as an area of agreement amongst number of authors who describe different development processes that lead to this characteristic form of integrated adult thinking. The variety of models in the literature on young adult development also suggests that factors such as the educational environment and interpersonal relations may play a significant role. The results I have presented so far suggest that the educational environment does indeed play a critical role in the development of certain specific forms of relativistic thinking that are not as structurally comprehensive as were expected. The Swiss school in which I based my previous two investigations was identified in the ‘background ‘section as a typical example of Swiss hospitality management education. As such this school’s educational professional roots and the fact that it had no connection with international academic teaching/learning standards influenced the learning environment. Therefore I thought that it would be valuable to extend my study to an institution which offered students a substantially different learning environment to the Swiss schools’. I chose City College Norwich Hotel School (CCN) which was a typical example of vocational education offered in the United Kingdom. A number of aspects, discussed in the background chapter differentiated this school from the SSH HMS Les Roches. Notably, CCN offered less craft based learning and its educational environment was influenced by the fact that its programmes satisfied the requirements of British standards in higher education. Nevertheless the Diploma programme of the SHA HMS Les Roches and CCN’s Higher National Diploma (HND) were comparable in terms of learning outcomes since a formal credit rating had been carried out between them. Additionally I was conversant with CCN programmes and had free access to
students and lecturers because I had run a BA degree programme for CCN in Switzerland.

The data I collected also revealed that relativistic thinking could be regarded as a cultural knowledge which is passed on through interactions with teachers, peers and more advanced students. Teachers were reported to be particularly helpful in the students’ development when they translated information and participated in parallel to the learning process. Students valued interpersonal relations with peers and lecturers which revealed much of their mode of thinking therefore it seemed important to continue to explore their perceptions concerning this aspect in conjunction with the different educational environment.

**Methodological considerations**

The objective of this investigation was to pay particular attention to interpersonal relations and the effect of the school’s educational environment on the development of relativistic thinking. I wanted to achieve a certain degree of comparability with the two previous investigations however I realised that the research question had evolved and that strict comparability would be difficult to achieve between the findings made in the SSH HMS Les Roches and those I would collect in CCN. I decided to interview students using the same interviewing technique as I used previously. Since the interviewees in the earlier investigation talked a lot about the help they received from lecturers, I thought that it would be profitable to also conduct interviews with lecturers. These interviews were intended to help gain further insights into how lecturers perceived their role in relation to the students’ development process. I interviewed lecturers using the same technique as I used for students. I felt that it was appropriate to use a method which I knew and which was likely to bring out lecturers’ arguments concerning their participation in the creation of the learning environment.
**Design**

Two sets of interviews were conducted, student and lecturers.

**Student interviews**

In the two previous investigations conducted in Switzerland I collected data from students in each academic year covering 4 years of hospitality management education. In the first problematisation I interviewed students attending the degree top-up programme in Switzerland (Year four) who had previously completed their Diploma course. In the second problematisation I interviewed students currently attending each one of the three years of the Diploma programme.

In this investigation, I wanted to continue to use a cross-sectional design, interviewing 4 students per academic year in each one of the four years CCN offered hospitality management studies. This design would ensure comparability with the previous investigations.

All students participated on a voluntary basis. Unfortunately a mishandling of the tape recorder made me lose some of the input of two "year one" students. For this reason I interviewed two extra "year one" students a few weeks after the main interviewing sessions were carried out. The number of "year two" students was under target because of lack of participants.

Additionally I took advantage of a particularity of the programme in year 4 offered in CCN. Students who had completed the SSH HMS Les Roches Diploma were allowed to pursue the one year degree top-up programme in Switzerland or in the United Kingdom. Those students who chose to transfer to CCN followed the fourth year together with CCN students who had just completed their HND. In this investigation, I interviewed two British students who had followed all their studies in CCN and two students who had transferred from SSH HMS Les Roches (one male Pakistani and one female Kenyan).

The characteristics of the students interviewed are outlined in Table 09.
Table 09: Characteristics of student sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic year</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard dev.</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews were carried out in the same way as in the previous investigations however I adjusted the focus of the questions to suit the research objectives. Interviewees were asked to talk about what stood out in their minds, within the current year in college concerning:

1) Relations with peers which regard their learning or development.
2) Relations with lecturers which regard learning or development.
3) The most important thing which helped them learn or develop in college.

The order and focus of each question remained the same for each interview although the exploratory nature of the interviewing technique I used did create some individual differences.

Lecturer interviews

Lecturers were also voluntary subjects who agreed to take part in a study of young adult development in the context of hospitality management studies. I interviewed two lecturers who relied on craft based learning situations for teaching (Restaurant management and Food production) and two lecturers who taught using lectures, tutorials and group work (Finance and Information Technology). This choice was designed to help gain insight into the educational environment in the two principal teaching/learning methods used by the school. Lecturers were asked to talk freely about their ideas concerning students’ development in general while in college and comment on how they felt they personally contributed to the students’ development. I applied the same standard of ethics as that used in the two previous investigations to students and lecturers.
Analysis of Data

The same data analysis technique was used as in the two previous investigations. Quotes from students are identified in the same way as previously except in the 4th year where I have identified the students who transferred from Switzerland with the letters LR which stand for “Les Roches”. Each lecturer was also given an identification code, the quotes from lecturers who use craft based learning are identified as ‘L1cbl’ and L2cbl’ the other two as: ‘L3’ and ‘L4’.

The presentation of the data follows the same principle as the one used in previous problematisations. Additionally I have introduced the lecturers’ views alongside the students. The central themes which could be distinguished in the students’ interviews were: the role of craft based learning, the development of relativistic thinking, instances of transgenerational development and support offered to prompt students’ progress.

The role of Craft based learning

In CCN, 23% of the contact time in year one was spent in craft based learning. Lecturers provided some insight into what they thought craft based learning achieved:

L1cbl “We’re not asking you to be a fully trained qualified chef, but to be able to use a knife, to understand, you know, different cooking methods, operational aspects”

L2cbl “For someone it could be the first exposure to some of the real pressures involved with trying to deliver a product, you know, to customers. A sort of quality product to customers so that you know, it does help to develop in my view, it can help to develop certainly, in sort of production area, deadlines to be met, organisation, organisation of your own particular work area, the fact that you are part of a small team and obviously if one slips up it can affect the overall thing, the overall process so they would seem to be.”

Lecturers thought that students needed them to be prepared for industry:

L1cbl “You must be responding to what the industry wants... The thing is that we’re working for the industry. We are working for young people.”
Lecturers understood that industry needs were not limited to operational skills as they were taught in craft based learning:

L2cbl “From feedback, we've got from employers is that they look and drive, and show initiative, follow things through, work in groups, work in teams and so, and I think that's it, what, that's the desire from industry for a graduate coming out not, not solely academic ability in the subject matter but also those interpersonal skills, time management skills, presentation skills, is what is required by industry.”

Lecturers talked about how craft based learning could provide more than the transmission of technical skills:

L2cbl “I'm passing on some of my own values apart from just the pure subject matter” [Which is recognised to take place in the instruction of operational areas] “I'm very much trying to instil those sort of disciplines other than just the subject matter we're trying to put out in terms of cookery methods or service and all that sort of thing... I'm trying to at the same time, I think, that they're going to be going out in industry which requires quite a lot of working in teams and team work and certainly we try and instil that in them and again there may be somebody who may not be able to get on with that well but they should be trying to talk that person round to come on board and what have you, so that's a big drive... as well which I don't want to go into but, those other sorts of values, we're trying to, I guess develop them into, cohering them into, or I guess in some respects, we do that by example. I suppose, how we sort of dress and act in those areas is what we're trying to do and a lot of students tend to, tend to, tend to sort of pick up on that and other students want to challenge that quite rightly.”

L1cbl “If they've got operational skills, then we're talking not only being able to wait at a table or even make a sandwich, but we're also talking customer care. One of the best ways of getting customer care confidence is in relation to practical application... They need confidence in being able to handle people, all sorts of people. There is nothing more difficult than a customer. If they gain that confidence through practical awareness at the same time then I feel that makes them a much better manager later on.”

“Interviewer: What do you think they were picking up?
Lecturer: They were picking up life skills.

Interviewer: Life skills?

Lecturer: Customer care skills, social skills in relation to dealing with customers but also looking at the industry. If you've got a practical skill and you've got it under your belt you'll spend less time concentrating on that skill and more time concentrating on what is actually happening out there…”

The emphasis lecturers put on teaching broad competencies through craft based learning may be a reason why students in the first year made no specific reference to craft based learning. However in the second year students did mention craft based learning.

2.1F “…I get a bit dubious about too much theory without practical (craft based learning situations)…”

Students in year two mention the role craft based learning played in anchoring the theory which they were learning.

2.2F “Important things which have marked the last years in terms of learning”. She continued to say: “I think the situation when we did practical work here and in the kitchens and restaurants, I think that gave us, although it is obviously not the real world, I think it gave us quite a good perspective of what it is like to be in both areas, how things work in general which I don’t think, if I had been taught that in a lesson, I would have been able to understand quite so well”

However in relation to the number of interviews carried out there were surprisingly few students who mentioned craft based learning as having an important effect on their development. The interviews with the lecturers hint at what may be the students’ principal concerns in year 1 and 2 as:

L1cbl “Yeah, the work does change. In the first year they’re trying to formulate buddy buddy systems with each other, you know, trying to find out different characters, work with people. The first year is very much a large learning curve. The second year is much more. If you start thinking about the group work, the group activities, they've got to know each other a little bit better. They can identify strengths and weaknesses in themselves without having to write down on a piece of paper…”
fourth year they will identify their own teams. They will literally go together without any interference whatsoever… They've identified the clicks a lot more within small groups the co-operation is heightened…”

“….the first year students and second year students are finding out about organisation structures and how there are built in communication channels and how, in order for the organisation to survive those communication channels need to be used effectively. So they have to bring quite a lot together within those first two years”

The fact that students did not often use instances of craft based learning to illustrate their responses may also be understood in the context of the lecturers expectations of their course:

L2cbl “Although we don't seem to concentrate on it that much, a group gelling that goes on in that sort of production area and bearing in mind coming from different areas especially the first part of the course as they're all sizing each other up not knowing each other that well. They don't all live in the lodge like they used to and don't mix that much so that seems to be quite a benefit as well from that. It's that sort of team building but certainly in terms of managing their own sort of work station you know, working tidily, working cleanly, working in a team…There are some things we don't really assess that happen in that area but tend to happen. And for some people it’s this what the industry is all about.”

L4 “but it is also they are growing in confidence, being able to present work in seminar presentation. In year one they are petrified of everything…in the kitchen, the restaurant, the thought of having to talk to a customer and you can see the growth in maturity…now I would like to think that the programme has something to do with that, in part it must, it gives them the technical skills, the knowledge, the know how, there is also them growing as young adults as well…”
The development of relativistic thinking

In the previous investigation I found that the development of relativistic thinking manifested itself through the students’ perception and use of peers’ and lecturers’ opinions. I noticed that interpersonal relations changed in relation to the students’ ability to think in relativistic terms. Interviewees confirmed that in CCN the modus operandi of the group changed over the years in a similar way.

L2cbl “I think there probably is a difference in year 1 and year 4. As I say in year 1, they are very much learning about each other. Find out each others’ strengths in terms of who is good at academic subjects and who is good at more practical planning. They use each other for that. They get to the stage certainly at the end of year one when they’re not afraid to. It’s not sort of getting one upmanship like perhaps at secondary school. They’re getting by the end of year one, the sort of recognising each others strengths and weaknesses and asking, you know, in study groups and helping each other through the course but I don’t think that is quite so evident in year 1. I think by year 4 they are more supportive to each other by that stage not quite so much competitiveness and jealousies as there are in year 1 as it tends to be.”

Students confirmed that in year one relations with peers were seen as potentially challenging their own ideas. A student (1.1F) talked in terms of “them (the lecturers and peers) and me”. This student felt uncomfortable when the school demanded collaborative work and reported to have “tackled it” by dividing the tasks so that each student in the group worked in isolation from each other.

Showing their preference for polarised views, students perceived working in groups as a more reliable means of getting the “right answer”. A lecturer said:

L3 “It's that team work in the early years particularly in year 1, but in the early years it's a matter of group support. There's safety in numbers. Team work in later years is a matter of division of labour and not having to do everything yourself and getting other people sharing out, you know?”

In year one, the interactions are not used to discuss and challenge ideas in a relativistic thinking mode:
“Yeah it is better working with other people because you can check to see if you are going wrong”

“…we have obviously shared each others' assignments “how are you going, all right” and that is as far as that goes but we do interact.”

Interviewer: “What do you mean by ‘all right’, what are you trying to achieve then?”

Student: “It’s, are you on the same stage doing the assignment, are you on the right guideline to what is actually set and like if the whole class is similar to yours then you are obviously on the right guideline.”

It appeared that individuals only shared information at the end of the ‘group work’, when they were putting the presentation together. At this point, different opinions were not used to plan a response for the assignment or challenge each others points of views.

“There was 3 of us, for a half hour presentation. We set ourselves different topics, I did types of French music, French radio, and I went of to research them and they’d had to go off and research. And then we’d bring it back like a pile of information together. And then we put it all together, what we were going to use, what was good information to start with as a group as a whole”

Further evidence supported that students were not showing signs of relativism and preferred to use a polarised mode of thinking. These findings confirm the findings I made in Switzerland in as far as first year students preferred polarised views and did not show signs of relativistic thinking. Similar results were found by Perry (1970) in position 1 of his development model which he defines as “Basic Duality” where students think in terms of right vs. wrong and “we vs. others” and generally do not show awareness of multiplicity.

Interviewer: “When somebody has got a different opinion to you, what do you do?”

Student: “It depends what the opinion was, if I thought it’s right or wrong, I will still stick by my opinion. If I think I am right until I am proved otherwise.”

“How do you feel about these projects where you have different ways at looking at something?”
Student: “I think in a way they are more difficult because you don’t really know what
to do, if it’s set what you have to do it is easier to get on with than if there are
different ways of doing it then you are not so sure, I mean it is not as easy to look at
other people and see what is right.”

A lecturer confirmed that students were using rigid polarised modes of thought in
years one and two:

L3 “There is as it were, there's a tightness in the thinking in the first year which is
extremely limiting. In the first year they learn what they learn very much for itself …
Even if you say this is a generalised framework, if it was taught in the context of MBO
[management by objectives], it doesn't lap over into manpower planning. Now that
changes over time and in the last years. Certainly in the last years you can expect
them to be in a sense always saying, yes, I hear what you're saying. I know you're
telling me about MBO but what does this mean in general.”

The expectations students had of lecturers also revealed something of the rigidity
which prevailed at this stage:

L4 “… year one they tend to put you more on a pedestal… I was teaching year one
HND’s… I made a mistake and one man said ‘oh you come down in our esteem’…
now that group of students will go away and think ‘well he is maybe not as clever as
we thought he was’. To them it matters because they are too immature to appreciate
what I am saying to them in terms of ‘I can’t see the immediate error but lets have
time to reflect on it.”

“In year two I get a lot of moans and groans, the students say: ‘oh we don’t like this
group work, because, it degenerates, we are held back by X … Y can be very
dominant, Y is always trying to impose their views on us, as I say to them it is a
matter of team work…they have got to learn about peer group pressure, of taking the
teams point of view”

“That is part of them accepting the assessment strategy, of doing these group works”

In year one, the only student who approached issues with relativism said:

1.5F “Lots of things. Keeping the staff happy and motivated and then the different
computer systems vary from place to place, I suppose. Doesn't matter what you learn
each place is gonna be different when you get there, making sure, planning for the future. At the same time you're keeping it on a day to day basis and it's problems. I suppose having an understanding of all the different parts of what I'm doing. It's going to be helpful at the end of it, I hope...I don't really know. I don't think there's necessarily a right way of doing things. Now there are various ways of doing things and just as a manager or whatever, you have to decide which one is going to be the best way for you not necessarily being the one that looks like the right way from the outside.”

Students from year two started to present a different picture, some were able to distance themselves from their own learning process showing definite signs of relativism because they were apparently becoming aware that multiple causes and solutions could be equally as good:

2.3F “... we are really still learning which are the best ways to learn really”. The use of relativism is also apparent in the relationships with peers which became an occasion to listen to and receive the other persons idea, thus accepting the validity of more that one logical system:

2.3F “Well I didn’t have so much experience working with others as far as college and academic stuff is concerned, I suppose I have changed. You do consider other people rather than just doing your own thing all the time, you have to consider what they think. And you have to share the work load as well because the work that you do is going to reflect on other peoples’ as well. So you have a responsibility to the other people to do your best as well.”

2.1F “I find it very hard to answer an essay question in an exam and start from scratch on it and I like to be able to talk to people, not nick ideas by any means, but bounce ideas around and I find it very hard to do it with a book and very hard to do it with a CD-ROM.”

2.2F “…I think we all work together quite well because we all have different ideas and things when we work together... we all come from different areas and so when we come together we all have something different to add to the conversation”

However in year two relativistic thinking was not regularly used, in many cases students preferred getting the ‘right’ answers from their peers:
2.1F “But if sometimes you can be talking to someone and talking your ideas and you can tell from their expression on their faces whether it is a good idea or a bad idea and that either gives you, well it gives you encouragement…”

Typically students applied mechanistic strategies which were designed to help the group meet academic requirements.

2.2F “…we discussed different methods you could carry out, how each method worked, which numbers should be used and how to carry out the assignment…we were agreeing on what the assignment required, what we needed to do for the assignment to get the marks”

However these instances could be interpreted as preparing the ground for relativistic thinking. According to Sinnott (1994a) relations, at this stage, are perceived as a set of givens which the group chooses to utilise in its efforts to meet collective goals. From the lecturers’ perspective these “strategies” may also be seen as a sign of relativism:

L3 “Earlier on they are simply saying, they're coming up and saying things like "how much time should I put into this", "where would I find any books", "can you recommend any reading to me". That kind of thing. In later years they are saying once the assessment criteria, "can I see your marking scheme", you know, "can I pass if I only do this bit". It's very much more a game plan based on satisfying. It's very clever in many cases. It's really quite specific and students are definitely determining what they need to do to do whatever is their particular game plan, just maybe, to get a pass. Particularly, this is true of adults.”

The groups’ interactions were reported by students to be more collaborative than in the first year:

2.2F “…we all get on very well and we also find that we help each other very much and if one of us has got a problem with a particular assignment the others will help. We really work together more as a team when we are doing our assignments and things…we discuss everything together and I find this as very important for me to be able to carry out this course”.

2.1F “…as far as assignments are concerned, individual assignments, people vary a lot the way they work, like there are a couple of very organised people…. Now I know that I can’t, I won’t organise my work, I will procrastinate for ages and, in a way I
don’t think I’d enjoy working with them… so that kind of working together wouldn’t be helpful. As far as our group is concerned we are flexible and if someone needs help we are prepared to give them help ”

The interviewees in year two appeared to have become more aware of the value of different and sometimes contradicting opinions:

2.1F “I can’t think of any time when somebody else’s opinion would not be useful except if it (is) just futile”

When I asked the same student: “When would a situation arise when somebody else’s opinion which is not your own would be helpful”, she answered:

“My when we are discussing a topic assignment or something like that. It’s usually seminars and then when it came to the assignments we would still be talking about things, we would each be doing a different essay but still contributing. That’s helpful, like you would talk over a problem with a friend I suppose.”

Illustrating the instability which was typical in year two interviews, the same student talked about situations when individuals remained entrenched in their ideas: “On the other hand there is one thing you can agree, to disagree”

When probed concerning the value of her peers’ opinion, in a first instance she appeared to value the different views expressed in the group. Nevertheless, eventually, she did not provide evidence that she was using the group to challenge her own opinions.

“…a time when it (an other person’s opinion) would actually be very useful, when we are in a seminar … and the teacher wants to get something started off and usually only one or two people have to have an opinion to get started off… and that is when it is rather useful to have one or two opinionated people …”

When asked what happened when two completely different views are expressed, she said: “each view tries to sound out the other to see if they can be converted, if they can’t they have to accept it. Usually when you have two opinions there is a stronger and a weaker … I know for certain ‘that is right’ and I know for certain ‘that is wrong’ and maybe one party, one person is more flexible than the other and in that case they might be persuaded.”
Despite some evidence that year two students were able to take on board different opinions and start to appreciate the subjective nature of peoples’ ideas and opinions, some still felt threatened by the diversity of opinions in the group:

2.3F“…you have to be careful about the size of the group…we don’t seem to get on so well in a 5 as in a 2 or 3. I think that sort of conflicting opinions and that better work in smaller group.”

However interaction between peers were provoking confrontations which appeared to be critical in the students’ development towards relativistic thinking:

2.1F “Either they [peers] frown, you know you have got a bad idea, you think good, I know its bad, not necessarily you always believe these people, it may just be it is just not their opinion, you don’t have to believe what you are saying is wrong because they have frowned but it’s a good indication, it helps you think about things.”

Further evidence supported that the students were thinking in polarised terms at certain times and manifesting relativism at other moments.

2.3F “…I tend to think ‘am I approaching this in the right way?’ whereas if there are 2 of you or 3, you can discuss it and decide after they have given their ideas, the best way to tackle it… it is just a question of security isn’t it? If you are 3 of you who have decided to do it one way then you are all wrong, whereas if you are doing an assignment on you own it’s just you.”

Later, when I asked her: “What does wrong mean” she answered in relativistic terms albeit applied to the close context of the learning environment:

“Well I suppose, lots of subjects there is no right or wrong really…” and realised that different contexts called for different decoding and treatment: “…because there is so much opinion but like things for quantitative methods we do and finance which often have right and wrong answers…”

The same student understood that different problems called for different modes of thinking:

“…more ‘woffly’ subjects where there is no really right or wrong, its just a matter of opinion depending on the approach you take…[which is intentionally set up by the institution] …then (the ‘woffly’ subjects described in the previous statement) very
often lecturers only give their way they would approach it, whereas there are several other ways you could tackle it.”

However, in a contrast which denotes the instability of this stage, the same student was clearly not comfortable with the relativistic approach of her lecturer:

2.3F “…but if I have actually done some work and I come in and say: ‘this is it, is it right or is it wrong?’ They (the lecturers) will say ‘Oh, it depends on your approach, it might be right and it might be wrong’. Now I don’t find that very helpful at all, you know I just want the sort of security and just for them to tell me yes that I have got it right and I am in, on the right track.”

In summary, some signs of relativistic thinking clearly appeared in year two, however the students continued to use polarised views at some times. These findings were mostly found in the way students perceived others’ opinions and in the way they interacted with each other. A lecturer noticed this phenomenon also:

L3 “Team working changed in its nature from the beginning of the course to the end in my view.”

In the third year the picture is completely different, there appeared to be much more consistency in the students’ responses and I found little evidence of polarised modes of thinking. The students readily accepted peers different points of view and recognised that there were alternative ways of seeing things in many cases which could be regarded as equally right.

3.2F “…I know that they are going to put the same sort of working input than I will…(we) will share each others ideas…basically we do not come up with an assignment which is the same on the three counts but we help each other along…”

The modus operandi of the peer group changed, students appeared to be more tolerant towards each others’ opinions. Students chose better solution as opposed to looking for one best way (the right answer) solutions.

3.3F “Well before, I don’t think so much now, but when I was younger, if I had’ve come after my A levels or whatever, I mean if someone had a really different opinion I didn’t agree with I am afraid I would have fought them, I would have, you know, definitely had a debate about it, I am quite outspoken I would have definitely put my
opinion across. Now, we are all working a big group at the moment for Scottish and Newcastle and we are all put in big group. And I think our group is working the best of the lot from what I am hearing from it, we don’t argue at all, we have really good debates and if anyone has an opinion I think we are all being just mature enough to listen to them and we just sort of take what the majority go with and everyone is easygoing, not pigheaded enough.”

3.2F “And obviously there were a few disagreements over opinions...(it) would go to a vote, it would be sometimes a compromise would be reached or one that sounded best or that more people agreed with…”

It was common for third year students to report that groups shared ideas and that different opinions were taken into consideration while working on set assignments:

3.4M “Well in the assignment we are doing at the moment, Scottish and Newcastle, we all have our say, we put our ideas in… putting in their ideas, what they think is being asked of us. It’s just putting in another viewpoint in it and making you think from a different angle, helping you that way”

Students were prepared to consider their peers’ and lecturers’ views in a relativistic mode of thinking, they expressed these ideas in more general terms than those used by year two students.

3.4M “I find he’s better at some things and I’m better at others”
3.1M “I know that the teacher aims to give it (the information) in a way that we will understand it, sometimes it does not always come across that way. My understanding is slightly different so the person I ask will explain it in a way I will understand it.”

Other students’ opinions were considered in a relativistic way however sometimes relativism was grounded in the context of the projects which were being worked on. These instances contributed to the understanding of different facets of a problem:

3.1M “…the question, I couldn’t really see the point of doing it in one place but when people explained the nature of the retail park I hadn’t quite, my idea of what this retail park was going to be was slightly different to everybody else’s but now they have explained it to me what they have understood about the new developments…we work well our group, there are some strong personalities but we have made allowances so we work very well”
This shift towards more relativistic perspectives was also observable when this student described her way of dealing with conflicting views:

3.2F “…I am prepared to listen to other people and if their idea, in the end of the day, sounds more reasonable than mine, then I will go with it…”

And when she talked about her approach to different subjects:

“…not where there is just right and wrong answer. For example we were doing this assignment we needed a theme for a pub, obviously there is no right answer to that, there are differences of opinions, however that works. Obviously there is no right or wrong but in the case where there is a right and wrong answer, for example finance assignment we were doing, someone was saying that is not right but I set out to prove it to them that it was, to say that I can argue my point.”

In this extract we also see that arguments between peers were no longer a test of willpower. Students in year three were aware that multiple causes and solutions could be used to explain certain situations. Interacting with peers helped this student develop consciousness of the subjective nature of her own opinions:

3.3F “…I am liable to make my opinion known but I have also learned to obviously put my opinion, not be so forceful, you know what I mean, otherwise you rock the boat and upset everybody and perhaps I can go with the flow a bit. I mean obviously I have been around so many people, being out, you know, makes you a bit more conscious of your actions…”

3.4M “Well you look at it in one specific way, you don’t span around the wide view and someone will say something else and so you’ll consider what they say, they’ve said and you might change what you think.”

In year three the responses showed that students were gradually generalising relativistic thinking. The data provided examples of relativistic thinking being used in many circumstances and students’ arguments showed they were no longer preferring polarised views.

The fourth year student interviews revealed that relativistic thinking was well established at this point. For instance they often reported that relations within the peer group were perceived as a helpful learning environment and relativistic modes of thinking were used to describe the modus operandi of the group.

4.3F “I don’t think someone can give me a set of quotas and I go and just learn or whatever. Experimentation, you know, like my peers, my colleagues, learning
together… Well there are many different scenarios, I mean in the classroom situation learning together is, you know you are given a case study, you all learn in groups that’s beneficial.”

The following student understood that the context and outlook played a part in the definition of the problem when explaining to the interviewer an incident which had happened between a lecturer and the class:

4.1M.LR “The teacher who we were complaining about, he actually did a very good thing, he had us sit down with all of us and we had an open face to face conversation. Because first we had these bad things about him and after that day I saw something good about him and face to face we will discuss the problem and if you think whatever I have done bad I will say why it happened and we will see how it can be done and that was one thing that was, he actually sat down and listened to our comments.”

Further on in the interview there was evidence of relativistic operations such as they are described by Sinnott (1984), for example she says that there should be the recognition that many different solutions may be correct and that events are the result of multiple causes, some outcomes are more probable than others:

4.1M.LR “…the teacher taught about one certain point one certain system he was teaching and I missed that class. If I had learned it on my own, maybe I would’ve not seen it from the view the teacher was seeing and another view. I could’ve mentioned the view, it could’ve been right but you know, you want to see what he has as a view.”

Further evidence of students meeting Sinnott’s relativistic operation criteria (Sinnott, 1984) were found when students demonstrated their ability to consider abstract and practical dimensions of the problem taking them both into consideration in order to find an appropriate answer:

4.3F “I think I have got a problem with only seeing my direction that I take to be the right one and so I kind of shun everybody else’s, you know I don’t do it openly but kind of in my mind, if their ideas are taken I am automatically demotivated because I don’t feel that my ideas are strong enough …in the end of the day I know it has got to be teamwork and everybody’s ideas have got to come together. So I really deal with it as and when it happens, when I think their ideas are more important or whatever.”

Student gave evidence of recognising key variables and weighing them in relation to the solution which is being sought thus meeting another criteria of Sinnotts’ relativistic operations (Sinnott, 1984)
4.3F “Interviewer: When is a situation when you will actually put the weapons on the floor and say “I recognise that”? 
Student: Probably in work practice, out there, because I think it’s more important, in here you know it is like ‘let’s pretend stuff’ so it doesn’t really matter, that out there you know it is budgets and people to be concerned about, then I would actually listen to other people or take heed of other people more than I do…”
This example was typical of fourth year students’ reasoning, it takes into account various factors and also showed that students took into account the particularity of situations. Students recognised that their views were important but that a balance had to be reached between accepting other people’s ideas when seen from a wider perspective:

4.4M “it’s good to be pig headed in some cases. It is a strength and a weakness, you have got to identify when it is a strength and when it is a weakness. …Other peoples’ opinions are their opinions, you can’t blame them for that, they are just as good as anybody else’s opinions, I value other peoples opinions, I like to find out somebody else’s opinion. Some times you can see a different angle on something to the one you thought of and you spin off from there along on your own. There are some people who deem it as their work, I don’t. All through your life you’ve got to learn through other peoples ideas otherwise you are just going to be yourself and stuck in your ways."
In this statement the student also showed some signs of perceiving that process and answer could be treated separately, by accepting that another person may be right and could be helpful he implicitly recognised that two processes may lead to similar final outcomes.
Students became aware that there were so many possible answers that finally the choice was up to them.

3.3F “…it (the study) makes you much more aware. Obviously it makes me a much more knowledgeable person and I can obviously have more confidence in going in and talking and relating to managers and perhaps putting myself forward more being able to talk with solid knowledge in my head. I mean it’s definitely helped, if I didn’t think, if I thought it was all pointless and everything I would be gone to get a job. It’s definitely helping, how much is yet to be seen.
To summarise students I interviewed in third and fourth year could be considered as collectively meeting Sinnott’s (1984) criteria for relativistic operations outlined in Table 10:


| ✓ ✓ | Meta-theory shift: (abstract and practical dimensions of the problem are taken into consideration in order to find an appropriate answer) |
| ✓ ✓ | Problem definition: (understanding that the context and outlook plays a part in the definition of the problem) |
| ✓ ✓ | Process/product shift: (Process and answer are treated separately, two processes may lead to the same answer). |
| ✓ ✓ | Parameter setting: (key variables are identified and weighted in relation to the solution which is being sought) |
| ✓ ✓ | Pragmatism: (choice of better solution as opposed to one best way) |
| ✓ ✓ | Multiple solutions: (recognising that there are alternatives to each choice) |
| ✓ ✓ | Multiple causality: (events are the result of multiple causes, some outcomes are more probable than others) |
| ✓ ✓ | Paradox: (perception that inherently conflicting demands are part of certain problems) |

Note: Ticked criteria were presented in this thesis as examples taken from transcripts.

It also appeared that fourth year students were reaching Perry’s (1970) “Position 9, Developing commitment”. The examples used in this chapter show that students had:

The “sense of being in one’s life” (ibid. Chart of Development)

Their own values which were situated in relation to others (ibid. p. 173)

A realisation that they were certain of things as year one students and that they had developed a sense of doubt over the years (ibid. p173)

Become aware of the limits of logical reasoning (ibid. p. 176)

“Faith vs. External reasons” (ibid. p. 170) they realised that there were so many possible answers that finally the choice was up to them.

Globally fourth year students were also at a postformal thinking level as it is outlined by Arlin (1984) in so far as they showed signs of expansion: i.e., “creating and tolerating the coexistence of inconsistency rather than its removal.” (ibid. p. 266) and displacement of concepts: i.e. “a shift of old concepts to new situations” (ibid. p. 266).

Lastly it should be noted that only one student who transferred from the SSH HMS Les Roches provided some evidence of generalised relativistic thinking. As a rule both students interviewed were not using relativistic thinking as the students who came through the entire CCN programme. These findings provided further evidence of the effect of the learning environment on the development of relativistic thinking.
Transgenerational development

In the previous section I showed how students gradually used a generalised mode of relativistic thinking. The lecturers naturally played a central role in transmitting the knowledge and values to the students which helped them in this process. Lecturers also set the parameters which students needed to take into consideration in order to successfully complete their studies. However interviewees provided valuable insights on the nature of the relationship they entertained with lecturers which apparently helped their development. This data confirmed and allowed me to expand on the observations I made in the previous investigation concerning transgenerational development.

In CCN, lecturers were aware that students’ needs changed over the years:

L2cbl “… certainly during the first year the student is, it is certainly a post 18 student… I think obviously, it's they’re often away from home for the first time, they've broken away from family for the first time and therefore they are going into the adult world for the first time if you like, away from sixth form college…

It's during perhaps year 1 or after year 2 when they really start to get into the subject matter with a lot more keenness … they come back into year 4, what's the word I'm looking for, almost sort of, full-time working adults if you like, as opposed to the sort first year, sort of, very relaxed sort of student… For example, in some of the dissertations it's directly relevant. They've been out there in the industry, they want to look into areas like kitchen violence or turnover or whatever it is and they seem to get very much more self motivated and don't have to be driven along if you like, and very much manage their own study during that 4th year…. from my knowledge of the 4th year..., we don't seem to have the reams of outstanding work and you know in terms of people getting behind on their courses, that by the time they've got to it…”

L4 “you can obviously see them growing in maturity, the difference between an 18 year old coming onto the programme, then at the end of the course, they have done a placement, they are maturing physically, mentally as far as their normal adult progressing…”

Lecturers were also aware of the individual needs of students:
“I think the first thing to say is that nothing that you would say would be true for all students and some, they develop very much at different paces.”

Students spontaneously perceived the importance of the kind of relationship they could entertain with their lecturers:

1.6M “I think it's important to have that human input for some reason. They would see your view more than a book would”

In year one there was evidence that students were being given unambiguous instructions from the lecturers. This level of help corresponded to the students’ preference for conformity as it is observed by Perry (1970) in the first stage of his model of young adult development.

1.2F Interviewer: “…are they [lecturers] telling you this is where we need to be or are they saying this is how we get there?”

Student: “This is how you get there…The teachers tell you what we have to do, telling you what to do.”

1.6M “They're [lecturers] just a guidance of what they're really expecting. Then some tutors will just hand that out maybe like a little discussion and then others, will, you know, give an actual talk saying roughly what they are expecting of you and obviously, not giving you the answer …”

Lecturers themselves recognised that year one students needed to be taught in relation to their level and expectations:

L2cbl “I mean, inevitably in year 4 there has to be somewhat more student led because the student contact time is reduced a lot… certainly going back to year 1… certainly we would like to promote more independent learning in sort off 1 or 2 (courses) but I think we’re fighting to do that because we recognise that even now we tend to develop into, the students can’t cope with that. They want more, it would seem that they want more delivery between year 1 and parts of year 2, you know, they want delivery, they want feeding at that stage and that would be the state they arrive to us after A-level. Post A-levels being very much that sort of mode of teaching certainly in the UK in any rate.”
However the lecturers’ teaching style was relativistic and adapted to the students level:

1.6M “Well a book is a sort of overview and that is one possible view, a tutor can give you their view and they can teach you about all the other views as well. So they can give their own interpretation or they can draw on their own experiences in industry. There is a book on you know, books often take a certain course.”

In year one, lecturers realised the considerable adjustments they needed to make to meet the students’ at their level of understanding:

L3 “…I kind of picked up a first year group this year, 1st year degree group, that I kind of forgot, the reason I forgot is that I picked them up half way through semester… they were very much slower than I would have expected for that level of material in a later year and I had to adjust… Not only in the speed of delivery but in the mode and what I mean by that is, it became very much more than the traditional “tell them what your going to do”. Do it, reinforce it, tell them what you've done, you know. It became very much a pattern of reinforcement of going over things many times, of going at them from many ways. A way you do dealing with an earlier student.”

Students reported that they could ‘use’ the lecturers understanding to help them work out problems:

1.4M “…teacher explained that there isn’t a right or a wrong answer to it.”

Interviewer: “And how do you feel about that?

Student: “I find it confusing, to tell you the truth, with so many different views on that subject, on that topic. I’d rather there be a right and a wrong answer, but obviously there isn’t, obviously some things there is going to be a right and a wrong answer. But what I am saying obviously it’s good to take their [lecturers’] views and work out your own views.”

The students were aware of the kind of support they could get from a lecturer and expected it to be adapted to their needs:

1.4M Interviewer: What do you call good guidance?
Student: Like points and views, like say if you’re given an assignment and what areas you’ve got to like. We are always given an assignment it’s like a paragraph and as to what they want us the expectation, intangible, teachers would break it down and tell us what she want us do to about that and break it down, what she meant by intangible customer expectations. But it definitely helps, but obviously you’ve got to learn to do that stuff for yourself. I think we will get this help for a start but I don’t think it will be all through the year, I think it starts lessening now and that is the way it’s going.

Interviewer: Are you comfortable with it?

Student: Yeah

In the first year, lecturers also recognised that they were translating information and teaching students the jargon:

L1cbl “The right communication in the right place… If you're working in a kitchen right, it seems that the main type of communication is in relation to everybody's got to have voices. Things get done because chef’s shout at each other… There's a lot more that's happening. There's a lot more communication that’s going on …The language, the jargon, I mean the jargon is important, very much so. If you say to a first year student go to the fridge and get me the mise en place for an escalope de veau viennoise…It's not just the fact there's a bit of French in there, I mean it is also a case of fridge? Which fridge?. There's so many, so it's the communication about the organisation. The breakdown of the organisation. The breakdown in relation to how the kitchen actually works.”

First year students typically confirmed that lecturers played the role of interpreters who could explain the information in words which were understandable to them. However it is interesting to note that it appeared that the teachers were finding an appropriate communication medium/channel together with the students.

1.2F “They (teachers) can make it easier”

Interviewer: “What makes it easier?”

Student: “hum… basic English if you don’t understand they make it clearer”

Interviewer: “What are they making clearer to you, go back to a situation where somebody was helping you, what were they actually making clear”
Student: “The technical language, the sentences, it’s a bit difficult they can explain it and set it”

Interviewer: “What are they explaining?”

Student: “Like the process of doing something, which part you do first … make the language terms clearer in terms you can understand”

Further evidence showed that lecturers were relating to the level of the student, making information available to them in their own words:

1.4M “…but sometimes we are given sheets that have been written by the actual teacher, in business environments, she’s done most of them. Like taken it off from a book and written in more simpler words for us, I feel that is good. And doing exercises in class they help you understand the subject a bit more than just note taking.”

Later in the interview the same student said:

“I think you tend to take it in more, I take it in more anyway if it’s direct to me from the teacher as opposed to going out and reading it …. But it’s good when teachers do handouts and talk about it the next lesson so that you can relate to it more than when you find out after you actually have had it. That’s a good thing, give a hand out one week and giving it back the next, well talk about the next, well “can you read the hand out we’ll talk about it the next lesson” and you feel you can relate to the actual subject and all that. And you all have your own opinions and all that whereas if you don’t go off and read it, you can’t really argue.”

However the developmental process appeared set within a relationship where both student and lecturer were taking on their own responsibilities.

1.5F “ A link to the knowledge we need, I suppose.”

Interviewer: “What makes that link?”

Student: “We have to make the link. They [lecturers] give us what we need and we have to go and find it out.”

Interviewer: “What is the teacher in your mind?”

Student: “(Laughs) I don’t really know. I suppose a source of information.”
Interviewer: “Just like any other?”

Student: “No, they are an easily accessible source of information ’cos if you don't understand something you can enquire about it, I suppose. Instead of just being stuck with a book or something. You can go and …”

Interviewer: “What makes it easier?”

Student: “Communication. Being able to talk to them.”

Interviewer: “Yeah, but elaborate on that if you can.”

Student: “The fact that they can sit you down and go through it with you and…”

Interviewer: “What are they doing then - to you?”

Student: “I don't really know. Providing something you've missed, I suppose. What you don't understand they are simplifying it. Giving you an easier route to what you need.”

In year two lecturers continued to meet the students’ level, progressively moving alongside them.

2.2F “…they (lecturers) just again explain a subject, which we could read out of a book, but they will explain it to you, in a language we can understand”

Lecturers were perceived as helpful because they ‘translated’ the information:

2.1F: “…they (lecturers) are really helpful and so it bridges the gap between what you are being taught and the more human side, communicating what you are being taught…”

In contrast this student talked about factual information obtained from books and said:

“…and often in a book I can be reading, I know what they are saying is important; I desperately want to know it but it is so boring you can’t get your eyes down the page… just like any subject really they are just so boring to read my eyes just glaze over as I open them. And you know that what is in there is what you need to know but you have to really concentrate to get to it.”

For the same student the lecturer offered the information in a more understandable way:
“...I find with a person I find it easier to concentrate and also people use other media. People use overhead projectors, might draw diagrams, wave their hands, make it more obvious what they mean and convey it in different ways.”

The following students gave evidence which supported the idea the learning process was happening in a kind of parallel mode where the lecturer adapted the information as students progressed.

2.2F “I like a teacher who can talk freely and don’t need to be really structured and I find that my notes will be much more useful to me as opposed to somebody who has just opened a book, taken a few sentences, put them on an OHP and expect you to write it down…it makes me think much more… I feel the teacher is taking time as well, he’s obviously prepared a lesson and knows what they are going to talk about in advance as opposed to those who just give pieces of paper…”

2.3F “…well a good way of teaching fact and figures is on a one to one, just sort of sitting down and explaining, maybe with a calculator, and saying how you got all the figures.”

A student (2.1F) expressed in a few words what was the criteria which made lecturers helpful in the learning process when she said that there were two kinds of lecturers those who are: “…excellent lecturers…” and those who “…just don’t get across”.

Third year student made similar comments to those made in previous years concurring the emotional dimension of relationships:

3.2F “So if I enjoy listening to the lecturer I will get much more out of the subject”. The quality of the teaching was related to the ability the teacher had to speak a relevant, entertaining way: “…not just sitting in front dictating notes.”

This student thought that the ‘accessibility’ of a lecturer depended on their ability to talk in the students’ language:

“ There is one lecturer and he makes us laugh a lot...he gets his point across and he lets us talk as well... in a lecture you will get some notes too... so I am not afraid to stick up my hand and say: ‘what the hell are you talking about?’”.

The teachers and students shared something of the learning process:
3.3F “But I think, I just think they (lecturers) offer more realistic views … also they can put it across in more understandable language sometimes, sometimes you can read a chapter of a book, oh I’ve, and you read it and you can read it and it just, you’re like what on earth does that mean. Whereas obviously they [lecturers] can say, and if there is something, you can say “what on earth are you talking about?” and obviously the more you know him the more you have confidence in your lecturer..”

3.2F “…well what would be helpful is first of all if the lecturer didn’t put me down, and then if they took me from the point I didn’t understand it, if they said to me ‘well did you understand this?’ , ‘yes’, ‘did you understand this?’ , ‘yes’, ‘did you understand this?’ , ‘no’ and then they talked, they don’t have to say the same things they have just said, because if they say something that I have just misunderstood and just repeats it again that’s not helpful. They might need to put into different words, or give examples, or just talk through it, give a reference to something else.”

3.3F “There is another teacher who taught us, oh, I was interested in the subject anyway, but he was very humorous he related to us all, he poked fun at you, and if you, like whispered in class, a joke, he would say ‘what are you saying Miss X, come on.’ He does relate to us all, he gets us all laughing and his notes are in brief and you write them down, he will then talk to you and you make notes from what he is saying, so you’ve got a bit of OHP and a bit of, well obviously you’ve got to listen and take the notes, so that’s what helps you take it in.”

She illustrated further the individually tailored help she got from lecturers by saying: “But obviously a book can’t sit down and point things out to you and sort of tell you where you are going wrong.”

Students found it helpful when lecturers were committed and showed commitment in their task.

3.4M “…just the way they (lecturers) explain it… Their personality with their teaching involved together make it interesting… What is a bad situation? Someone who just stands in front of the classroom, they will write in front the board, they will talk as I am now (laughter) in one tone, so you switch off, and you don’t learn it, it’s as simple as that. You may write it down, but.”
3.1M “… the informal nature of the teachers that did help. I’ve raised the point that they guide us. They give you that, they will raise the point when you are discussing something, they want us to think out something of our own…I suppose they lead the conversation.”

In general, year three students did not require so much translating of information, they were looking for the lecturers’ ability to take their point of view and provide information which was not, in their view, accessible through other sources.

Fourth year students continued to talk about the lecturers’ ability to work within the level of the student:

4.2F.LR “Well I think it is the teachers’ attitude, here [CCN] they almost come down to your own level and it counts what you think”

The rapport with lecturers was perceived as an important factor in the learning process, which appeared to rely on the lecturers’ ability to sense the students’ needs:

4.1M.LR “…but the fact that the teacher, I feel he knows I am in the class he knows that I am doing it… like some teachers you study for them others you come to class and just get through the exam. If a teacher is there and he is always asking you something and he knows that you are at the back of the class. It encourages you to go to the class and listen to what he says.”

Students seemed to engage themselves in their learning when they felt that lecturers shared something of the learning process with them.

4.3F “But I mean it is an automatic thing when you know you are going to have respect for someone, straight away. And then you are prepared to learn, you are prepared to do virtually anything for that person, if you have that respect for them. You know by somebody’s persona if you are going to have respect for them but then it is a question of time, it builds up over a period…”

Cognitive and emotional dimensions in the relationships with lecturers were built up over the years and appeared to be very important to students.

4.4M “…I think it easier to learn from the people you get along with or if you don’t have respect for, in this case, the lecturer, you don’t tend to learn, well I don’t personally if I don’t have respect.”
There were more indications that learning could be understood as a shared process in which lecturers and students progressively adjusted to each others understanding.

4.1M.LR “Like one that is a teacher at school, like he sees us as a student and then he can say well I can see that in your case, he would say I understand from your point of view. Please try to understand it from the teacher’s. I think it is important for a teacher to see it from your point of view as well not only from the teachers.”

4.4M “He (a particular lecturer) has got something about him that just, if you ask him a question right or wrong, he won’t put you down for it, he makes out it was a good answer anyway but not quite what he was looking for. He has never told anybody that their answer was wrong, he has this weird knack of being able to turn it around so that even though it was wrong you think you have answered it right, which I think is really good…”

4.2F.LR “It [a lecturer’s ability to be there for the student] provides guidance, ‘here for you’ provides guidance you may be on the wrong course. In the case of, there is the book and read it, you may be on the wrong course of the topic and you reach the end and you say OK I have read the book and I understand but it may not be so. As compared to the ‘here for you’, you read the book and you can discuss it with the teacher and they will explain that you are on the right track or may be not so and they will point you on the right track. It is definitely better, you will get more out of it than if you had just sat down and taken from the book… well by guidance I don’t mean hold your hand kind of guidance, I think, they will give you direction, which is guidance. I think they are not there with you which is guiding like somebody with you who says go this way, I think I am breaking more free from depending on the teacher.”

The relationship appeared adapted to the students’ different levels. The following examples taken from 4th year interviews show that lecturers and students used a modus operandi which was adapted to the students’ level.

4.4M “…lecturers that will get on with you and will talk to you as an adult and treat you absolutely no differently in class or out, you tend to learn off.”

This student went on to say later that:
“It’s the people that came straight out of school I know for a fact that they depended on the lecturer more in the first few weeks.”

The expectation in terms of support seemed to have shifted over the years from seeking a direction in the first years to responses such as this one in year 4:

4.4M “It’s easier talking to a person, they have different views on things whereas from a book you get the one sided view from whoever has written the book…I mean it is easier to get somebody who, like, talks the same language than you and will explain it how you want to hear it, rather than sitting down reading a book and basically after about 20 minutes just shutting the book and forgetting about it. You tend to remember more what people have talked to you about rather than what you read.”

Two lecturers revealed that their teaching went beyond the strict subject area. They attempted to communicate broad life skills that were difficult to talk about and were not formally included in the programme of study.

L3 “…far more important to me is my role as a motivator and that involves trying to communicate something of my joy and concern about the subject I am teaching, its value, its relevance and at the same time within that, the value of discipline for its own sake... I try to teach them the value of getting to grips with digging out and doing a piece of first class work on a topic even if they don't like it, even if they don't think it's relevant but that process is relevant to everything they'll do for the rest of their lives. That attitude, that rolling up the sleeves and getting on with it, but getting on with it properly and recognising that the process of study is not much different to the process of life and it has to be approached with integrity and that it has it's own internal set of ground rules, which, if you violate them, then you are cheating, you know, and that in essence is something … I don't see myself just being concerned with transferable skills. I also see myself as being in the business of developing character and I think the two go hand in hand at this level.”

L4 “I like to think that one of the things we instil in students is a sense of care, caring for others, a sense of hospitality. Although we impose the bureaucratic rules we care for them and I hope that over those four years that sort of caring attitude comes out, that they will take into industry to try and get the balance between satisfying the capital providers and the caring for employees, caring for the customer… I would like
to think that they did, I don’t know how you get the hard evidence for it. But employers like our students… I would like to think that we are getting that over to them, a bit of osmosis… it is just how we cope with students, how we cope with them.”

In summary lecturers were adapting their language and thinking modes to the students’ level in an attempt to help students assimilate information and cultural knowledge. In these instances there was little or no demand for students to develop new thinking skills and accommodate new knowledge.

Nevertheless, in addition to these findings, students and lecturers reported phases when students were helped and prompted to progress. These instances appeared to be a category of findings which needed to be treated separately because in these cases the lecturer and the entire programme of study was helping the students progression by offering temporary support and occasions for practising new skills.

Support offered to prompt students progress

Interviewees described instances when the lecturer offered temporary support which was adapted to the students’ needs and expectations. These situations appeared to be designed to help students acquire independent use of new competencies and thinking skills. The support varied over the years. In year one, students relied on the directives of the lecturer,

1.4M “we practised the presentation in front of the teacher where he says whether you’re right or wrong…..”

L3 “…In the early years they tend to want everything from the teacher. They tend to want everything in the classroom and in the class time. There is a lack of confidence in the students in the first year particularly the first year, but it's also true to some extent in the early parts of the second year, of not being on safe ground unless there is a hand there. They're prepared to walk on their own but they do want to know there's a hand there, you know, they can reach out for if they feel uncertain and so there is a tendency to want everything to be clear, to want everything to be done in the class, during contact time when there’s safety around. They are not at all happy with
working on their own. They get very lost very quickly. At least they are fearful that they'll get lost very quickly.”

The support which was offered through the structure of the programme and the lecturers’ teaching style was designed to push students beyond their level and progress towards relativism:

1.5F “I think I see the teachers as they supply us with the basic knowledge we need for what we're doing and leave us to find our way to the next level of information that we need to carry on. You see what I mean?”

Students recognised that this support would be temporary:

1.4M “…we are getting good guidance and they [lecturers] have also stated that we will get it this year, guidance, but next year and year 4 we won’t get the guidance that we have been used to in year one, just to get us off and going.”

Interviewer: “And you think that is all right?”

Student: “Yeah I think because you start a new course you don’t really know what is expected and what is not expected but I understand we have got to learn to do things ourselves as well.”

In the second year, students continued to express the need for support:

2.3F “…some lecturers we don’t get enough support from them. …the helpful ones, I found that the whole lecture has been explained as a group, then if you don’t understand they will come and talk to you one to one and explain”

with a clear expectation of ‘translation’:

“… they will have to explain it one way to the group and if you don’t understand it that way they will change the information and make it easily understandable”… “he’s got all the information there and it is his job to filter it to us in a way we can understand”.

She thought this adaptation to individual needs is necessary because:

“…everyone thinks differently…I think everything a tutor does has to be related to the people they are teaching at the time. I mean you can’t have a set method of teaching everybody, you have to adapt to the personalities you are with.”
2.3F “… obviously I need the guide and the support because I don’t know very much. But once I have finished the course or gone into my 4th year, I won’t need the tutors quite so much and will be more independent.”

2.3F “I’ve always needed their (lecturers’) support so that they are always there if we need them. But it is difficult coming from school where there is always someone there and you know your teaching was based around your teachers whereas here it is more learning yourself, going away and reading the books and that and if you need the lecturers they are there… they are very reluctant in giving you an answer, they are more based around ‘I will point you in the right direction, but I am not going to help you that much’”

However year two students also reported gaining more freedom from the support of lecturers and being able to work more independently.

2.1F “…getting the ball rolling to start. They [lecturers] give us the education, they give us the learning but when it actually comes to implementation, describing it again in an assignment…then you put it out”

In year two, students could start taking over the role of translator which was previously held by lecturers.

2.2F “…it’s [language] become better, more descriptive words I think, which obviously I’ve gained through the teachers, using different languages…just different words and ways of saying things I think I have become better”

2.2F “I usually will read and take notes, I read a book and take notes in my own language which I understand, as opposed to, because sometimes I don’t find the language in books, it’s, I don’t think it is basic enough, it’s too descriptive and it doesn’t get to the point. And so I will read a few lines and when I think I find a valid point I will write it in my own words…”

Much later in the interview (2 pages) this student reconfirmed her ability to work on her own, gaining independence from the support offered by the lecturers:

Interviewer: “Do you feel dependant or independent from the teacher?”

Student: “Independent, I feel I do it on my own, I use them as a source of reference as well as I use many other things, the teachers, to me are a very small part of how I
get an assignment done, I use lots of different areas… I find, in my first year I used very much what the teacher gave me and relied completely on my notes but this year I find I use very little the notes and I will go away and find articles and magazines and books and find things out myself as opposed to using the teachers notes…”

Later in the interview she said: “… the first year you are learning how things get done, what is required of you, and the second year you become more independent, you find your own way of learning”

Lecturers acknowledged that their support could be withdrawn at this stage:

L4 “… they are not very demanding in their requests, I am not hassled… Year two they have got their feet under the table…(as opposed to year one students).

Year three students confirmed the trend, they needed very little support from the institution or lecturers:

3.1M “ I suppose they do tell us we have books and things like this but it has obviously been decided what we need to know on the course and they tell us but they try to guide us to try and find for ourselves and as much expand upon ourselves.”

Characteristically, students were starting to find the direction from within themselves but recognised that this had not always been the case.

3.1M “ I have become a bit more balanced. I think one major development is the confidence, perhaps direction, because I was lacking direction but now I can see what I am going to do with myself”

In the fourth year interviewees gained more independence and understanding of their own capabilities:

4.4M “ I think, conceptual ideas I am better with now than when I first came. I would have a lot of difficulty with a problem, I would see that problem as it was written and get blocked, you know what I mean. And now you tend to look for different angles, you tend to look for what is wrong and what is right in it, whereas before just tended to look at the question in it and that is that. You didn’t look deeper in it.”

These examples showed that lecturers offered temporary support which was lifted as the students gained confidence and autonomy. The interviewees also indicated that the school’s programme was designed to prompt students to exchange opinions and take
into consideration a number of perspectives hence prompting the development of relativistic thinking.

For example a lecturer talked about the way in which the school encouraged rational use of team work:

L3 “I know all the students complain but I do actually think we do put them under great pressure and this is not accidental.” … “The range of work they have to cover and they do have to cover much more on their own now, which is part of the prevailing philosophy that they should do more learning and we should do less teaching.”

However the support and expectations were not the same throughout the four years. In year one the programme created situations where students had to get in touch with each other and share ideas:

1.6M “I feel fellow students could help you in guidance of what is expected because, you know if you are in the same situation as your fellow classmates. When you do the course work, you do not necessarily end up with exactly the same piece but you can help each other in guidance where you found books and generally when, if somebody is stuck, you know, it’s good to have others there who are in the same position who can guide to what is expected…

Interviewer: “What’s the objective of helping somebody then getting it from others?”

Student: “It’s just the fact that, you know, it’s pointless if you’re struggling with something, to just sit there and worry about it that you know, you can go either to your tutors and ask them to explain the question or, you know, you get feedback off the others that are doing the same sort of thing…That’s the thing, as a group you know, we sit and we, you know, it comes up when we sit. We sit down and course work and stuff like that comes up, you know? you chat what you’ve found and how you’re getting on with the project, stuff like that. And so, you would sort of give feedback to others.”

The situations created by assignments prompted students to consider different opinions and accept that for some problems there were no right or wrong ways:
“Well, as a group on a whole, you know, there’s the scope of different interpretations that in some ways you’re just left to yourself where no friends can really help you. It’s what you interpret the question and in that sense you just have to make your own judgement and so you can’t really compare with others. And obviously, you know, unless you’ve been given like a case study we could specify a date, you know. Everybody will have different information although you may have the odd piece where you said, this is a good book and you may have read the same chapter and taken figures out or whatever. Generally, you’ll have different information and that will cause different interpretation. I don’t think you can, you know, when I said you help each other point them in the right direction or whatever when you’ve found a good book. This is guidance rather than sort of…”

“Knowing that I’ve got several different ways of obtaining information, I suppose is helpful. I’m not relying on one thing at any time.”

In year one, the lecturers’ way of presenting information provided the students with opportunities to discover different perspectives:

“Well, they obviously give you their notes on their version of what they want you to understand. And then they give you the sources. You have a text book for the course obviously, as well as attending the lessons. They don’t just give you the textbook and say go on read that. And then if they want you to find out something, they’ll say look on the CD ROMS and Internet and the library, but they won’t give you the exact source. You have to go and find it yourself so they are telling you where you can find it but they’re not pinpointing it exactly.”

Thus in year one the support offered by the institution created the circumstances where students came across diverging opinions and theories which might have equal validity. Many students felt uncomfortable with these situations because they challenged them in their quest for right answers. In year two, the educational demands of the school continued to provoke situations which prompted students to work together and exchange ideas, however the modus operandi of the groups changed and the institution’s support was progressively lifted.

“(concerning an assignment in finance) “…we didn’t have a clue what we were doing of what we are doing, so we just got together and talked about it and we sort of
went round to each others’ houses and sat together discussing the assignment, working it out together…”

It was interesting to note that the group got together before assigning the task to work out the assignment. This account was different to the ones I collected from year one students. In year four individuals were prepared to face the challenge of diverging opinions and use the entire group’s resources to solve academic requirements.

2.2F “…so that although we all had different answers, we all sort of knew how to do it together.”

“…we all went away separately and we have all taken little things out of the discussion we have used… each person will bring something different maybe, that somebody else hadn’t thought of…so that although we all had different answers, we all sort of knew how to do it together.”

2.3F “…learning to accept other peoples’ opinions even if you disagree with them you know that you have to accept that that is their opinion and this is the way they are always going to feel unless you can convince them otherwise… but yeah it does teach you a lot working in a group… so many different opinions and you end up rowing over the same point, well not rowing but discussing the same point over and over again and you don’t get anywhere.”

2.3F “But obviously everyone’s opinion is important in the assignment to show that we have been working as a team…”

Students in year three continued to report that the schools’ educational environment created situations which could be seen as prompting them to use relativistic thinking.

3.1M “…here it is very much, I have to achieve a par for my teachers, they are there to instruct us and work and perhaps I can turn to but I will be expected to have the knowledge not necessarily the way they see it or how they interpret it…I find them (peers) a great help, it’s a different opinion, a different perspective in that I can only think harder at a situation or a problem, look at the way they perceive it and relate the two, perhaps it was a problem of research and I have had an idea of how to solve it, then somebody else said: ‘ha, but I saw it like this’, try and evaluate the pros and cons.”
Interviewer: What would be an unacceptable idea?

Student: Unacceptable, I don’t really know really, I suppose if they have not taken into account all factors, I might take as much information as possible and if I think they have just seen the problem in one perspective I would…I would value it less than ordinary…”

3.4M “…our course, is course work based, so if they give you the information you are not leaning anything anyway, you are just going to put it straight down on the paper. Therefore they have to give you something to do, if they just give you the information you’ve got it, pointing you in the right direction is enabling you to look and learn from it…Well it’s completely different from school, the learning, you’re left on your own a lot more, as we have just been saying things aren’t put in front of you, you have to do something to get the information. It’s progressively more difficult, I suppose.”

The students illustrated the temporary support which was being provided by the school creating situations where ideas, opinions and theories were confronted. The nature of the assignments was designed in such a way that the students were prompted to develop relativism. Initially directed by the lecturer, the students gradually developed autonomy and practised their ability to use relativistic thinking in different circumstances. In year four students no longer referred to the support or guidance having reached a certain degree of autonomy. Lecturers themselves acknowledged that 4th year students worked autonomously.

Discussion and reproblematisation

Craft based learning

The school relied on craft based learning to help the students acquire organisational and interpersonal skills. Lecturers reported that craft based learning helped students take their first steps in the professional world and understand basic features of the hospitality industry such as guest contact. First year students did not mention craft based learning although it accounted for nearly a quarter of the time they spent in college that year. Teaching technical skills and craft based learning environments did not appear to have played such a significant role for them. The students used craft
based learning situations to form relationships, trying each other out and identifying each others’ strengths and weaknesses.

Hannafin et al (1997) propose a ‘grounded design’ approach to education. For these authors, deep learning results from learning environments that help students relate practical applications with theory. Analogously, in the second year, interviewees recognised the benefits of craft based learning and reported that it offered a grounding to their learning which helped them understand theory.

These findings are quite different to those of the first two problematisations since in CCN I found little or no evidence that craft based learning participated in the development of relativistic thinking in so far as students made little or no reference to practical situations which arose in their studies.

Craft based learning evidently existed in both of the schools in which I carried out my investigations. However it appeared that the educational ethos of each school gave craft based learning a different meaning and function that the students readily absorbed. The fact that students in CCN did not illustrate their argument with instances drawn from craft based learning reveals something of this educational culture.

*The development of relativistic thinking*

Interactions with peers and adults created situations where students expressed their views and put to use different opinions and theoretical stances. In year one, students preferred to think in polarised terms and did not manifest relativistic thinking. These findings agree with those of Perry (1970) who observes that young adults prefer polarised modes of thinking in the first year of college.

In CCN, year one interviewees systematically sought ‘right’ answers, even though the problems they were facing were complex, subject to interpretation and often more suitably handled from a relativistic stance. Students I interviewed were faced with “ill-structured” problems similar to those described by Churchman (1971) in so far as one logical system could not adequately explain them. Year one students reported feeling uncomfortable with these situations.
In the second year, students were starting to understand that contradiction, subjectivity and choices are inherent to most situations. Sinnott (1994a) says that such awareness is a prerequisite for shifting from formal thought to relativistic thought. Students in the second year showed signs of accepting the validity of more than one logical system as well as becoming aware that multiple courses and solutions can be equally valid in some situations.

Year two students sometimes used relativistic thinking, however they also occasionally reverted to polarised thinking modes. Interviewees were not using a particular criterion such as the nature of the context to choose one or the other mode of thinking. In fact situations which called for relativistic thinking were often perceived as threatening. These findings agree with those of Radtke and Boyes (1996) who say that the principal problem of young adults is the recognition, response and understanding of multiple points of view. It was apparent that students were trying out relativistic thinking in relatively safe situations which did not directly affect them.

In year 3, students moved towards a generalised use of relativistic thinking. Their statements showed that they were aware that no absolute truth could be found and that different points of view could be equally acceptable in many cases. This finding corresponds partly to the 5th position in Perrys’ (1970) developmental model. He says that at this stage, students are not committed and have a diffuse sense of relativism. In contrast with Perrys’ (ibid.) findings, the students I interviewed showed signs that relativistic thinking was grounded in the assignments and work they were carrying out which was industry related.

Collectively, students in year four gave further evidence that they were using relativistic thinking meeting the criteria set by Sinnott (1984) for determining relativistic operations. Typically, students revealed their ability to consider different options as equally valid, considered both abstract and practical dimension of a problem and showed that they were aware that context could influence the outcome of problems which were initially similar. Interviewees were aware of the subjective nature of their own judgements and prepared to consider pragmatically their peers’ ideas. These findings were considerably different from those I made in the Swiss school studied previously. Data obtained in CCN provided evidence that students met accepted criteria which indicate that they had attained relativistic thinking. The same
was not the case in the SSH HMS Les Roches where it had been impossible to provide substantive evidence of relativistic thinking.

In this investigation, it appeared that particular kinds of interaction with lecturers and peers played an important role in the development of relativistic thinking. Interpersonal interactions helped students work out problems, supported their learning and eventually challenged them to drop polarised modes of thinking for relativistic thinking.

Transgenerational development

Students reported certain instances of their development that did not necessarily involve progress. Lecturers sensed the students’ level and adapted their explanations. Students reported that this helped them understand problems and theories with which they were having difficulties. Lecturers were aware of their efforts to meet the students’ level and students appreciated them for their commitment and considerate teaching style. Johnstone (1988) says that a programme of study should be based on the lecturers and students shared understanding of the learning exchange. The findings in this investigation threw some extra light on the dynamics of some aspects of this shared understanding.

In the first two years in college the lecturers’ ability to translate was very important for students who did not know the jargon and found it difficult to understand complex theoretical models. Lecturers were conscious of individual needs as well as of the generic capabilities of their students at different times in their studies. This understanding encouraged them to adapt their teaching style to the student. Lecturers reworded theory, walked through processes and offered examples from their own experiences that helped students situate their learning and decode new problems they were facing. Lecturers also used these instances to pass on some information and beliefs, which were reported to be difficult to give to students at other times. For example lecturers helped students to share their interests and concerns in a given topic.

Typically, lecturers’ teaching modes moved alongside the students’ development, thus encouraging transfer of understanding to occur. By relating to the students, lecturers provided ideas in a format, which could be assimilated within the students’ current
thinking mode. In the years one and two, lecturers made special efforts to give students unambiguous instructions and clear information which suited their need for conformity and polarised thinking. In year three and four, the interactions took into account the students’ development and lecturers adapted their style accordingly.

From the students’ point of view, this process is analogous to the assimilation described by Piaget (1936) when he says that: “Assimilation is the transformation of the external world in such a way as to render it an integral part of oneself”. The particularity of the findings I made was that lecturers played an essential role in preparing the material for this process to occur, adapting and manipulating information so that it can be ‘digested’ by the learner. These were not typical instances of development in the sense that the students did not appear to be constructing new knowledge. Nevertheless, students were restructuring current problems and incorporating dimensions which were not immediately understandable to them.

These moments existed within an emotional and cognitive learning relationship which developed over time between lecturers and students. It appeared that the lecturers’ own relativistic thinking might be an important factor because they needed to relate and transform information taking into account the students’ perspective. This observation opened new questions concerning the transmission of relativistic thinking because I also noticed that the students own use of relativistic thinking affected their ability to understand less heavily ‘translated’ versions of the information proposed by lecturers and appreciate the wider perspective they were being offered.

Besides this aspect I also noticed in this investigation instances when the lecturer and institution pushed the student to progress and adopt new thinking modes.

*Support offered to prompt students progress*

In contrast with instances described in the section above, there were some cases when the lecturer and the programme of study intentionally pushed the student to change their mode of thinking. The lecturers provided temporary support to students expecting them to move towards autonomy. The programme of study was designed to create situations which made students work together. Initially there was some
direction given by the lecturers, however their guidance was eventually dropped and by years 3 and 4 student groups worked autonomously. In the literature I found similar situations described as “scaffolding”.
The concept of scaffolding was introduced by Bruner and his colleagues (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976). These authors introduce scaffolding to denote the mothers’ support in response to a child’s ongoing activity and the gradual withdrawal of this support as the child gains independence. A number of authors in the field of education have used this concept and varying definitions are being proposed throughout the literature which highlight some important facets of scaffolding as it is understood today. For example: in the context of mothers teaching 4-5 year olds, Minami (1996) says that “Scaffolding refers to the temporary support that parents and others give a child to perform a task”. Always in early childhood, McLachlan-Smith (1991) say that scaffolding should refer to an adult helping children acquire a skill which they could not reach on their own. With the same category of children Malicky, Juliebo, Norman and Pool (1997) talk of scaffolding as “interactional talk structured by teachers to maximise learning”. These three examples highlight four fundamental dimensions of scaffolding: temporary support, learners practice, new skill and instructors planning of the interactions which must occur for scaffolding to be effective.

Although originally applied to early childhood, the concept of scaffolding is also used in the sense of helping adolescents develop higher levels of cognitive strategies, helping them clarify thoughts, summarise and generally move forwards in their understanding of complex mathematical problems (Rosenshine, 1992). Analogously I found that lecturers planned their support with the intention of helping the students develop the independent use of relativistic thinking.

There are other examples of scaffolding being used in a number of areas within higher education. Ridout et al (1995) describe scaffolding as helpful within teacher training courses and Jacobson and Spiro (1995) show that undergraduate learners benefited from scaffolding to learn complex knowledge in a hypertext learning environment. Lawrence and Sommers (1996) show how scaffolding can help teaching English to inexperienced writers in an American two year college. Evanciew (1994) describes how scaffolding in a vocational context is used for effective teaching methods which help apprentices gain confidence and apply their knowledge. Stasz (1994) shows that
teachers using scaffolding technique help students in high school vocational classes acquire complex reasoning skills and problem solving strategies. Commonality also exist amongst these authors because in each one of these studies involving young adults, students receive help and guidance, practice new skills and progress towards autonomy. Analogously, in CCN the students I interviewed were aware of the temporary support they were receiving. Interviewees in the first two years expressly sought guided support, in the third year students reported that they needed less support and by year four there were no more references to the school’s support.

The withdrawal of help has been identified as a critical moment of the scaffolding process, for example in the case of computer assisted instruction Beimans and Simons (1995) point out that it needs to be tuned to the students actual level of self regulated learning. Similarly I found some evidence which indicated that the lecturers were taking into account the students’ level to implement their withdrawal of help, they would “get the ball rolling” and then let the student work on their own.

Beyond the dyadic relation, scaffolding can also apply to the institution’s programmes as a whole as it is suggested by Hogan and Pressley (1997) for teaching scientific competency. The data I gathered provided many examples of how the programme in CCN was designed to offer students the chance to practice new skills. For example assignments and group work were regularly given to students from the first year. These pieces of work required students to take into consideration a number of contextual, theoretical and personal considerations. The opportunity given to students to apply their knowledge through actual experiences after an observation and data gathering phase is identified by Newman (1997) as an important aspect of scaffolding. Interviewees provided many examples of the support which lecturers gave and of its gradual withdrawal. Year 3 students became more autonomous and year 4 no longer expected support. At the same time students developed relativistic thinking which meant they no longer sought clear directions pointing them towards a ‘right’ solution. Chi (1996) points out that the interest in scaffolding is that the tutor and tutee collaboratively construct a response that is more likely to lead to deep understanding. The foregoing evidence led me to believe that scaffolding could effectively help young adults develop adult thinking skills. However this interpretation opened new questions concerning the possible rapport between the development of relativistic
thinking and the students’ movement towards autonomy within scaffolded educational environments.

Summary

This investigation set out to examine the development of relativistic thinking in a different context to the one I previously used in problematisation one and two. The importance of interpersonal relations in the development of relativistic thinking was identified in problematisation 2 through literature and confirmed by my own findings. For this reason, in this investigation I paid particular attention to this aspect. I chose to conduct interviews in City College Norwich (CCN) because this school was comparable to the Swiss school I had previously used, in so far as it also relied on craft based learning and offered a programme of study which had technically the same learning outcomes. However I expected the educational environment to be different because CCNs’ programme was a typical example of British higher education in hospitality management studies. As such the course design and delivery was in the hands of academic staff as opposed to the Swiss school where professionals with industry background designed and run the programme.

In CCN I found that craft based learning was used as a grounding for theoretical knowledge and served to prepare students’ awareness of the industry. Lecturers pointed out that craft based learning provided students a chance to take their first steps in the professional world and acquire certain organisational and interpersonal skills which would be difficult to acquire in a classroom situation. The data provided evidence that craft based learning contributed little to the development of relativistic thinking.

Students attending year one used polarised modes of thinking. The progressive use of relativistic thinking started in the second year. However second year students were apprehensive of situations which could not be answered with a right answer. Typically students at this stage used both relativistic thinking and polarised thinking. In the third and fourth year students provided evidence of generalised use of relativistic thinking meeting Sinnott’s (1984) criteria for relativistic operations.
Interpersonal relations were central to this development because they provided the opportunities for students to practice with the support of lecturers and peers. Lecturers translated some of the complexity of the problems students were facing in ‘student language’. Lecturers adapted their teaching style to the students’ level and helped them decode theoretical and practical situations in a way which was accessible to them. These instances provided further evidence of transgenerational development, showing that the learning process may not necessarily always involve progress. Transgenerational development denotes instances when lecturers and students enter into a relationship which helps the students assimilate information preparing the ground for progress. The interviewees showed that transgenerational development depended on emotional and cognitive adjustments from both parties.

The data showed that lectures and programme of study provided purposefully designed situations which temporarily supported the students in their development of relativistic thinking. Group work, assignments and tutorial help given to students gradually prompted them to, for example: consider different opinions, understand that some problems have many right answers, be aware of contextual and practical aspects which need to be simultaneously considered. In the first and second year students expected the direction and guidance which was offered. Students in years three and four worked with increasing autonomy. This educational support was similar to instances of scaffolding described in other learning environments.

The findings in this investigation concerning craft based learning and the development of relativistic thinking are considerably different to those obtained in the Swiss school I studied previously. Some aspects of transgenerational development are similar however the scaffolding offered in CCN could not be identified in the interviews carried out in the SSH HMS Les Roches. Students in CCN did not provide examples of ‘local relativistic thinking’ and made little reference to practical situations to illustrate their responses. These observations called for further analysis of both sets of data. At this stage of my investigations, a growing body of evidence suggested to me that relativistic thinking was not a structurally unified mode of thinking independent from the environment in which it developed. There were also clear indications that certain modes of transmission of thinking skills played a key role in the development of relativistic thinking and that these needed further exploration.
Problematisation 4

Introduction and summary of the previous investigations

Hospitality management education has traditionally relied on craft based learning which is perceived by many schools as an appropriate way for teaching students technical skills and background knowledge needed in industry. Current research (Umbriet, 1993; Luke and Ingold, 1990; Durocher, 1983) reveals that technical skills are no longer the most important management competency currently used by managers. Consequently the emphasis put on teaching technical skills is questioned by some schools which offer higher education courses in the United Kingdom and the United States. Recent studies (Baum, 1990; Gamble et al, 1994) have identified a number of skills used by effective managers such as interpersonal relations, finance, marketing and business management. Based on these findings Umbreit (1993) encourages schools to reduce or drop craft based learning and focus their curriculum on teaching generic management skills.

My background in psychology prompted me to approach the question of role of craft based learning from a developmental perspective. I interviewed students in a Swiss school which relied on a considerable amount of craft based learning in their programme in an attempt to explore the link between craft based learning and young adult development. The interviewees had finished a three year Diploma programme which was comparable to a British HND. The students reported that they appreciated craft based learning and that it helped them mature and develop. It was apparent that craft based learning helped them acquire thinking skills which they could apply to different operational situations (i.e. other than those they had learned in). For example students reported that they had learned to organise work and acquire self discipline while learning to cook. However it was difficult to isolate instances of development uniquely associated with craft based learning because students made reference to the schools’ entire learning environment. This environment was influenced by the school’s approach to education and the professional values which were carried by teaching staff.
As a result of the findings of this exploratory research I chose to focus my attention on
the students’ development in relation to their overall progression towards using adult
thinking skills. This orientation led me to review and build upon theories which
describe the development of young adults and more particularly the development of
relativistic thinking, because this was one area of agreement I found in the literature.
But the review I conducted also revealed that the environment and conditions in which
young adult development occurred could have an important influence on the thinking
skills that were developed.

The second piece of research I carried out in the SSH HMS Les Roches in Switzerland
tried to shed some light on the possible development of relativistic thinking in the
specific context of hospitality management studies. The results suggested that
practical learning experience, as a component of a curriculum, is not merely a way of
acquiring basic skills but also contributes to the development of a particular form of
relativistic thinking which is linked to the environment in which it developed. This
was my first evidence that directly challenged the structured unity of relativistic
thinking, by showing that in some cases it was only used in the confines of a familiar
context.

In the first year of their studies, the students in SSH HMS Les Roches tended to think
in ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ using a polarised mode of thinking. In the second and third
year students began to use relativistic thinking albeit in a restricted way. Within the
context of the hospitality environment, the students realised the subjective nature of
knowledge. However, they did not generalise relativistic thinking and for this reason I
called this ‘local relativistic thinking’.

Responses concerning interpersonal relations studied in the light of current literature,
revealed that relationships with peers and lecturers changed in relation to the students’
aptitude in using relativistic thinking. First year students reported that their peers’
opinions were judged in a right/wrong perspective. Typically, by the third year they
used their peers as a source which informed their own judgement showing the first
signs of relativism. Interaction with teachers also changed, initially students were
looking for precise directions and right answers. Progressively they reported becoming
more interested in the teachers’ experiences and opinions which they could relate
directly to their own experience and knowledge. I also noticed that students
appreciated teachers who could translate the information participating alongside them in the learning process.

The importance of the learning environment and of interpersonal relations in the students’ development of relativistic thinking prompted me to conduct another set of interviews in a different institution. I chose CCN, a British higher education institution, because this school used craft based learning within a teaching/learning culture unlike the Swiss environment I had studied previously. Compared to the students interviewed in Switzerland, the interviewees in CCN reported a different development path which led them more speedily towards generalised forms of relativistic thinking. This phenomenon was noticeable because students changed in the way they perceived and used different points of view and sources of information. In the first year they found situations, which had no clear right and wrong answers, confusing. However by the second year, students were applying relativism in some cases and in years three and four, most interviewees provided examples which showed a generalised use of relativistic thinking. In parallel with this development I noticed that the modus operandi of the peer groups changed, initially the group was not a centre of discussion and confrontations were avoided. From the second year debate and mutual respect superseded the dualistic approach used by year one students. Different opinions expressed within the group informed the students’ own judgement. Furthermore students realised the subjective nature of their own knowledge. As they applied more relativism the expectations students had of lecturers changed. In the first year they were looking for precise guidance on the right way to approach issues, from the second year they accepted that lecturers could only offer a context and suggest possible approaches to situations which students themselves realised called for interpretation and had no right or wrong solutions.

Lecturers appeared to be offering students a constant support by translating information into the students’ language, which they acknowledged themselves changed over time. In these instances, the lecturers were reported to be readjusting their interactions in relation to the student’s own developmental circumstances. Thus lecturers appeared to participate in the learning process helping students assimilate issues and problems they were faced with.
The learning environment within CCN also created situations, which prompted the students to think in relativistic terms. Besides the guidance lecturers offered, they designed academic work and assessment strategies that encouraged the students to work together sharing opinions, seeking different theoretical approaches. In CCN, students worked on complex assignments, which did not have clear right or wrong answers. It appeared that this learning environment helped students develop relativistic thinking.

Thus I found that interviewees in both schools appeared to develop different forms of relativistic thinking. Therefore I had some evidence which challenged the idea that relativistic thinking is a generic thinking skill. Setting the findings made in Switzerland alongside those made in the United Kingdom reveals that the support offered by lecturers was, in some aspects, similar in both schools. However CCN created situations which helped students develop generalised relativistic thinking. In contrast students from the SSH HMS Les Roches only developed a limited form of relativistic thinking. This fourth problematisation examines these differences in more detail, highlighting what has been discovered, its significance in terms of new knowledge and its practical value for hospitality education, and finally making suggestion for further work.

**Impact of different educational environments on young adult development**

In both institutions where I carried out interviews I found evidence that students had developed maturity, industry awareness and forms of integrated adult thinking skills which allowed them to cope with situations which require some degree of relativism. This commonality is however deceptive, the students’ development paths were essentially different and important differences were identifiable in the way students applied relativistic thinking. These differences revealed the determining influence of the learning environment and type of support given to students on the development of discrete forms of relativistic thinking. The two schools in which I conducted this study had distinctively different approaches to education. These may be illustrated by students in the fourth year in the way they talked about what they had learned in their schools:
• A SSH HMS Les Roches student (4.2M) says: “The most important we learned from the school is the background knowledge of the hotel, the front office, computer systems, check-in check-out everything.”

• A CCN student (4.4M) says: “I think, conceptual ideas I am better with now than when I first came. I would have a lot of difficulty with a problem, I would see that problem as it was written and get blocked, you know what I mean? And now you tend to look for different angles, you tend to look for what is wrong and what is right in it, whereas before just tended to look at the question in it and that is that.”

The different approaches used in each school also appeared clearly when students talked about how they were encouraged to explore ideas and participate in the construction of their knowledge. In SSH HMS Les Roches student (4.1F) says that: “…we were not given let’s say the occasion to express what we thought of data let’s say of things happening”

In contrast students in CCN were confronted with academic demands which required them to work in groups challenging each other’s ideas from the first year onwards. The particularity of the educational environment of each school had an impact on the development of relativistic thinking.

The SSH HMS Les Roches provided the students with vocationally specific situations where they learned for themselves that some situations required relativism. There was no evidence that the school helped students reflect on these circumstances or helped them relate practice to theory. For example: a student who had completed the 3 year Diploma course said: 4.1F “… what school gives us is the basic knowledge of situations, but it does not tell you ‘In this situation you have to act like this, in this situation you have to act like that.’ I do not think we were prepared for that”.

This statement may be contrasted with one from a student in 4th year at CCN:

4.4M “I think it has just been drummed into us through the 4 years, so that is how you have to approach it. When I first came here, I was first in construction before I came here, and they tend to look at it ‘That is the way you are going to do it, there is no other way of doing it’. Whereas with hospitality management, it is so much of an open field, there are different ways of approaching it, a lot of people have their different ideas on how it should be done and you have to look at it from different
angles and you have to, when you’re faced with a problem, and then conceptualise where it came from and how you can change it, have different ideas on how it can be done rather than to be able to solve with one mind.”

Both CCN and SSH HMS Les Roches confronted students with practical problems set within a defined vocational context such as restaurants, kitchens and front office work. The focus of the Swiss school was upon teaching students the technical skills associated with these hotel operations, significantly the first two years of this school’s programme were called respectively “Hotel Operations 1 and 2”. In the three year Diploma programme offered in this school, students came across some practical situations which could not be answered in ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ because they were subject to interpretation or were very sensitive to the context. For example:

4.1F “…it is in the kitchen that it is very difficult to give motivation to the poor cook who is being paid $200 a month and they work 12 hours a day minimum, it is very difficult for a chef, and his budget is limited…”.

4.2M “When you are cooking an omelette you know somebody is waiting for this, you have to cook it in five minutes and you have to convince yourself that you have to do this omelette perfectly. It’s money coming in and if you don’t do it well the kitchen chef will come down and shout at you, and if you do it twice or three times you will get fired of course. But it is the commitment, the standard of doing the job that works and most important is, I believe, the background knowledge of that, of so many things, that managers should know. If you don’t go through all this you don’t realise how difficult all this it is to be an employee.”

These examples taken from students who completed the Diploma programme, showed how SSH HMS Les Roches students’ thinking remained localised in the context of their experiences lived in school. These students appeared to be aware that several points of view may be legitimate, but they made no differentiation between an abstract, hypothetical solution and the practical answer to a problem. Typically students did not generalise relativistic thinking, showing an ability to transfer their thinking skill beyond the limits of the professional world they were immersed in. For these reasons I have called this early form of relativistic thinking ‘local relativistic thinking’.
The following examples were taken from SSH HMS Les Roches students attending the degree top up programme (4th year) in Switzerland:

4.1F “Before doing anything you have to make up a plan of the steps of which time you are going to start, finish lets say blanching the potatoes, cutting the meat or whatever, it was very important because it was not only doing something that was important it was the way you organise yourself, the way you plan it and making these contingency plans thinking”

However when I specifically asked her if these skills were only kitchen skills, she said:

4.1F “Sure it is not only cooking the vegetables or blanching the potatoes it is before going or having a speech or whatever or presenting a report you plan your steps on what you are going to say and how you are going to say it and these things.”

4.1F [this student was talking about what, in her studies, had prepared her to face the legal complexities of the hospitality industry ]“Well also in the kitchen and service, all the hygiene procedures for example they used to check our collars, they used to check our hand, our finger nails everything and this is preparing you to face the eventuality of somebody coming and checking that you know, you are not contaminating what you are cooking and what you are serving that you have this proper standard that we had in the first two years.”

4.2M “we can say that this is wrong that a manager should do that and have many alternatives, sort out our own answers, our own ideas of how to run a restaurant, on how to have many alternatives to sort out the problem or have alternatives to see the problem” “Yes, because different people have different ways of sorting out things and for example if we have a breakage of coffee machine I will seek an instant replacement I will think of alternative ways of making coffees but the other person they may think like buying a new coffee machine.”

The concept of local relativistic thinking helped highlight the differences between students who had studied in the SSH HMS Les Roches and CCN. As a school, CCN provided a totally different learning environment in which there was less emphasis on teaching technical skills through craft based learning. Lecturers wanted craft based learning to give students a first experience of the industry and help them understand
aspects such as customer relations and time management which underpinned the theoretical approaches students were studying elsewhere. There was confirmation of the different emphasis which each school put on craft based learning in so far as first year CCN students did not mention this aspect, either to illustrate their examples or in the open question at the end of the interview when they were asked to talk about anything significant which affected their development. In contrast, all SSH HMS Les Roches students used examples from practical situations to explain their development or depict their relations with peers and teachers. First year students in CCN talked about their difficulties with assignments and group work. Craft based learning was only mentioned by second year students who pointed out that it helped them contextualise knowledge and relate different theoretical approaches to ‘real-life’ situations.

From the first year in CCN programmes, students were asked to complete assignments which required them to take into consideration much wider operational issues such as planning events and working on industry related development projects. In order to satisfy these academic requirements, students were expected to explore different theoretical perspectives and take into consideration complex interrelations between variables. The interviews I carried out in CCN revealed that students used relativism from the second year of their programme and applied this mode of thinking to a wide range of situations from the third year. By year four, students were using a generalised mode of relativistic thinking as it is described in literature.

Members of CCN faculty who had taught in both institutions on the degree top-up programme noticed the dissimilarity between students who studied in Switzerland and CCN:

L3 Interviewer: “If you don't mind, it would be interesting to explore together the difference between the students here and the students back over in Switzerland wouldn't it?”

Lecturer: “...there are some very clear differences. The fourth year students at Bluche are more like pupils than students. I mean in the course of that fourth year, they move quite a long way. They move quite rapidly given the opportunity to move. But whereas in many ways, they are far more sophisticated, far more cosmopolitan, far more widely experienced and have a good deal of range of personal contact with the world..."
than the students here [CCN] have. They are much more international in every sense, you know. They are nonetheless in educational terms, pupils. They are vessels waiting to be filled. Their attitude to education is one I would associate with a school not with a college. It is markedly different. I mean the difference is incredible.”

In both learning environments where I conducted my study, students were internalising thinking skills which were adapted to issues and problems provided by the schools and college life. Typically students reported that interpersonal relations with peers and adults were important to the internalisation process. This prompted me to consider a Vygotskian perspective and propose that relativistic thinking is a cultural knowledge. This standpoint highlighted the possible transfer processes which occurred in young adult development. Thus relativistic thinking appeared to be deeply influenced by particular socio-organisational contexts of the learning environment. This finding challenged the view that relativistic thinking was a generic thinking structure that characterises adult thinking.

Using this conceptual framework, two features emerged from the data, the first was common to both institutions. Interviewees from each academic year reported interactions where the teacher/lecturer acted as a mediator bringing knowledge within reach of the students’ understanding.

Lecturers were able to identify the learners’ difficulties and adjusted their words to help the student assimilate information and problems they were facing. In Switzerland, students reported instances were the lecturer practised in front of them in such a way that the student was able to internalise the action.

SSH HMS Les Roches student: 4.2M “Because it’s all these pieces, these things that you see, what can I say, the movement the action of teachers, for example kitchen teachers teaching us, in front of the students, on how to cook a chicken and he will turn on the oven first, that we see that, we cannot recognised that, but it is subconsciously gained in your head.”

In both schools teachers were reported to be able to relate, emotionally and intellectually with the students. Through the lecturers’ own accounts of professional experiences students were able to enlighten their current understanding of issues.
The themes running through these interactions were: the ability of the lecturer to adjust to, and understand, the students’ current level, the mutual involvement in the learning process and the students’ ability to assimilate information. To denote these interactions which did not specifically pull the students beyond their abilities, I have used the term ‘transgenerational development’.

Besides these instances that I have compared to ‘time-outs’ there were, in CCN, interactions which helped students go beyond their current level by supporting the learning process. The descriptions of support offered by the school were similar to those I found in other learning environments referred to as scaffolding. I was able to distinguish two forms of scaffolding in CCN, which helped the student internalise relativistic thinking. Students and lecturers reported both forms.

Firstly the programme of study was designed in such a way that students were given assignments which required skills and knowledge which they did not have at the time. This meant that in year one, they were asked to look at a problem from different perspectives, to consider theories and practices in relation to the setting and constraints of the environment. The first stage of the scaffolding consisted in helping the students and the group cope with these situation by guiding them, telling them how to approach the problem, albeit without giving them answers. In a second stage, students were told that the support would not always be available. Eventually the support was lifted in years 3 and 4 of college life. Students were then able to rely on themselves and their peers to figure out their own way forward.

The second form of scaffolding was noticeable in the way lecturers helped students internalise relativistic thinking using their own ability to think relativistically. In the first year, they provided two apparently contradictory messages to students. On one hand they told them there were problems that required relativistic thinking and on the other lecturers provided strong guidance in terms of what was the right way to approach a problem. Lecturers gradually withdrew their support and encouraged students to use relativistic thinking for themselves, while continuing to offer procedural guidance. The third step was the actual ‘letting go’ stage where students were expected to produce work which demonstrated relativistic thinking by themselves.
In summary, the vocational environment and technical skills provided grounding to students’ learning. Thus it situated theory and helped them discover some of the complexities of the professional world. In Switzerland craft based learning provided students with situations that helped them develop a certain degree of relativism. Students gradually understood the subjective nature of their opinions and came to apply ‘local relativistic thinking’. However it was apparent that the schools’ learning environment and programme did not elicit generalised modes of relativistic thinking. By contrast, CCN helped students achieve a broader use of relativistic thinking by using craft based learning as a grounding coupled to the curriculum which encouraged students to use a variety of perspectives working with different theoretical and conceptual approaches. This study showed that different educational environments elicit different forms of relativistic thinking. This finding prompted me to regard relativistic thinking as a cultural knowledge. Thus I contended that relativistic thinking was not a unified generic structure which characterised adult thinking. Rather, the educational culture appeared to have a determining role in the development of discrete forms of relativistic thinking. I found distinct differences between the two educational cultures studied in terms of the kind of support they offered to students.

The mediating role of the lecturer was a crucial element in the students’ development in so far as they ‘translated’ knowledge, staying within the range of the students’ abilities in instances I have referred to as transgenerational development. At other times using scaffolding techniques, the lecturers and programme of study pushed the students forward in problems they initially felt uncomfortable with. The combination of transgenerational development and scaffolding appears to have been critical to the development of generalised modes of relativistic thinking. These findings strengthen the argument that different forms of relativistic thinking are closely related to the modalities of development and consequently to the environment in which they are being used.
Significance in terms of new knowledge

Introduction

Earlier in this thesis I have compared the concept of transgenerational development to a light beam, used to reveal certain aspects of the development of young adults. Other “beams” may be used and could eventually reveal different aspects of the phenomenon. Development is by nature difficult to describe or represent because it can be compared to a moving target. For this reason I adopted a multi-concept approach which endeavoured to show different, sometimes overlapping, aspects of young adult development. This approach respects the necessary difference that exists between concept and phenomenon. It also attempts to offer heuristic value in so far as it can highlight pertinent aspects for researchers and practitioners.

This conceptual framework applies to the three noteworthy themes which emerged from my investigations. Thus, concepts such as: relativistic thinking, transgenerational development and scaffolding may appear to describe facets of the developmental process that are, in some points, similar. Therefore, I do not claim that any of these concepts describes a unique aspect of the developmental process. The results I present in this thesis support the conclusion that students in both schools developed relativistic thinking, albeit in different ways and by different processes. In both schools transgenerational development helped the students’ hic et nunc understanding and in CCN scaffolding effectively supported the development of relativistic thinking. I have used these concepts as keys for the presentation of my findings and discussion of future work. It should be stressed however that the reporting style is designed to present a network of evidence that might appear as a patchwork of ideas and new questions. This presentation is in keeping with the stance I described in the preamble. My aim has not been to offer “grand theories” or explanations that comprehensively describe complex developmental processes. In the preamble I argued that the object of my inquiry did not lend itself to such explanatory ambitions.
The development of relativistic thinking in hotel management schools which offer craft based learning

My findings agree with those of Lee (1991) who says that adult thinking is better understood by studying the kind of problems which adults face. The students I interviewed in SSH HMS Les Roches and CCN did not encounter the same ‘problems’ in their learning environment and consequently appeared to develop different levels of generalisation of relativistic thinking.

In SSH HMS Les Roches students appreciated hands on learning and reported that technical skills and practical knowledge had prepared them for the managerial tasks of the hotel industry. These findings are congruent with those found in vocational schools in the USA where Johnson (1996) found that practice was one of the four aspects of informal learning which enhances conceptual learning.

Tanon (1991) shows that weaving skills can be transferred to other tasks than those for which they were originally taught. My interviewees in Switzerland also reported that they had acquired skills in craft based learning which they could use later in different contexts.

However these students were not made explicitly aware that several solutions could be equally valid in some cases and they were not set assignments which required them to consider different theories and points of view in relation to context sensitive problems. The school did not prompt students to express their opinions and they were not encouraged to critically reflect on their learning. Sinnott (1994b) proposes a number of prerequisites for the shift to occur between formal operations and relativistic thinking, Table 11 synthesises them. Perry (1970) says that college students need to experience complex multiple views which challenge polarised views in order to prompt relativism. Sinnott (1991) also recommends that students should be shown different points of view by their teachers to elicit “multi reality orientation”.

Examining in retrospect the interview data from the SSH HMS Les Roches, one may notice that a number of these prerequisites were not being met in this school.
Table 11: Prerequisites for the shift from Formal Thought to Relativistic Thought (Sinnott, 1994b, p. 111)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to structure inherently logical formal systems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance of validity of more than one logical system pertaining to a given event.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to one set of a priori beliefs of many possible sets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness that the same manipulation of the same variable can have varying effects due to temporal and environmental contexts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness that the concept of causal linearity is erroneous when reality is multicausal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding that contradiction, subjectivity, and choice are inherent in all logical objective observations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking into account that contradictory multiple causes and solutions can be equally “correct” in real life within certain limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness that an outcome state is inseparable from an outcome process-leading-to-state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However students reported that they discovered by themselves that contradictions and subjectivity are present in many situations within the working environment they were exposed to. While performing tasks students realised that on some occasions polarised thinking was inappropriate, they subsequently revised their thinking style and applied a form of relativistic thinking which remained constrained within the immediate circumstances of the situations they were living. In other words students were capable of understanding that some problems such as personnel issues cannot have right/wrong answers, however, they failed to carry this form of reasoning past the context in which they had learned.

Furthermore, teachers shared personal accounts of situations they had lived in industry which helped students understand that, in some circumstances, there were no clear right answers, no ‘one best way’ technical solution and that the context could have a dramatic effect on problem setting. Sometimes the students’ own experiences helped them consider different points of view and accept that certain problems had a number of equally valid solutions. Thus, at least three out of eight criteria (Sinnott, 1984, p. 314-315, reproduced in Table 10 in Problematisation 3) for establishing the presence of relativistic operations were met. However it was through the examples and scope of students’ thoughts that one could notice that relativistic thinking remained constrained by the professional environment in which they had come to realise the limitation of formal thought. To denote this form of relativistic thinking which remained close to the situation being lived I have introduced the concept of ‘local
relativistic thinking’. Thus I showed that the nature of relativistic thinking developed by students in SSH HMS Les Roches was closely linked to the particularities of the educational environment and culture of the school.

Although CCN also prepared students for the hospitality industry also using craft based learning in its curriculum, the learning environment in this school appeared very different to the one reported by students in Switzerland. In general CCN lecturers challenged students’ thoughts and opened up questions encouraging them to think of alternative solutions. From the second year, students provided examples of groups putting disagreements to good use and exploring knowledge cooperatively. It was apparent that students were asked to work on assignments which prompted relativistic thinking. The interviews I carried out revealed that CCN was following many of the recommendations made by Sinnott (1994\textsuperscript{a}) for teaching science to adults and meeting most of the prerequisites for the shift from formal thought to relativistic thinking to occur (Sinnott,1994\textsuperscript{b}) outlined in Table 11. CCN replaced strict competition for university grades by team learning approaches as recommend by Sinnott and Johnson (1996).

This educational environment helped students develop relativistic thinking following successive stages. Initially and similarly to first year students in the SSH HMS Les Roches, CCN students preferred polarised modes of thought and took a dualistic approach (right vs. wrong) Second year CCN students were markedly different to their Swiss counterparts because they showed some signs of using relativistic thinking. Its use increased in regularity in year 3 and students in year 4 showed generalised use of relativistic thinking. However contrarily to Perrys’ (1970) model which predicts an intermediary stage where students are not committed and have a diffused sense of relativism, the students I interviewed appeared to have a grounded form of relativistic thinking from the second year.

Setting the findings I made in both schools alongside each other has shown that different educational environments affected the development and quality of relativistic thinking. This may appear trivial, however it implies that relativistic thinking might not be a unified mode of thought. This interpretation confirms Irwin and Sheese (1989) who say that it may be difficult to identify unified adult thinking structures.
In the course of this thesis I have compared relativistic thinking to a cultural knowledge which is internalised by students during college years. The results I have presented suggest that this internalisation process constructs and defines to a great extent the students’ use of relativistic thinking. Therefore the apparent novelty in the findings I am presenting resides in the fact that there may be a link between discrete forms of relativistic thinking and socio-organisational contexts.

In the first literature review of Problematisation 2 I found a consensus in that a substantial number of authors (see table 12) support the idea of a development towards relativistic thinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Proposed development model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basseches, 1984</td>
<td>Schemata co-ordinate into an organised form of dialectical thinking that represents a higher level of epistemological equilibrium than provided by the organised formal operations suggested by Piaget and Inhelder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fischer, Hand and Russell, 1984</td>
<td>3 developmental levels involving the progressive co-ordination of abstractions in more and more complex relations. For these authors the organisation of behaviour undergoes massive restructuring during adolescence and early adulthood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchener and King, 1981</td>
<td>Reflective judgement model; people change in the assumptions they hold about knowledge itself and how it is acquired and these assumptions are reflected in the way they operate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Labouvie-Vief, 1984        | Three level model  
4. Intrasytemic Level: formal realism  
5. Intersystemic Level: Contextual relativism  
6. Autonomous Level: Autonomy |
| Perry, 1970.               | Proposes a sequence of 9 positions in epistemological development. Begins with basic dualism; the breakdown of dualistic beliefs results in multiplicity; following multiplicity comes the discovery of relativism, and finally the ability to take stands in a relativistic world called “committed relativism”. |
| Richards and Commons, 1984; Richards, 1990. | Three stage model:  
4. Systematic operations: operate on sets of operations; abstractly represent the set of relations and operations within each system  
5. Metasystematic operations: axiomatization of relations; transforming systems, determining relations between systems  
6. Cross-paradigmatic operations: relate and transform paradigms; show how paradigms from one field can transform another (super systems representing knowledge in a given field). |
| Sinnott, 1994             | The development process involves the progressive co-ordination of logical systems and the relations of those systems to regulated emotional systems and interpersonal systems. |

However, there were also authors who questioned the structural stance that underpinned these models. Notably, Cavanaugh and Stafford’s (1989) review affirms
that it may be difficult to describe the adult mind in terms of structures. Authors like Labouvie-Vief (1990) attempt to include the role of socio-cultural influences in their models by suggesting a complete redefinition of the mature mind. The latter author says that to do this one should consider the dialectical interplay between cultural, emotional and cognitive aspects of the mind. Placed in the perspective of my own results, theories such as that of Labouvie-Vief (ibid.), suggest that it would be difficult to consider adult thinking solely as “a structure within the mind”. Particular forms of relativistic thinking, as I have suggested earlier, may be compared to a cultural knowledge, present and alive in a particular society and to a certain degree in the people who belong to it. Thus my study provides some grounds to question the approach taken by authors who focus on the structure of relativistic thinking somewhat independently from the social-cultural environment in which this mode of thinking appears and develops. My evidence suggested that relativistic thinking took different forms, depending upon the teaching/learning culture within which the development occurred.

This argument is bolstered by my findings on the nature of the lecturers’ support that are examined next.

Transgenerational development

Some authors recognise that socio-organisational aspects influence adult development (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1993; Sinnott, 1991; Kramer, 1989; Cavanaugh and Stafford, 1989). The interviewees reported some interesting aspects of the interpersonal relations students entertained with peers and adults (teachers and lecturers) which contributed to their development. In some instances students mentioned that lecturers were understanding their perspective and clarifying their thoughts through questions and answers. Rogers and Rothlisberger (1991) recommend this form of listening skills between adults in a business context. Re-examining the interactions from this perspective showed that lecturers utilised their listening skills to understand the students’ level and gain trust. For example lecturers restated students’ ideas making sure that both parties agreed on what was being said. This form of listening is similar to ‘active listening’ as it was introduced by Gordon (1970) who says that one of its important features is that it informs speakers (students) that their
point of view counts. Gabarro (1991) stresses that ‘active listening’ helps speakers feel that they are really understood. Interestingly, the students interviewed reported that lecturers made them feel this way.

Nevertheless ‘active listening’ supposes that the information is restated but not transformed. Similar examples were found in CCN, however, there were also occasions when lecturers did more than simply rephrase, they showed definite signs of empathy towards students similar to those described by Gladstein (1983). This author differentiates an ‘emotional stage’ which refers to a form of automatic empathy and a ‘cognitive/conscious mode’ where the listener makes a deliberate effort to understand the speaker. Both forms were reported by students and lecturers in CCN. However in the SSH HMS Les Roches, there appeared to be more instances of Gladstein’s (ibid.) ‘emotional stage’ of empathy.

Effective listening skills are sometimes associated with facilitating change (Ariel, Abigail and Basseches, 1994). One of the five levels of rating empathy which Ivey (1988) proposes is ‘influencing skills’ which he describes as interactions which are effective in making a client explore new dimensions of a problem from different perspectives. The method they propose relies on empathy but has a definite goal of transformation in so far as the listener points out new dimensions and adds ideas which were not initially expressed by the client. Similarly in middle school mathematics classes, Li and Adams (1995) show that the teachers’ use of examples which use old content to present a new topic will help students understand new concepts.

Some characteristic instances in CCN and SSH HMS Les Roches the lecturer used sophisticated listening skills and empathy but stopped short of adding ideas and did not attempt to make students consider their ideas in a new frame of reference. For this reason these interactions did not correspond either to mediated learning which Presseisen and Kozulin (1992) consider in their review as situations which help the learner internalise new abilities. In the investigation I carried out, I found a number of instances where the lecturer adjusted the interaction to individual learners. A similar finding was made by Hackling and Fairbrother (1996) who show that matching the degree of openness with the students’ experience and skills helps in high school science teaching.
These instances stood out because listening skills and empathy such as those described above helped lecturers make information accessible to students. Lecturers appeared to share information through their own understanding which was tuned to the students’ level. Typical instances could be distinguished when lecturers:

- Identified the learners’ difficulty and went through the idea again restructuring the problem in a way which was understandable for the student
- Reworded in what students called “their language” ideas and concepts which the students could not understand
- Practised a skill in front of the student in such a way that the student was able to internalise the action
- Went through a complex process of thought using the students’ imagination and interests as a canvas
- Shared values and other intangible learning outcomes which situated the developmental context.

All these situations happened within interactions which appeared to be constructed over time. The relation between the lecturer and learner had both emotional and cognitive dimensions. Both parties relinquished individual control on the development process in a relationship that was based on reciprocity and intuitive adjustments. Contrary to the accepted idea that the learner should take on full ownership of the learning process (Dudley-Marling and Searle, 1995), my findings imply that, at certain moments, ownership of the development process was neither in learners’ nor lecturers’ hands alone, it was shared.

For example in both institutions that I studied, lecturers told personal accounts of situations they lived in industry, vignettes of their lives. The students reported that they were able to relate their own experiences to these stories and apply the lessons learned from these examples to their own lives. Similar findings were found in psychotherapeutic situations by Gunzburg (1997) who says that clients can gain some insights into their personal problems from therapists who tell stories which highlight specific facts of human functioning and interaction.
In the course of this thesis I suggested that during moments of transgenerational development, the students were assimilating information. However the assimilation concept I borrowed from Piaget does not account for the emotional dimension which was present in the interview data.

Winnicott (1971) suggests that ‘transitional phenomenon’ describes a mother giving the illusion to a young child that what they have created exists. It is an intermediary experience which children may not be able to situate clearly within themselves nor attribute to the outside world. Winnicott mentions that similar processes may be found in adolescence (ibid.).

Transgenerational development was by no means a permanent characteristic of the interactions between students and lecturers, Winnicott’s ideas might help understand why students engage and disengage in this form of relationship. This interpretation would also explain the importance students put on ‘feeling comfortable’ with the lecturer before actually being able to learn in the intimacy of these shared moments of development. The rapprochement I have just made also points out that instances in the development process may serve as meaning making transition phases which are not necessarily associated with direct progress.

To summarise, instances of ‘transgenerational development’ draw our attention to two aspects of young adult development. Firstly they highlight complex relational systems which students and lecturers adopted at certain times, that had a determining effect on their development. Secondly, the concept of transgenerational development helped distinguish ‘time out’ moments which did not necessarily involve any progress from the students’ point of view even though they inevitably inscribed themselves in their overall development. These instances were characterised by shared understanding and reciprocal appreciation. They were only noticeable as, and in, the relationship.

Therefore the concept of transgenerational development highlights an aspect that is neither a property of the lecturer nor individual student.

Irwin (1991) says that it is important to look at the socio cultural dimension of young adult development from a Vygotskian perspective. Using Vygotskys’ concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) Vare (1993) invites researchers in adult learning to look at the interactions between teacher and learner as a strategic relationship where meaning is constructed. The underlying idea of the ZPD is nevertheless that the
teacher is ahead of the learner (Daniels, 1996; van der Veer and Valsiner, 1994; Newman and Holzman, 1993) albeit adjusting the demands put on the learner in a progressive and considerate way (Newman and Holzman, 1993). The interviews also carried examples of a form of support which participated directly in the development of relativistic thinking when lecturers were ‘ahead’ of students. In the third problematisation I compared this support with scaffolding as it is described in other educational environments, it is this aspect which will be explored next.

Scaffolding

In CCN the support being provided by the institution and lecturers changed as students progressed through college years. In the first year, students were guided and shown through procedures which they would eventually carry out alone in later years. Similar patterns are described as ‘scaffolding’ by Wood and Wood (1996) who view this method as an important and effective educational interaction which helps students internalise new knowledge and skills. In early childhood programmes, scaffolding is generally recognised as good educational practice (Siraj-Blatchford and Brudenell, 1996). For example, scaffolding provided by a schools’ programme is shown to have increased children’s performance on reading skills by improving the effectiveness of multimedia lessons (Nelson, 1996). Jackson, Stratford, Krajcik and Soloway (1994) demonstrate that scaffolding structured programmes in high schools help students work on complex problems. However scaffolding is not only used in the context of young children and adolescents, Platt (1996) uses scaffolding to describe the structure of an effective language instruction programme in a vocational classroom for adults. Mendelsohn’s (1996) demonstrates that the design of a scaffolded learning environment has, on its own, an effect on learning outcomes. In a computer based learning environment he studied the effect of a computer coach teaching experimental psychology using scaffolding techniques. The authors presented have in common that scaffolding is used to describe characteristics of an educational programme which offers students the chance to practice new skills under temporary guidance (instructions), gradually removing support in order to achieve autonomous use of that new skill.
For some authors scaffolding applies more specifically to the support which is being offered by an adult to a child, for example Burns-Hoffman (1993) says that it “refers to adult behaviours that support and guide children’s participation in activities, including speech events, enabling the children to extend the range of what they are able to do without assistance”. Similarly Johnson and Graves (1997) emphasise that scaffolding refers to the language teachers use to support middle school students. Stasz (1994) says that high school teachers who use scaffolding help students acquire generic skills however her definition of scaffolding emphasises the support given to activities performed by the learner leading towards autonomous use of a competence. All these authors agree with Hogan and Pressley (1997) who says that scaffolding applies to situations where a learner is attempting to achieve a level of skill or acquire new knowledge which would take longer or be impossible to reach without the support of the teacher.

While the variety of applications and definitions illustrated above show the richness of scaffolding they may also reveal its principal weakness. Schaffer (1996) says that because it is only a vivid metaphor, scaffolding does not help us understand the internalisation process. I refrained from going so far because there are some central themes which appear in all this literature which help define certain characteristics of effective educational exchanges. In the literature reviewed above, scaffolding is typically used to describe situations where:

- Students are acquiring something which is more than they could have achieved without support.
- Temporary support is offered to learners. It is adjusted to the learners’ development, less support is given as the learners gradually develop autonomous use or internalisation of skills or knowledge.
- Learners have a chance to practice through a new process/skill/application of knowledge throughout the process (accompanied in the early stages when support is being offered)

Each one of these characteristics was met and reported by students and in some cases also by lecturers in CCN. The data I gathered provided evidence of scaffolding through the structure of the programme of study and the lecturers’ support. What
appears to be a novel finding is that the scaffolding in CCN was an important factor in
the students’ development of relativistic thinking.

The support given by the programme of study offered the students opportunities to
develop relativistic thinking by guiding and supporting them. The assignments in the
first year were supported by clearly defined procedures. Students in the first year
talked about how they were told which way to go, which course of action to take. By
following the programme’s requirements and receiving its support, students were
finding out that there were no necessarily right answers to some of the important
projects they were working on. Furthermore group work with peers revealed the
subjective nature of opinions. Since assignments also required students to compare
different theoretical approaches it also became apparent to them that several logical
systems could be equally valid. These planned educational situations created a
number of Sinnotts’ (1994) critical conditions for the development of relativistic
thinking outlined in Table 11.

In the second and third year, the programme of study required students to work with
less guidance. Eventually students reached autonomy and reported they were able to
search for different view points to construct a meaningful piece of work which
integrated several theoretical approaches and practical features of the hospitality
industry.

Lecturers provided a key role delivering the programme, but their contribution
towards the development of relativistic thinking did not limit itself to implementing
the programme using scaffolding techniques. Lee (1994) and Johnson (1991) show
that the teachers’ own relativistic thinking allows them to present multiple,
contradictory views of truth which help in the students’ development. In the
interviews I carried out I noticed similar support being offered by lecturers in CCN. In
the first year they would typically introduce relativism, showing students that in some
cases several points of view could be equally appropriate. Lecturers merely pointed
out subjects or problems that could not be answered with rights and wrongs,
attempting to help the student reframe situation from a different perspective respecting
the students’ preference for polarised views. Both students and lecturers recognised
the need for direction and guidance in the first two years of college life. However in
the third year and increasingly in the fourth, this support was lifted without difficulty.
At this point students reported they were aware of the subjective nature of the lecturers’ views and provided many examples of relativistic thinking in their interpretation of peers’ views and use of different theories.

To summarise, two facets of young adult development appeared to be novel. The first was that scaffolding was an effective feature in a programme, which prompted students to develop a certain form of relativistic thinking which they could apply to a wide range of problems. The second was that the lecturers’ own style of relativistic thinking was used to take into consideration the students’ changing thinking style. Furthermore some evidence indicated that the students’ ability to think in relativistic terms coincided with the decline in the need for support and direction from the tutor. The evidence I have collected only allowed me to note the fact that they both occurred simultaneously, it did not allow me to speculate on which one of them induced the other or even if there was any rapport at all between these two elements. Nevertheless aspects such as transgenerational development and scaffolding added to the web of evidence, showing that the development of discrete forms of relativistic thinking was intrinsically linked to the cultural setting in which it was transmitted.

**Significance for practice in vocational education**

*Relativistic thinking*

The overall findings indicate that students benefited, albeit differently, from the two educational environments I studied. In Switzerland, SSH HMS Les Roches students experienced the emphasis which their school put on teaching technical skills, they reported that it gave them a clear understanding of the hospitality industry. These students also benefited from the international student body that existed in the school. A student attending the third year illustrated this point

3.4F “Doing hotel management, I like the course, but as I’ve been here, I’ve also been discovering other things about myself. I feel like I’ve been here for a purpose, to learn something, about people, about being international, to learn something about broadening my horizons not just thinking like only from my culture, only from my point of view, but to
incorporate other peoples’ point of view and relating to them, keep that in mind and in the skills I’ve learnt I’ve learnt to use them appropriately”

Thus the schools’ environment helped certain students realise the value in different points of view and accept subjectivity. However it appeared that in general, students from this school did not reach a generalised form of relativistic thinking. Oliver (1996) points out that programmes which rely too much on social structures fail to offer enough opportunities for students to engage in personal struggles and experience complex environment. In contrast to what was reported in SSH HMS “Les Roches”, CCN students were confronted with complexities and asked to overcome personal difficulties to achieve their academic requirements. By the fourth year in college the students I interviewed used relativistic thinking.

This research has not explored which one of these learning outcomes are preferable for students or industry. Nevertheless in the light of current research in adult thinking it would appear that critical thinking, reflective thinking and relativistic thinking are important skills for adults (Commons, Armon, Richards and Sinnott 1989; Commons, Armon, Kohlberg, Richards, Grotzer and Sinnott, 1990; Sinnott and Johnson, 1996). Research into managerial competencies needed in the industry also indicate that managers should be prepared to adapt products to market needs and take into consideration multiple logical systems in their decision making process (Gamble et al, 1994). Managers in the hospitality industry need to be responsive to customer demands, market tendencies and new technologies (Johns, 1996). Thus time and consideration might need to be devoted to reflect on the benefits of including the development of relativistic thinking as a strategic goal in hospitality management education which uses craft based learning.

Schön (1991) suggests that reflective thought should be associated with practice. For this author, reflection in action allows practitioners to put their actions into words, which are then related to theoretical frameworks. Schön (ibid.) says that this method enhances the person’s ability to generalise and transfer skills from one practical application to another.

Hotel management schools could create opportunities for reflection in action. Thus lecturers and students might engage in activities which accompany craft based learning with reflection, prompting relativism, critical thinking and reflective
thinking. For example, lecturers could point out ill-structured problems that cannot be adequately explained by a single logical system (Churchman, 1971).

Furthermore, educators might be inspired by Ruth et al (1992) who recommend teaching practices which support transferable learning. In the first two steps they suggest preparing an appropriate theoretical and emotional basis with the student. The findings I made in Switzerland and the United Kingdom showed that students were sensitive to the overall educational environment. Craft based learning, lecturers’ teaching style and schools’ historico-organisational backgrounds were some of the dimensions which influenced this environment. The third step recommended by Ruth et al (ibid.) says that teachers should encourage reflection on the complexity of knowledge and its applicability in diverse contexts. To achieve this educators might want to consider that college years were reported by students I interviewed to be a significant development period where they traversed different phases (identifiable by typical thinking styles such as preferring polarised views in the first two years) and adopted relativistic thinking in the last years in school.

A fourth step proposed by Ruth et al (ibid.) asks lecturers to stimulate and challenge students to transfer knowledge within the learning environment offering support to them as they practice. The results I have presented testify to the value of this recommendation and show that, in CCN, a great deal of the practice was experience in group work which stimulated the development of relativistic thinking.

The suggestions made by Ruth et al (ibid.) are interesting because they point out the necessity to plan an overall educational strategy which supports the students’ development of relativistic thinking taking into consideration the climate it creates for learning, its educational goals and the support which is being offered.

To take these factors into consideration and prompt reflection in schools I would suggest some practical questions outlined in Table 13 which might help set the scene for elaborating programmes which encourage the development of students’ relativistic thinking.
Table 13: Self study questions for an institution planning to encourage the development of relativistic thinking amongst its students.

- **What is the school’s educational ethos?** (What is the spirit and attitude which prevails amongst teachers and students regarding knowledge? Which are legitimate professional competencies in the schools’ view? How does the school view novelty and its rapport to learning?) For example an aspect of the school’s ethos is revealed when in the SSH HMS Les Roches students reported that teachers did not give them occasions to express their ideas.

- **What is the school’s historico-organisational background?** (Who owns the curriculum from a historical perspective and the same question taken from an organisational viewpoint? What is the rationale for teaching subjects, is this rational coherent throughout the programme? What subjects are grouped with each other and since when?) For example certain theoretical subjects were taught in CCN by practitioners who had both an academic and practical background to draw upon when teaching.

- **What are the lecturers’ credentials?** (What do they mean to them, to the students? Is the ethos associated with particular credentials an important aspect in the lecturers’ approach to a problem?) For example in Switzerland a Master Chef is the highest qualification for a lecturer, it is obtained after years of apprenticeship and involves much memorising and little reflective thinking: Both of these learning experiences influenced these lecturers’ outlook on education.

- **What is the lecturers’/administrators’ current understanding of relativistic thinking?** (Do they value this form of thinking? Do lecturers/administrators perceive its relevance and why?) For example, in a staff meeting I met a teacher in finance in the SSH HMS Les Roches who perceived relativistic thinking as inappropriate in his field i.e. the first rule for implementing relativistic thinking is to apply it to oneself (I have deliberately left some ambiguity about who is being referred to by ‘oneself’ because this question threw into light the complexity of relativistic thinking).

- **How does the present programme of study take into account the students’ development through college years?** (Is there an awareness that students are not the...
same throughout their studies? Do faculty recognise that students’ needs change and if so what is understood to be happening?) For example in this investigation CCN lecturers said that they thought the students changed each year and had a clearer idea of their needs and capabilities.

- How does the current programme of study prompt relativistic thinking in respect to the students’ varying abilities over the years? (or do the expectations put on the students take into account the level at which they are?)

Transgenerational development

Oliver (1996) noticed that professors failed to engage in a project which attempted to introduce situated learning because they felt that freshmen students lacked prerequisite skills. This author studied first year students who had been asked to develop intellectual curiosity and work on ill-defined problems. The concept of transgenerational development which I have proposed in this thesis could help educators appreciate the value of temporarily adjusting themselves to the students’ level. This may be most true when the students’ level appears unsatisfactory from a lecturers’ perspective in the early years of college life.

The findings I have presented indicated that young adults and lecturers are, at some moments, partners in the learning process. The emotional and cognitive dimension of this partnership are complex, however it appeared that some features of the relationship do not change over the years students spend learning. In this study, students always needed to be engaged in a meaningful relationship which provided them with a chance to assimilate knowledge.

Lecturers might well benefit from distinguishing these moments where the priority is not progress, but simply making sure the student is ‘digesting’ the information. These instances could be compared to time-out because I noticed that lecturers and students were sometimes disengaging from the ‘fight to win ground’ and taking time to work on reflection. Transgenerational development helped them make sure that they had a common understanding of concepts and theories before going further. Pointing out the difference between these instances and those which are more specifically devoted to progress might also help appreciate students’ non linear development path. This
aspect is important because it should encourage educators to make the distinction between questions posed by students which reveal lack of interest or serious learning difficulties with those which only serve to consolidate and prepare the field for transfer of knowledge to occur.

Scaffolding

Craig (1996) suggests that principles of scaffolding should be applied throughout higher education. In computer based instruction of statistics to college students, Kao and Lehman, (1997) have shown that scaffolding helps independent knowledge application. Jacobson and Spiro (1995) have shown that scaffolding within hypertext learning environments helps students acquire and use complex knowledge flexibly. Thus scaffolding has proven to be effective with adults and within higher education, however Oliver (1996) relates problems encountered using scaffolding in an introductory freshman engineering course. This author found that students were confused regarding inherently vague or theoretical concepts and feared working on problems which could not be explained using a single approach.

It is possible to relate these findings to the ones presented in this thesis. Educators who apply scaffolding to higher education may need to take into account the students’ progressive ability to use relativistic thinking, as well as their own support in this process. First year students I interviewed preferred adopting polarised views and feared situations, which required relativism. In CCN, both students and lecturers provided evidence of the considerable amount of support that was offered in the first two years and gradually lifted in the later years of study. To conceptualise this phenomenon I applied the notion of scaffolding to a period covering four years of students’ college life.

The ambiguity that surrounds the concept of scaffolding I have referred to earlier in this chapter should encourage researchers and educators to take a critical look at identifying the time frame in which scaffolding is studied. Oliver (ibid.) uses scaffolding to describe the support offered within one year of study and notices some difficulties, which appear related to the overall development of relativistic thinking in
college years. The investigations I made pointed out that scaffolding could help support this development process. Thus both findings depended on the relationship between the time frame which was taken into account and the type of development which was being studied. It would therefore appear necessary to design scaffolded programmes in relation to realistic educational goals which take into account students’ development of relativistic thinking. To help institution in this task I have sketched out a few leading self study questions outlined in Table 14.

Table 14: Self study questions for higher education institution planning scaffolded programmes of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Are the demands made on students the same each academic year?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do lecturers implement the academic requirements i.e. how much support do they expect to be giving at any given time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do the students effectively undertake in order to meet academic requirements? (i.e. where and how do they get the job done?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do assessments take into account the support which is being received or given?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do assessments measure the degree of independence with which a task is accomplished?</td>
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</table>

Critical examination of findings and suggestions for further research

General comments

The inductive process I adopted and the problematisation structure of this report allowed me to explore and discover new phenomena. It also had a number of methodological and contextual consequences that needed to be addressed. For example it could be argued that the effect of moving from one institution to another could in itself have changed my own perception of the research environment. Undoubtedly it did, but as I pointed out in the Preamble, objects of study in social research are rarely comparable. For this reason many researchers have abandoned this positivist ideal.
Therefore I did not seek strict comparability between the educational environments I studied. My approach was inspired by post modernism and concentrated upon highlighting significant differences interviewees’ awareness and usage of their educational environment at the two institutions.

Thus I set, side by side, responses from students who attended SSH HMS Les Roches and CCN, two markedly different educational environments. My approach sought to analyse the data through “constructive otherness” (see Cahoone, 1996 p.14) in order to shed light upon the importance of the different developmental paths and their relationship to the school learning environment.

This research did not have as its objective the presentation of a systemised concept of young adult development. However, I have attempted to highlight features of young adult development that bear some heuristic value, showing relationships between particular developmental pathways and the associated thinking skills demonstrated by students.

The clinical interviewing method I used aided this process because students were encouraged to elaborate and clarify their views. This methodology allowed me to show some important features, which differentiated students’ perceptions and usage of two educational contexts while also prompting further discussion and pathways for further investigation. This section takes the three leading ideas developed previously and examines in more detail some alternative interpretations and possible avenues for future research.

**Relativistic thinking**

The first stage of the development of relativistic thinking described in the literature review of the second problematisation is characterised by “polarised modes of thought”. My investigations confirmed that students at both institutions used such modes of thinking in the first years of study. At times they appeared stubborn, which could have been interpreted as a form of maturity or self-confidence. However, the interviews also revealed that students were uncomfortable with challenging views and preferred “right-wrong” answers. For this reason, it could be valuable to investigate
further the negotiating techniques used by students. Studies of this nature might reveal that different thinking styles are used simultaneously thus further challenging the unity of early forms of relativistic thinking.

The normative educational environment described by lecturers and students in SSH HMS Les Roches might also account for the fact that students were fulfilling lecturers’ expectations when they appeared to be using polarised modes of thought. This would provide an interesting pathway for new research that could for example examine the relationship between the degree of freedom given to students and the development of relativistic thinking. This line of study would also help to understand in more detail the relationship between specific learning environments and certain aspects of relativistic thinking.

Within this study, my investigation examined the development of relativistic thinking, comparing it to a cultural knowledge that was progressively internalised by students. The conditions of the internalisation process appeared to influence the development and form of relativistic thinking. For example, at CCN, presenting students with ill-structured problems made them consider different points of view and eventually accept that certain problems did not have a unique solution. This interpretation suggests the possibility of further inquiries that would examine the specific culture ill structured problems belong to. For example it is not clear whether they belong to the educational culture or are a feature of industry. This question is important for vocational schools that prepare students for a specific sector of commerce.

A novel approach could be taken by considering relativistic thinking as a ‘speech genre’. Speech genres were introduced by Bakhtin, who defines them as “typical forms of utterances associated with a particular sphere of communication (e.g. the workplace, the sewing circle, the military) which have therefore developed ‘relatively stable types’ in terms of thematic content, style and compositional structure.” within specific social environments (Morris, 1994). Thus speech genres operate in close connection with the social structure and it would be possible to investigate relativistic thinking from this viewpoint. Such research might help to find commonality/differences between relativistic thinking as it is applied in different social structures such as the educational environment and the profession.
Using the same approach, one could also question the rapport between relativistic thinking and its assessment, and for example, whether one predetermines the other. There is also the interesting question of which speech genre we, as researchers are to use to gather and analyse data.

Looking back at the stages in the development of relativistic thinking one notices that students from both schools went through a similar first stage. However in the SSH HMS Les Roches I was aware that students used a particular form of relativistic thinking which I labelled ‘local relativistic thinking’. Because this appeared to be a novel finding and because ‘local relativistic thinking’ is by definition determined by the context, further investigations are needed to examine in more detail relevant features of the learning environment that critically influence the development of adult thinking skills.

The results I have presented in this thesis suggest that social, historical, physical and political contexts all have a determining influence on adult thinking skills. Taking this line of thought I propose that the development of relativistic thinking could be studied (for example) in terms of value orientations association with students’ culture. Bem (1970) defines value orientation as the cognitive and/or affective categories that guide a person’s assumptions about life. Kluckohn and Strodbeck (1961) argue that each society develops specific value orientations that profoundly influence behaviours and perceptions. These authors maintain that people are rarely aware of these value orientations and Wurzel and Fischman (1995) argue that certain value orientations can be culturally bound. I mentioned earlier that students in the SSH HMS Les Roches came from all parts of the world. In most years over 60 nationalities were represented in the student body. At the time of my study the student population was made up of students from: South East Asia 35%, Latin America 20%, Africa 10%, the Indian sub-continent 5%, the Gulf States 5%, North America 5% and Europe 10% (Figures obtained from the marketing department of the school).

Wurzel and Fischman (ibid.) distinguish between high and low context value orientations that influence communication, teaching and learning. They explain that: "in high-context cultures of Asia, Africa or Latin America it is appropriate to speak non linearly, to use metaphors, or to associate unrelated statements to convey a message, and to place the responsibility for understanding and interpreting what is
being said on the listener.” The same authors say that people from high context societies tend to pay more attention to social atmosphere and relate more readily to interpersonal issues. But while the respondents in my investigations showed a concern for social aspects of the educational experience they were also very task oriented. This characteristic is typically attributed to low context societies which Wurzel and Fischman (ibid.) also see as generally more analytical and less concerned with the social environment.

Since a large proportion of students in Swiss hotel schools come from what these authors define as “high context cultures”, it might be interesting to investigate whether the students’ use of contextually bound reasoning patterns was influenced by their cultural background. Such research would also need to take into consideration the fact that the students I interviewed based a lot of their arguments on tasks performed within the school. Some students used analytical reasoning within the practical world of their studies and profession. Students generally illustrated their thinking with examples from day to day tasks.

Thus it could be maintained that they were simply demonstrating high context value orientation associated with some form of relativistic thinking. But the clinical interview method I used also allowed me to show that the themes and structure of the responses were nevertheless related. In contrast to CCN students, those at SSH HMS Les Roches did not generalise and remained constrained within their local understanding of the subject they were studying.

However the cultural mix was very different between CCN and SSH HMS Les Roches. Research to further explore the influence of culturally specific thinking patterns could differentiate, and might even question, the concept of ‘local relativistic thinking’ that I have proposed in this thesis. Value orientation theory contends that thinking skills can be culturally influenced. Thus value orientations are presented as characteristic modes of thinking, comparable to structures. My study has suggested that learning environments also have a determining role in the development of broad thinking skills. Therefore researchers following this line of investigation might also want to consider the way in which culturally influenced thinking skills are used when students are displaced in foreign learning environments.
In contrast with ‘local relativistic thinking’, the term generalised relativistic thinking was applied to students in years three and four in CCN. With hindsight this terminology might not be completely appropriate, and at the very least it creates opportunities for future research. In the interpretation of data I suggested that students in CCN developed this form of relativistic thinking and that they were probably capable of transferring it to other domains because they used abstract terms and differentiated between a theoretical position and practical ones. However one could question this interpretation because generalisation is not typical in adult thinking. For example, critical thinking is proven to be domain-specific and transferability poses problems (Kennedy, Fisher and Ennis, 1991; Norris, 1985). The results from my study associated the relativistic thinking developed in CCN with a particular educational ethos that prompted generalisation. Therefore it would be interesting to explore the limits of generalisation, asking oneself whether these students could apply this reasoning in fields with which they are unfamiliar.

Looking back and interpreting the combined results from both schools prompts me to suggest that relativistic thinking was an adaptive tool which was internalised and used in relation to particular problems and contextual variations encountered by students. Thus relativistic thinking, as a mode of thought, should lend itself well to a large number of situations which are recognisable by adults (i.e. situations which are familiar and or part of a familiar environment). Perhaps there is some similarity between this and the structured whole which Piaget refers to as “a system of elements defined by a general set of laws such as the laws which define a group or lattice” (Gruber and Voneche,1995, p. 456) This structuralist stance presents an opportunity to investigate possible commonalities between relativistic thinking and formal thinking.

To illustrate this one can consider a situation in which a driver has been called out for an emergency and encounters a traffic signal on a country road. The lights are designed to filter cars through a single lane caused by road works. It is early Sunday morning and there are no other cars on the road, visibility is excellent and the driver can safely see that the road ahead is clear of traffic over a long distance. The light turns orange when the car approaches. The driver decides to jump the light knowing that the light will probably be red by the time the car reaches it. Six of the eight criteria suggested by Sinnott to determine the presence of relativistic thinking are
satisfied by this driver who we would consequently say was displaying relativistic thinking (see table 15).


| ✓ | Meta-theory shift: (abstract and practical dimensions of the problem are taken into consideration in order to find an appropriate answer) |
| ✓ | Problem definition: (understanding that the context and outlook plays a part in the definition of the problem) |
| | Process/product shift: (Process and answer are treated separately, two processes may lead to the same answer). |
| ✓ | Parameter setting: (key variables are identified and weighted in relation to the solution which is being sought) |
| ✓ | Pragmatism: (choice of better solution as opposed to one best way) |
| ✓ | Multiple solutions: (recognising that there are alternatives to each choice) |
| ✓ | Multiple causality: (events are the result of multiple causes, some outcomes are more probable than others) |
| ✓ | Paradox: (perception that inherently conflicting demands are part of certain problems) |

Note: Ticked criteria correspond to analysis of the driver’s decision to jump the light.

However by the principle of Ockham’s razor (Yule, 1978) we should look for the simplest explanation and could, for example, attempt to explain the driver’s reaction using qualities of formal thinking described by Piaget (Piaget and Inhelder,1958b). Piaget refers to Formal thinking in terms of a Group or Lattice (Piaget, 1957). Piaget says that this period is characterised the structure that coordinates various logical operations into a single system. It allows groupments of classifications and seriations to be combined (ibid.).

The latter implies that formal thinkers can prioritise and create a hierarchy between different formal systems and/or abstract concepts. Thus, in the case of the driver jumping the light, seriation associated with probabilistic calculations might have been used, albeit subconsciously. This example highlights why contextual information is critical for the individual to evaluate the chances in any given situation Research using this approach might be able to demonstrate that relativistic thinking is but one particular form of formal thinking sensitive to contextual criteria, and thus only observable in particular contextually bound situations..

To summarise, the findings I have presented in this thesis have shown that relativistic thinking may not be a unified generic thinking skill because it can take on different forms that are related to the socio-cultural environment. I have suggested that it would
be possible to consider relativistic thinking as a particular case of formal operations, providing a line of research that needs further investigation.

Finally it must be acknowledged that my findings only reveal trends which appeared consistently amongst students attending college education in each one of four years of study. I did not focus my attention on individual development, but this would nevertheless be interesting to study because age, cultural background and previous experience might well interrelate and also have a significant influence on the students’ mode of thinking.

Transgenerational development

Labouvie-Vief (1990) contends that emotional dimensions interrelate with cognitive skills in adult thinking. My study has not explored the psychodynamic aspect of the relationship between lecturers and students that might have shed a different light on my findings. For example, instances of transgenerational development were identified when lectures and students shared a level of understanding. One could argue that this phenomena is comparable to instances of transference and countertransference (see: Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967), that are present in a normal psychoanalytic setting.

However transgenerational development appears to be a useful finding because it offers some insights on particular modes of communication and understanding that are helpful to young adults. In keeping with my philosophical stance, this concept does not have the pretence to offer a general explanatory model. The interactions between lecturers and students were set in a specific learning environment. A lecturer in CCN pointed out the specific nature of hospitality management education, which for him contains central themes such as communication skills and understanding of the guest’s needs. It is not clear whether this emphasis alone explains the importance of transgenerational development identified in this research. Further work, in different educational contexts, would be necessary to identify the influence of the subject matter and ethos of the school on transgenerational development.

Should transgenerational development prove to be a recognisable feature in many learning environments it would be interesting to explore the different facets which have been alluded to in this thesis. Obvious dimensions such as emotional and
cognitive influences need to be better understood. However in order to offer pragmatic advice to educators I would suggest that the rapport between listening skills and transgenerational development needs to be explored in more detail, because this question may offer some insights into particular listening skills which are transferable to other educational situations.

In the course of this thesis, I mentioned that transgenerational development was connected to the development of relativistic thinking. The data I gathered showed that lecturers were aware of this fact and adjusted their relational skills accordingly. Therefore it would appear that transgenerational development is associated with lecturers’ ability to think in relativistic terms. For example, lecturers needed to consider simultaneously the students’ perspective, the theoretical knowledge and any contextual constraints, in order to translate information into ‘student language’.

Further studies could explore the rapport between lecturers’ relativistic thinking and their ability to engage in instances of transgenerational development. Such investigations might provide valuable insights for educators who want to promote the development of relativistic thinking.

Scaffolding

This research noticed that the scaffolding offered at CCN as a teaching/learning method was effective in helping groups of students reach autonomy in thinking skills which they previously did not have. My work did not analyse the differences which might exist between individual and groups needs in terms of scaffolding. This could be an interesting angle of research given the care with which lecturers attempted to understand individual students’ thinking skills. From an educator’s point of view it would be important to know what type of scaffolding should be designed into the programme of study and what is better achieved on a one-to-one basis. Such work might also help describe specific instances of scaffolding in lecturer/student relations and set them against realistic learning objectives given the individual’s and the group’s capacities. This line of research could also investigate the readiness of students to engage in and with lectures in the scaffolding process.
Furthermore my investigations examined scaffolding over a four year period. Many of the authors I quoted took a different approach by studying interactions within a single year of a student’s education. Thus different angles of research alone may provide insights into different facets of scaffolding.

I noticed another avenue for future work when individuals reported that they used the peer group as a temporary support for their development. I did not have enough evidence to confirm that peers offered scaffolding, however, Wallace (1994) found that students provided scaffolding to each other in business writing classes and Kao et al (1996) found that more knowledgeable peers offered support to learners in hypermedia assisted instruction. Therefore there is some indication that scaffolding can be provided by peers. Students I interviewed in the first two years of college were apprehensive of each other’s differences and were themselves learning to appreciate and respect each other’s opinions. As students showed more signs of using relativistic thinking the modus operandi of the group changed. In the light of these findings it would appear interesting to explore the relationship between the development of relativistic thinking amongst young adults and their possibilities of offering scaffolding to each other throughout college life.

**Summary and conclusions**

This problematisation took into consideration the results from each of the previous investigation. Setting the responses obtained in the SSH HMS Les Roches alongside those from CCN has allowed me to highlight some specific features of young adult development which were related to these educational environments. Different approaches to education affected the students’ aptitudes in relativistic thinking. In the SSH HMS Les Roches Switzerland the prerequisites for eliciting relativistic thinking were not met, but students developed ‘local relativistic thinking’ through their own experiences drawn from practical situations. In CCN students were exposed to a scaffolded programme which prompted relativistic thinking. Ultimately students provided evidence of generalised relativistic thinking that measured up to accepted criteria. These findings suggested that relativistic thinking could be a cultural
knowledge, which was internalised by students through interpersonal exchanges with adults and more advanced peers.

Relativistic thinking was influenced by the internalisation process and the environment where it was acquired. Future work has been proposed to investigate the possible link between discrete forms of relativistic thinking and specific socio-organisational contexts. This research has shown that students developed relativistic thinking by being confronted with assignments which required them to use relativism from the first year in college. However, my investigations also revealed that these assignments were accompanied by two characteristic forms of support, transgenerational development and scaffolding.

From a cognitive standpoint transgenerational development helped the students assimilate information. From an emotional perceptive it allowed the lecturer and learner to engage and disengage in shared meaning making moments which were reported as useful by students in both schools in each year of the programmes I studied. Educators were recommended to consider these instances because they could shed some light on the non linear pathway of development. Scaffolding was noticed in CCN and shown to contribute towards the students’ development of relativistic thinking. The programme offered support and practice to students who gradually became independent relativistic thinkers. The lecturers’ own relativistic thinking was used to understand and support the students’ different needs as they constructed relativistic thinking. Craft based learning participated in the development of relativistic thinking if the school used it as a grounding for conceptual knowledge, as at CCN. This thesis suggests that craft based learning accompanied by reflection in action might be a way to formalise a teaching/learning strategy designed to prompt the development of relativistic thinking.

Thus, my findings challenge the view that relativistic thinking is a generic cognitive structure by showing that it takes on some characteristics of the socio-cultural environment in which it develops. Because relativistic thinking coordinates various logical systems that are relevant within a particular context I suggested that it could be a contextually sensitive case of formal thinking. This interpretation opens the way for further investigation.
**Postscript**

This research set out to examine the role of craft based education in hospitality management schools from a developmental perceptive. My philosophical stance evolved as I became aware that an inductive approach would be more appropriate in a research area little explored to date. I am aware that I made pragmatic choices such as the institutions where I carried out my interviews and to a certain extent the developmental framework I used to investigate young adult development.

The choices were made as a result of my philosophical stance, which recognised the value of exploring particular socio-cultural environments. The schools I chose provided good sources of data and an inspiration to explore the psychological literature. As a result I have been able to present a web of data, theory and interpretations concerning young adult development that I hope will inspire further research.

This thesis has been structured in such a way that the reader may appreciate the progressive development of the research process. The first chapter dealt with the background which influenced and set the initial research question. The following chapters described the four successive steps in the study in which observations and reading generated new investigations making the research question evolve as work progressed. In the first exploratory study the research question focused on the role of craft based learning in students’ development of managerial competencies. I found that craft based learning could not be isolated from the total learning environment and that students were developing adult thinking skills. This was a first step towards recognising the critical role of the educational environment on the development of adult thinking skills.

The second investigation was carried out in the same schools as the first study. It examined students in the light of young adult development literature. The findings indicated that the learning environment had a profound effect on the development of relativistic thinking and that interpersonal relations were critical in this process. Interviewees did not provide evidence of using relativistic thinking as it is described in literature, however they did use relativism within the context of their learning environment. I called this ‘local relativistic thinking’.
A third set of interviews were carried out in a different learning environment which nevertheless included craft based learning in its curriculum. The students developed relativistic thinking in a programme which supported their growth. The findings in this school were different to the ones I noticed in the two previous investigations and prompted me to make a critical comparison of the results from both schools in the last chapter.

This thesis has shown that craft based learning can form a valuable part of a learning environment. In itself, craft based learning offered grounding which helped students contextualise theories and gave them a setting for their first experiences of industry. Thus it helped them discover certain characteristics of the professional environment which would have been difficult to encounter in a classroom setting. Craft based learning also provided complex situations which helped students develop awareness of relativism. However it was the learning environment as a whole which held forms of cultural knowledge such as relativistic thinking that were specific and related to the schools’ ethos. I noticed that relativistic thinking existed first at an interpsychological level and through the students’ internalisation proceeded to an intrapsychological level.

The transmission processes of relativistic thinking were critical to the students’ development. Lecturers played a key role in so far as they provided instances when students could take up knowledge, as well as scaffolding which prompted them to progress. The students reported that lecturers’ understanding of their level and subsequent translation efforts helped them assimilate information. Besides these cognitive aspects, emotional comfort in the relationship appeared to be important in moments I have referred to as transgenerational development.

In other instances reported by interviewees, there was evidence of support being specifically designed to make students progress. This support was not the same throughout the four years of college life and I only noticed it in the school where students developed generalised relativistic thinking i.e. in the third investigation. The structure and nature of this support was similar to scaffolding as it is described in literature. Scaffolding was being offered through the programme of study and through lecturers’ own use of relativistic thinking. It appeared a novel observation that a scaffolded programme helped students develop relativistic thinking.
The significance of these findings in relation to practice in vocational education may be presented in two steps. Students in both schools I studied developed relativism, albeit with some important differences. These findings question current research insofar as relativistic thinking is generally recognised as an integrated form of adult thinking by many authors. This study showed that discrete forms of relativistic thinking developed within particular kinds of educational ethos.

Hospitality literature also suggests that problems and issues faced by managers require relativism. Schools may therefore need to consider the necessity of including the development of relativistic thinking as part of their curriculum. This research has suggested that a way forward may be to associate craft based learning with reflection in action. This method provides practitioners opportunities to widen and deepen their perspectives. In hotel management schools, practical situations could be used as a substratum from which cognitive and emotional experiences could be used for students to reflect upon theory and develop relativism. However, my study also suggested that there might be a need to study the relationship between the type of environment faced by adults, and the form of relativistic thinking that they develop.

This research has also shown that a programme of study which respected the students’ developmental needs and offered adequately scaffolded programmes prompted rapid development of generalised relativistic thinking. Suggestions have been made for self-addressed questions which might help schools in their effort to implement scaffolded programmes which take into account the students’ need to practice and relate to different theoretical approaches in an understanding climate of study. My investigations revealed that the lecturers’ own relativistic thinking helped them provide students with a support which was matched to their needs. Students benefited from instances when the pressure to move ahead was replaced by an effort to understand, translate and relate to them. Schools might want to proactively address questions concerning lecturers’ ability to adjust to the student development of relativistic thinking.

This thesis has proposed a series of new questions. Relativistic thinking was compared to a cultural knowledge, hence sensitive to the context in which it was developed. It is therefore reasonable to assume that it could have its own thematic content and compositional structure which could either be associated with industry or
education. Furthermore, generalisation is not typical in adult thinking and this study showed that relativistic thinking may not always be applied to all problems faced by adults. It may for example be pertinent to ask the following questions:

What are the limits of this mode of thought which was learned in a specific context?

Should relativistic thinking be applicable to any context?

Could it be comparable to a structured whole and could it be understood in probabilistic terms?

This study focused on general trends and did not investigate the individual development of relativistic thinking. However age, cultural background and experience might play an important role in this process. Some data suggested that inter-individual differences might have an impact on the role of peers in the scaffolding process. These questions would merit further investigation because the students’ development of relativistic thinking influenced their use and therefore probably their ability to offer support to each other.

The concepts of transgenerational development and ‘local relativistic thinking’ both need further study. Transgenerational development may reveal some interesting facets of listening skills which might be used in the context of developing relativistic thinking. ‘Local relativistic thinking’ might offer some opportunities to investigate the relationships between specific learning environments and particular forms of relativism. However beyond these ‘scientific’ considerations the research work I conducted brought about three major changes which will have a profound effect on whatever I do in the future.

Firstly, like many other PhD students, I came across the difficulty of writing. The scaffolding which I received from my supervisor combined with reading authors such as Bakhtin (Morris, 1994), de Saussure (1916/1995), Barthes (1963) and Foucault (1963; Gutting, 1994) helped me engage in a deep reflection concerning the relationship between my ideas and my capacity to write them i.e. to communicate. I look back at the creative confusion in which I started to write with some uneasiness and concern. Has the process of communicating robbed me of freedom? The answer is definitely no. I have learned that composition is at the heart of any socialised creation and those are the ones which are probably genuinely helpful. In fact the difficulties I
had eventually liberated me from a dream of ‘absolute’ creation and made me concentrate on delivering ideas bearing in mind that the reader partly reconstructs them.

Secondly, the initial research question I set seemed very simple and I thought that a good research plan, coupled with some sound background reading would see me through. Little did I realise how many dark alleys I would need to follow, how many rethinks and personal inquiries I would need before presenting my work. It was as if, each time I held an idea, it slipped out of my hands like a wet fish. Something would invariably make an approach or an interpretation untenable or, for the sake of humour, in the best of cases foolish. However it was often not the answer which was wrong, it was the question which needed to be rethought. These experiences changed my outlook concerning any form of inquiry and made me adopt a position resumed by Gutting (1994) who resumes Foucault’s stance, saying that he rejects the idea of finding true theories but is concerned about their values. Prominent contemporary philosophers such as Lyotard (1979) and Rorty (1982) also argue that one needs to pursue the search for relevant rather than true information.

The third important change occurred through the questions I asked myself about the purpose of inquiry. At the onset my ambition was to find out something about the origin of the phenomena I was investigating. In his anthology Cahoone (1996) defines “origins” as: “the notions of source of whatever is under consideration…” (p. 14). The inquiry into origins is, according to the same author: “an attempt to see behind or beyond phenomena to their ultimate foundation. For modern philosophies of the self (eg. Existentialism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, even Marxism), the attempt to discover the origin of the self is the road to authenticity. Postmodernism in the strict sense denies any such possibility. It denies the possibility of returning to, recapturing, or even representing the origin, source, or any deeper reality behind phenomena, and casts doubt on or even denies its existence.” (p. 14-15). These ideas inspired me to abandon the search for “origins”, foregoing the ambition of finding objective truth in favour of uncovering meanings and values attached to particular situations. This view is reflected and made richer through the pragmatist’s definition of relativism proposed by Rorty which has inspired me to continue my journey of exploration after this thesis: “Relativism … is the view that there is nothing to be said about either truth or
rationality apart from descriptions of the familiar procedures of justification which a given society - ours - uses on one or another area of inquiry” (Rorty, 1996/1991, p. 576). Investigating these descriptions and carefully reporting them might contribute to a form of collective wisdom which in turn could have the virtue of practicality and no essence.
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