

## **Out of the frying pan: Factors effecting the motivations to later access formal education of final year Commercial Cookery students**

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### **Introduction**

“They have no way of escaping from this life, for they cannot save a penny from their wages, and working sixty to a hundred hours a week leaves them little time to train for anything else” (Orwell, 1933, p. 23).

As George Orwell observes above, there have long been several barriers to re-engaging education for a cook, particularly long hours and low pay. While there are few academic studies of cooks’ post-cooking transition, there is an observable trend towards youth in kitchens (Lethlean, 2003; Parkinson & Green, 2002). The ‘old’ cook is conspicuous by their absence. This provides a tension: cooks stop cooking professionally many years before retirement age, but the culture and systems of kitchens may provide hurdles for this transition.

Cooking professionally is demanding in many ways. The nature of the work, the heat, split shifts and the number of hours worked are physically gruelling. Placement of hours, predominantly at night, limits a ‘normal’ life. The high work output and abuse can be mentally and spiritually draining. The comparatively low level of pay reduces personal options including access to formal education.

Cooks do not always plan their exit from kitchens and, ultimately, career cooking. The lack of career planning is evidenced in how cooks often leave kitchens mid-shift, discretely (an apron left crumpled on the floor without an owner to fill it), or conspicuously (with loud expletives and verbose posturing) (Sheehan, 2002). Just another cook walking out of another kitchen; these actions are normally unplanned, just knee-jerk reactions to one request too many (Fine, 1996). It is not an industry that follows up with an exit interviews.

I was interested in studying how other cooks fared post-cooking, particularly with re-engaging education. Although some authors, writing of the American system, believe that cooks should ideally plan their vocational and educational careers (Brefere, Drummond, & Barnes, 2006), Fine (1996, p. 49) observes how realistically “cooking lacks a career trajectory”. Therefore, cooks are more likely to react to, rather than plan for, steps in their progression both within and beyond hospitality. This may be implied through the seemingly unlikely transitions from sous chef to bricklayer’s labourer, from executive chef to fishmonger or, from pastry chef to university student. The anecdotal trend from professional cooking to unskilled labouring is surprisingly common: hands-on work, shorter hours, and better pay. The fishmonger shows a similar example, but with the addition of identifying a niche and using transferable craft-skills to financial benefit. Neither requires going back to school. The final example is an anomaly: a cook re-engaging with formal education and studying at university-level.

### **Literature Review**

This section will first discuss the formative experiences of cooks and how this is likely to impact access to formal education: the demographic that cooks are drawn from; experiences of studying Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) at TAFE; and experiences of working in professional kitchens. A review of the age when cooks ‘retire’ and how well prepared cooks

are for this transition will be followed with a review of what options exist for formal education within culinary studies.

Cooks are drawn from a demographic that is mainly male, working class, has a predisposition towards manual work and a poor engagement with compulsory schooling. Nearly eighty percent of Australian cooks are male (Australian Government, 2009). Internationally, many of these men come from working class backgrounds (Dobson, 2003; Pratten, 2003), initially attracted to kitchens through a perception of manual work (Brefere, et al., 2006; Dornenburg & Page, 2003; Pepin, 2003). In 2008, when this research was conducted, most Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) students held a year eleven pass or less as their highest level of educational success (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2010a). Celebrity chefs that these young men aspire to, including Shannon Bennett (2004), Jamie Oliver (Hildred & Ewbank, 2001), Gordon Ramsay (2007), and Marco Pierre-White (1990), admit (and sometimes glorify) a poor connection with core subjects at high school and were early school leavers.

Becoming a cook is often unplanned (Brefere, et al., 2006; Dornenburg & Page, 2003), nor a childhood aspiration (Fine, 1996). Many cooks are not so much drawn to cooking, as repelled from alternatives (Guerrier & Adib, 2000). The common access point to professional cookery, the largely thankless task of dishwashing (Brefere, et al., 2006; Orwell, 1933), may indicate an actual or perceived lack of choices.

During compulsory schooling many males disliked written work and preferred non-text based learning, showing a clear preference for practical study. Perceived school failure is higher in working class areas and can create an enduring self-image as a non-learner making re-engagement with formal education less likely. (Teese & Polesel, 2003)

Cooks study at TAFE to attain the Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) which, along with relevant work experience, leads to becoming a qualified cook. Culinary schools are often criticised for not preparing cookery students for the 'real world' (Fine, 1996). The qualification is partly taught and assessed through paper-based 'theory'. Paper-based learning is cost-effective and efficient (Print, 1993, p. 168). However, learners prefer practical over paper-based learning if they are lower SES males (Teese & Polesel, 2003) and/or apprentice cooks (Cullen, 2000). Ryan, head of the Culinary Institute of America, puts it succinctly: "If you're going to learn to cook, you have to cook food. The only way that happens is in a kitchen. You can't do it out of a book" (Brefere, Drummond, & Barnes, 2009, p. 115).

Pardy (2007) studied credentialism in TAFE. He found that the current model atomised learning into low-level, narrow, specific, vocationally-focused outcomes. This study included one Diploma of Hospitality Management student. She felt the surface-level job-specific nature of her TAFE experience taught her few new skills that she had not already learnt in her extensive work experience, that the text books including cartoons were "silly" and found the industry-specific nature of her qualification was "no help at all" when changing to another industry.

There is a mismatch between cooks kinaesthetic learning style and TAFE provision - cooks prefer practical and contextually-relevant informal learning, while TAFE provides a formal learning structure and greater consistency. This may indicate that the apprentice-mode of formal learning at TAFE one day a week combined with on-the-job training in a professional kitchen is the best mix of learning styles for learning cookery. Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) may also be studied full-time in one year in block study-mode with significantly less on-the-job training provided by industry placements.

In Australia's professional kitchens, a full-time cook works four hours a week more than the average of all occupations (Australian Government, 2009). However, full-time male chefs are paid a weekly average of \$800 pre-tax, compared to \$940 averaged across all occupations

(Australian Government, 2009). This creates a lack of financial security that may limit formal education options.

Work/life balance is recognised as becoming a priority for hospitality workers (Service Skills, 2009, p. 21). However, hours remain long and are atypical to most jobs (Cullen, 2000; Dornenburg & Page, 2003), making a cook's lifestyle often incompatible with a 'normal' family life (Brefere, et al., 2006).

Kitchen work has a societal expectation of long hours, low pay, poor conditions and work/life balance (Orwell, 1933). Cost cutting in kitchens generally increases these stressors (Fine, 1996). Victorian hospitality students cite these stressors for not seeking employment in the Hospitality industry (Hamm, 2009, p. 15). These stressors make burn out a common theme among chefs (Dornenburg & Page, 2003; Lethlean, 2003). However, cooks may have difficulties getting time off professional cooking or having the financial stability to afford formal education. These stressors are likely to both motivate and inhibit career transition and the re-engagement with any required pre-training.

An analysis of Australian census data (Martin, 2007) found that engagement with formal education is effected by age and gender: males engage more when young, but from age thirty onwards female participation is higher. Trade qualified workers are more likely to transition to other occupations than those with professional qualifications (Martin, 2007, p. 7). Around ninety percent of the 1993 cohort of Canadian apprentices were no longer registered as working in their trade by 2003 (Morissette, 2008, p. 34). As many cooks begin their apprenticeship in their late teens, this nominates the late twenties as a likely life stage that most cooks would have sought a career change. This equates with my observed experienced of my cooking colleagues, but is not matched by the Australian Government (2009) data which states the median age for chefs is thirty-three.

Preparation for transition to further education is a benefit stated in many TAFE's advertising literature (Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, 2009; Box Hill Institute of TAFE, 2009; Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE, 2009). While the Commercial Cookery Taskforce (Casey, 2001) recommended promoting Commercial Cookery as a pathway to higher levels of study, a negative correlation exists between the early school leaving of many cooks and level of post-school qualification earned: just under seven percent of people who left school after completing year ten held a qualification higher than Certificate IV (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Therefore, while this subject area certainly recruits well at lower levels (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006), chefs educational attainment drops significantly after Certificate III. The Australian Government (2009) statement that forty-six percent of chefs hold either a Certificate III or IV is slightly misleading: while approximately eighteen thousand students are studying Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) in Victoria, this drops to less than one thousand studying Certificate IV (Service Skills, 2009, p. 15). Certificate IV students in 2008 represented a different demographic: ten percent were under nineteen, the gender spread was even, eighty per cent had attained year 12 or higher, and one third did not speak English at home (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2010b). As educational levels increase attainment dwindles: ten percent of chefs hold a Diploma or Advanced Diploma; five percent a Bachelor degree; two percent a Graduate Diploma/Certificate; one percent a Post-graduate qualification (Australian Government, 2009).

The students who articulate from VET to higher education perform best when following pathways that feeder and receiver institutions have set up (Cram & Watson, 2008, p. 9). A model business plan for any TAFE is to fill both roles, creating repeat business. A search of advertised articulation opportunities offering credit transfer or credit for informal learning for qualified cooks yielded one course: the Certificate III in Hospitality (Patisserie) bridging course at NMIT. This was represented as up-skilling, yet was the same Certificate III level.

In summary, cooks are often young and male, drawn from lower socio-economic backgrounds, have poor experiences of compulsory schooling and prefer hands-on work. TAFE study is likely to require at least a proportion of paper-based ‘theory’ training and assessment, at odds with both vocational requirements and student’s kinaesthetic learning preferences. These cooks will work more hours, experience poorer work conditions and be paid less than most Australian workers. This is likely to both motivate and block a career transition from professional cookery around their late twenties. For this transition pre-training is increasingly required. At this juncture a cook’s previous, often negative experiences of formal education overshadow recent vocational successes. Lowered enrolments at Certificate IV and a dissimilar demographic indicate a perceived ceiling on educational attainment of cooks at Certificate III level.

### Methodology

The qualitative research design sought to describe the factors that affect Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) student’s motivation to later engage with formal education. The research design involved two Victorian TAFEs in differing geographical locations comprising four focus groups recruiting four to eight final year Commercial Cookery students and four semi-structured interviews with their four predominant chef-trainers. One TAFE was located in the greater metropolitan area of Melbourne (Metro), while the other was in a regional Victorian centre (Rural).

Research was conducted in traditional ‘theory’ classrooms of the TAFE, assumed to be a location that participants would be familiar and comfortable. The pool that participants were drawn from was purposively selected for meeting the requirements of the research design, namely current experience of Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) at a TAFE that allowed this research to be conducted. A senior representative of each TAFE’s Hospitality department presented to each class the opportunity to volunteer to take part in their classes’ focus group.

Purposeful sampling was utilized. The ability to perform a focus group from a sample of final-year Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) students randomly selected from Victoria would have been impossible, given the funding limitations of this study.

This study aimed to satisfy the two main principles of sampling: get a representative sample of relevant perspectives and increase sample until data saturation (Arksey & Knight, 1999). This study involved four focus groups of students and four semi-structured interviews with their chef-trainers with a total of twenty-eight respondents. There were eighteen males and ten females. The rural TAFE had eleven respondents, while the metro TAFE had seventeen.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents**

Metropolitan				Rural					
Chef trainer		Apprentice		Chef trainer		Apprentice		Block	
F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	1	6	9	0	2	0	4	3	2
1	1	5	8		2		4	1	1
mature	mature	young, 1 mature	young, 1 late twenties		mature		young	young, 2 mature	young, 1 late twenties

The TAFEs were purposefully chosen within the research design from Metropolitan Melbourne and from Rural Victoria to allow greater variety of experiences. Six TAFEs offering Commercial Cookery were canvassed. The first metro-based and first rural-based TAFEs to accept were selected. Two TAFEs declined to take part in the study.

The chef-trainers were purposively selected by availability, access and direct teacher-learner relationship with apprentices in focus groups. Chef-trainers were all qualified cooks with years of experience in professional kitchens. They were older than their late-twenties and had re-engaged formal education to, at least, begin study of the minimum teaching qualification of TAFE trainers. Both rural chef-trainers were male and held the minimum training qualification. The metropolitan TAFE had one chef-trainer of each gender. Both had worked in TAFE for several years and held greater than the minimum educational qualification to train.

The first three student groups were in their third-year of a traditional apprenticeship-mode study. They attended TAFE one day per week during term, and worked a minimum of four days a week in a professional kitchen. The Metropolitan-based TAFE offered in one group eight apprentices on their final day of study and in the other seven apprentices with one semester remaining. The one rural apprenticeship-mode group comprised four male third-year apprentices around their early twenties. The final focus group of five students were undertaking one year's full time block-study mode and were included to express their uncommon study experience of Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery). This small group had the greatest diversity: two (one of each gender) who had recently left high school and were yet to be employed in kitchens; one woman older than her late twenties career changing into professional cookery from nursing; and two (one of each gender) participants seeking to formalize their significant experience of professional kitchens.

Data analysis program, NVivo7, allowed various data outputs; under a theme or sub-theme, text frequency, or by respondent grouping. Data was coded by location (metro/rural); occupation (chef-trainer/apprentice/block student); gender (male/female), and life-stage (young/late twenties/mature). Like groupings (apprentices) were summarized and compared with other groupings (block study-mode students) (Eisenhardt, 2002). The themes of this comparison were looked at in terms of frequency, specificity, emotion and extensiveness. Broad themes and sub-themes coded provided a structure for analysis and writing.

Rigor and trust were improved through consistency and truth value (Arksey & Knight, 1999: 55). Consistency is achieved through an audit trail undertaken by Dr. Peter Ferguson which required and found evidence from this research supported the findings (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Participants were given the opportunity to verify the transcript of their study as true providing "evidence for the validity of an account" (Hammersley, 2002: 75) and thereby improve truth value. One participant exercised veto on one comment.

One of the implications of the literature review is that cooks' experience of traditional learning environments may be negative. One of the potential limitations of this research was conducting focus group discussions in what may have been the wrong type of classroom. Retrospectively, research should have been conducted in a practical class: a kitchen.

This studies' small sample size (N=28) will create limited generalizability. This study should be generalizable to the TAFEs studied and may have limited external generalizability to other parts of the VET sector particularly other trade studies.

### Findings/Discussion

This section discusses the stage of leaving professional kitchens focusing on re-engagement with formal education within hospitality. So far this paper has discussed the students' demographic background and experiences of compulsory education, TAFE and professional kitchens as blocks and preparations for formal education. This final section will consider options for those transitioning from professional cooking and focus on how well prepared the formal education sector is. Firstly we will begin with a discussion of how gender, age and geographical location can be expected to impact further education.

Younger females indicated a more open-minded attitude to future engagement with formal education and had generally done more planning. Only two of the nine female students did not

state a course for further study, and one of those was confident with further study, stating she *"could do it, I'm good at school, like I've got a brain for theory."* All students older than thirty were female. Of the chef-trainers, the female held the highest educational credentials. Males indicated a poor engagement with formal education, which weakened as they aged.

A rural apprentice indicated that further education does not necessarily reduce the effect of ageism on career changers: *"you never stop learning; it's never too late to learn a trade is it? But it's usually too late to be hired, by the time you're forty, fifty-odd or whatever."* The perception that skills learnt may not be utilised through not being employed may impact the cook's motivation to study.

A lower proportion of rural students stated an intention to engage with formal education. Solutions to find a greater range of study options included on-line study, relocation or significant amounts of travel. One young, rural, block student considered moving to Melbourne, partly to attend formal education at William Angliss, *"there's a lot of opportunity down there, just very good hospitality university down there, is it William Angliss?"* Rural students are further disadvantaged through availability of a more limited range of courses than metro students.

Most respondents disliked paper-work, preferring practical hands-on learning. This is represented by the following statement from a young male rural block student wanting to destroy the physical paper-work mislabelled as theory: *"I look at that theory and I want to burn it (laughs). Give me a recipe, tell me how you want it done, I'll do it every time that way. Theory, I just don't like it at all, it's always be something that I've had a problem with."* One mature-age block-student with years of professional kitchen experience believed that she was *"not a theory person, the theory made sense to me, because I had the experience."* For many cooks, traditional classrooms and paper-based assessment do not play to their strengths.

Respondents discussed various post-cooking vocational and educational destinations both beyond Hospitality and further into culinary studies. Cooks seeking a transition from professional cooking would ideally access formal education to employment of equal or better standing. For the purposes of this study, culinary-focused studies will serve as a more finite subset of formal education and provide the opportunity to discuss any preparatory issues within the subject area.

A range of potential post-cooking occupations beyond Hospitality were stated. Males stated predominantly low-level manual jobs in *"labouring"*, *"truck-driving"*, *"butchery"*, *"carpentry"*, *"shovelling gravel"*, with the exception of several who discussed doing computer studies. The females had generally higher aspirations within the management or nurturing professions which included business owner, child care worker, nutritionist and environmental health officer. The stated occupations of males, in general, represented an underemployment of their cookery craft-skills, while the females offered options that built upon their kitchen experience, but were deterred by time commitments required of longer courses.

A small number of respondents indicated were motivated to return to formal education in the near future. Although their comments displayed little research into available courses, the respondents stated what their ideal course structure would be. These three students indicated a preference for *"short-courses"*, *"not like a year ones, I want to do a week one."* Currently, short-courses seldom integrate into a recognised formal qualification; however the potential exists for studying individual units in a flexible modular fashion resulting in a higher qualification.

Respondents offered options for occupations with a culinary focus - including becoming a pastry chef; promotion from kitchen; becoming a chef-trainer or simply keep cooking. These options relate respectively to Certificate III in Hospitality (Patisserie); Certificate IV in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery), Diploma of Hospitality Management and the Bachelor Degree in Culinary Management; Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and no further education. Options within hospitality, representative of under-employment of cooking craft-skills, included being a bar-person or waiter.

One quarter of the students intended to go on to complete Certificate III in Hospitality (Patisserie) which suggests they considered Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) prepared them for this formal education. All were young with even gender distribution. Five out of fifteen metro-based apprentices stated consideration of the pastry course that was offered at their current TAFE as a post-apprenticeship study. A chef-trainer noted qualified cooks could study *"it as post- their apprenticeship. And they come back one day a week for twelve months, and they get their pastry qualification, as well as their cookery qualification"*, representing significant credit transfer that shortened the course by two years. Apprentices at the metropolitan TAFE that offered this course had familiarity with the campus, the patisserie classroom and probably the patisserie teaching staff. One felt *"pretty good, because we did a little bit of patisserie, so I know when I start this course, what to expect."* Only one rural student stated an intention to study this course. As his regional TAFE did not offer this course, he stated that this study would require moving to Melbourne. This tends to concur with the literature that reported that students are more likely to consider studying further education when pathways are formalised and in familiar surrounds, particularly effecting rural students (Cram & Watson, 2008).

The students perceptions of being well prepared to study pastry offers an anomaly to the concept that cooks are not theory learners. Pastry work, more than savoury cooking, is embedded with applied theory, in the form of technical terms and assumed knowledge, requiring the cook to work within a specific set of guidelines, while concurrently allowing for nuances of equipment and changing dynamics of ingredients.

A cook cannot consistently produce pastry without a strong theoretical understanding of the associated technical aspects. Additionally, a cook must also be able to apply this theoretical understanding in a practical context, again and again. This practice provides the opportunity to develop theory through trial and error, assessments of past failures, new hypotheses tested. This indicates that many cooks can be motivated to learn theoretical knowledge if offered in an applied, ritualized, familiar context of a kitchen. This brings into question the fallacy that theoretical learning needs to be paper-based.

Only two student respondents stated intention to study of Certificate IV in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery). Both were young males; one metro, one rural. Both incompletely named a 'grab-bag' of multiple courses, concurring both that men focus on credential acquisition when young (Martin, 2007) and that cooks have poor planning for further education;

Danny: *"I was thinking about doing a Certificate IV and Diploma and a teaching degree for TAFE..."*

The male metro educator questioned the effect on student motivation of the largely paper-based delivery: *"have you seen a Certificate IV? What they actually do in Certificate IV? ... There's nothing really appealing. You're not going to do any cooking"* Several blocks existed for Certificate IV in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) that did not occur for Certificate III in Hospitality (Patisserie). Both TAFEs, at the time of research, did not offer this certificate, causing pathways issues; this certificate does not seem to be valued in industry; and content was criticized as having too much text or being 'too theory-based'. Chef-trainers believed the Certificate IV in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) content offered too little time spent in the kitchen, was too paper-based, and implied that Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) offered little towards Certificate IV in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) study other than credential prerequisite. Chef-trainers considered Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) inadequate preparation to the immediate next level in the same subject area.

The lack of theoretical rigour at Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) creates issues with educational scaffolding to higher education as does the hands-off nature of Diploma in Hospitality Management. A representative view of the educational ceiling of cooks by the chef-trainers was *"I think at Cert III, Cert IV level; you've got more opportunity for success at those levels. I think, looking at sometimes what they're expected to do at Diploma level, there's*

*sometimes a big jump... because it's more academic, it's more the thought processes and the academic requirements are different. They're not practical, they're not tangible.*" This concurs with the assumption that academic and theoretical learning must be text-based, and that cookery students can only be motivated to learn practically. A metro chef-trainer commented on the lack of attractive educational options in culinary studies;

Conor: *"I don't think that there are many pathways... I mean you can go and do a diploma, I mean as a chef... that's not a real pathway is it? You're not going to do any cooking... there's more front-of-house focus."*

Apart from the student already studying a Diploma of Hospitality Management, only one other student stated intention to study to this level. The composition of the Diploma of Hospitality Management often has a resounding front-of-house focus that reflects the existing division between most cooks and servers. Cooks are unlikely to be attracted to study that requires changing teams, is hands-off or they are not educationally prepared for.

There is a growing movement to formalise competent business employees as Workplace Trainers including holding the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. One young apprentice stated this as the motivation to study this course. With RTO auspice this may lead to employees being trained at work and receiving formal recognition for informal on-the-job training. A Certificate IV in Training and Assessment with a Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) are the minimum qualifications of a chef-trainer. The education sector also requires quality on-the-job learning as adequate prerequisite to become a chef-trainer, proven through job references, which indicates recognition of on-the-job learning in one sphere of education. Paradoxically, there is little formal recognition for this informal learning when a student re-engages in alternative study. It seems a double-standard that this occurs for aspiring educators, but not for potential students aiming to change careers. This indicates the carryover effect from a major issue within much formal learning: The assumption that for most learning to count it must be structured and ideally written.

Seventeen percent of students indicated an intention to complete Certificate IV in Training and Assessment in order to transition from professional cooking to a chef-trainer. The level of planning is questionable as none could correctly name the course of study. Three of the five students in their late twenties or mature-aged stated an intention to study this subject as a vehicle to career change into education. Those discussing this qualification seemed primarily motivated in personally achieving better work/life balance. One late twenties rural student stated his motivations to become a chef-trainer, conceivably reflecting his entry to professional cookery, *"because I don't know how to do anything else."*, and intended on making this transition later, when he was *"really burned out"*. The female metro chef-trainer stated that cooks *"irrespective of whether they are or aren't (prepared for formal education) they'll do it because they want to change."* This shows that cooks may re-engage education regardless of stressors and obstacles, albeit again motivated by a perceived lack of choice.

## Conclusion

Male cookery students concurred with Martin (2007) indicating a poor engagement with formal education, which weakened as they aged. Rural students were further disadvantaged with fewer educational options in local areas. Females were significantly more aspirational in their stated post-cooking destinations; the males naming entry level labouring jobs.

Student respondents expressed a general dislike for 'theory', paper-based learning, and assessment that was not their favoured learning method. Consequently, the majority of respondents stated a preference for the practical learning environment of the simulated kitchen. The prevalence of paperwork in formal education and the perception of inaccessibility though this medium creates a block to later engagement.

Students were most motivated to study Certificate III in Hospitality (Patisserie). Five of the six students who indicated an intention to undertake this course were studying at the TAFE that



offered this course. There are several lessons to be learnt from this: the articulation pathway was clearer, well-advertised and largely obstacle free. There was the potential to study with familiar teachers, campus, classrooms and possibly classmates. The hands-on learning style of students and proportions of production assessment requirements of this course provided a good match. The additional skills had the potential to redress work/life balance. The high level of applied theoretical requirements of patisserie contradicts any student who had a self-image based upon not being “a theory person.” This indicates that when a number of the above factors are met in a courses composition, cooks may be motivated to overcome existing blocks to re-engage formal education.

The students were not well motivated to engage the seemingly most logical articulation options from their Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery). Certificate IV in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery), the Diploma of Hospitality Management and the Bachelor of Culinary Management were the least popular stated options. This was likely to be partly due to the non-kitchen teaching environment, the paper-based assessment and the poor preparation that the Certificate III study provided.

Intention to study above Certificate III level was rare, indicating an educational ceiling. The only stated exception was the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. While this level of study was anticipated to be challenging, however the improved work/life balance this qualification led to was considered to be worth attaining. Both students and chef-trainers implied being at least partly motivated to undertake this study by push factors from career cooking, rather than being attracted to passing on culinary knowledge.

Cooks have a variety of obstacles to overcome to re-engage formal education. This demographics' forte is likely to be hands-on work and they may have a non-learner self-image. They are probable to have been poorly prepared for both the requirement and rigors of later re-engagement with formal education during their Certificate III study. It is possible that their career change is motivated through desperation caused by these push factors, rather than the being attracted to the possibilities of their new careers and study.

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