DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 435 809 CE 079 340

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Somekh, Bridget; Convery, Andy; Delaney, Jean; Fisher, Roy; Gray, John; Gunn, Stan; Henworth, Andrew; Powell, Loraine |
| TITLE | Improving College Effectiveness: Raising Quality and Achievement. |
| INSTITUTION | Further Education Development Agency, London (England). |
| ISSN | ISSN-1460-7034 |
| PUB DATE | 1999-00-00 |
| NOTE | 104p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Further Education Development Agency, Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH, United Kingdom (12 British pounds). |
| PUB TYPE | Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Research (143) |
| JOURNAL CIT | FEDA Report; v2 n12 1999 |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC05 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Change Strategies; *Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; Foreign Countries; Literature Reviews; National Surveys; Postsecondary Education; *Program Effectiveness; Program Improvement; Research Needs; Technical Institutes; Vocational Education |
| IDENTIFIERS | *United Kingdom |

ABSTRACT

Work undertaken to improve the effectiveness of the United Kingdom's schools and further education (FE) sectors was identified and assessed in a study entailing four data collection methods: literature review; questionnaire administered to all FE college principals in England and Wales; expert seminar and face-to-face interviews with high-level representatives of all major agencies responsible for the schools, higher education (HE), and FE sectors; and focus group and telephone interviews with quality managers in a sample of colleges. Although the questionnaire elicited a response rate of only 18%, the respondents were representative of the FE sector as a whole. Among the main obstacles to improving sector effectiveness identified by the principals were the following: lack of finance and funding; lack of management systems and training for middle managers; and need for lecturing staff to adopt new teaching methods. Confusion over the terms "effectiveness" and "improvement" was discovered. It was concluded that systematic quantitative and qualitative research based on a theoretical framework clarifying its relationship to Further Education Funding Council policy and practice is critical to future work to improve the schools, FE, and HE sectors. (Appended are the following: research methodology, bibliography that contains 125 references, and information about the study's authors.) (MN)

FEDA Further Education Development Agency

# Improving college effectiveness: raising quality and achievement

***Bridget Somekh, Andy Convery, Jean Delaney, Roy Fisher, John Gray, Stan Gunn, Andrew Henworth, Loraine Powell***

*feda report*

FEDA Further Education Development Agency

# Improving college effectiveness:
## raising quality and achievement

***Bridget Somekh, Andy Convery,***
***Jean Delaney, Roy Fisher, John Gray, Stan Gunn,***
***Andrew Henworth, Loraine Powell***

feda report

3

Published by FEDA

Feedback and orders should be sent to FEDA publications,
Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH
Tel: 0207 840 5302/4 Fax: 0207 840 5401
e-mail: publications@feda.ac.uk

Registered with the Charity Commissioners

Editor: Sara Clay
Designers: Mike Pope and Dave Shaw
Printed by: Henry Ling Ltd, Dorchester, Dorset

ISSN 1460 7034

# Contents


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Acknowledgements | 4 |
| | **Foreword** | 5 |
| | **Summary** | 7 |
| 1 | **Introduction** | 13 |
| 2 | **The state of the colleges** | 19 |
| 3 | **Definition of terms** | 25 |
| 4 | **School effectiveness research** | 29 |
| 5 | **Research on issues relating to college effectiveness in further education** | 39 |
| 6 | **Systems for inspection and improvement** | 57 |
| 7 | **Frameworks for research and development** | 69 |
| 8 | **Recommendations** | 77 |
| | **Appendices** | |
| 1 | Methods of study | 89 |
| 2 | Bibliography | 92 |
| 3 | The authors | 102 |

# Acknowledgements

The scoping study *Improving college effectiveness* was carried out on behalf of FEDA by the Research Units on the Management of Change and on School Effectiveness, School of Education and Professional Development, University of Huddersfield.

This publication is drawn from the research report co-authored by the project team listed below; the final draft was edited by Bridget Somekh.

**Project team**

Bridget Somekh, University of Huddersfield
Andy Convery, Redcar and Cleveland College
Jean Delaney, University of Huddersfield
Roy Fisher, University of Huddersfield
John Gray, Homerton College, Cambridge
Stan Gunn, University of Huddersfield
Andrew Hensworth, Bishop Burton College
Loraine Powell, University of Huddersfield

**Project steering group**

Paul Martinez, FEDA, project manager
Sue Brownlow, FEDA
Emer Clarke, FEFC
Stella Dixon, FEDA
Anna Reisenberger, FEDA
Barry Smeaton, DfEE

# Foreword

Since incorporation, one of the main drivers for colleges has been the need to improve efficiency. This has been expressed through the very detailed requirements of the funding regime: efficiency targets, convergence, and the allocation and claw back mechanisms.

By contrast, the driver to improve effectiveness has been blunt: the direct linking of funding to retention and achievement.

There is now a professional and political consensus that we need to be more effective. In particular, we need to improve retention and achievement, both rapidly and significantly.

Against this background, this report is particularly welcome and timely. It contains a robust and, indeed, critical review of previous research, inspection and developmental activities, and current perceptions of the issue within the sector. It confronts difficulties and complexities head on. In addition, it summarises very succinctly the huge amount of work that has already been done on effectiveness and improvement in the school sector and makes this accessible to colleges.

Above all, I welcome the rigorous analysis of problems and the recommendations for future research and development. If understanding a problem is halfway to resolving it, then this report takes us some way forward.

Raising standards is at the forefront of the Government's agenda for further education. At the same time, colleges have been set new and demanding recruitment targets to widen participation and encourage lifelong learning.

In his letter to the FEFC in December, David Blunkett said:

> *Raising standards is absolutely essential if the sector is to make the contribution to the lifelong learning agenda for which the Comprehensive Spending Review settlement provides. Rates of retention and achievement must be raised significantly, college by college, course by course and year by year.*

The recommendations in this report help us focus on an agenda for research that will unite all institutions, managers and teachers in the sector: raising student achievement.

FEDA, with AoC are taking forward many of the recommendations in a three-year programme funded by the DfEE to raise quality and effectiveness. The ***Raising quality and achievement*** **programme** offers support strategies that include:

- a quality information and advice service
- quality improvement teams
- benchmarking and information
- development projects
- leadership and governance for achievement
- best practice
- research into and evaluation of strategies that work.

**Chris Hughes**
*Chief Executive, FEDA*

# Summary


The aims of this study were to:

- identify relevant work on improving effectiveness from the FE and school sectors, and assess its relevance
- define the agenda and make recommendations for future work.

This report outlines the major changes in policy since the Further and Higher Education Act (1992). There is a wide range of colleges in the sector and a lack of agreement on their purpose and, therefore, no consensus on what constitutes an effective or improving college. Methods of measuring effectiveness often depend on comparing like with like; this is difficult where the purpose, curricula and client groups are extremely diverse within and between colleges.

Principals surveyed for the project see the following as the main obstacles to improving effectiveness:

- the lack of finance and funding which has led to poor pay and conditions and low staff morale
- the lack of management systems and training for middle managers; the increase in bureaucracy
- the need for lecturing staff to adopt new methods of teaching, including the use of IT in college and for distance delivery.

## Definition of terms

There is confusion about the terms 'effectiveness' and 'improvement'. Efficiency is not the same as effectiveness. The former is concerned with the relationship between inputs and outputs, whereas the latter is concerned with whether the objectives or purposes of the institution have been achieved. Improvement implies change over time. An improving institution may not be an effective institution, and effective institutions may not be efficient or cheap.

The focus for improving effectiveness should be the teacher, because it is relatively easy to relate outcomes to teaching. However, there has to be a generally agreed definition of quality, and this can change over time.

## Evidence from research

There is an extensive body of research relating to the schools sector within the specific research paradigm known as 'school effectiveness' research (SER). Its defining features are that: it is concerned with the outcomes of education; institutions should be compared like-with-like; and processes are mainly of interest insofar as they are related to outcomes.

There is increasing interest in research into how schools improve. Schools that start to change have usually worked on:

- the school's attitude and approach to planning
- the way the school is run and organised
- the way the curriculum is organised
- the ethos or culture of the school
- aspects of the quality of teaching and learning.

Few comparable research studies relate to further education. Gray *et al.* (1995) showed that about 11% of 16–19 institutions appear to make a difference, and that the kind of institution appears to have some effect on students' examination performance. Conway (1997) describes how GCSE scores can be used to predict students' performance, can improve the work of departments that are underperforming, and can be combined with valuing each student as an individual.

A diffuse body of literature touches on educational effectiveness and improvement issues in relation to further education. These studies suggest that self-assessment is a key component of quality improvement, and that leadership and organisational development are important factors in college effectiveness. Developing the culture of a learning organisation depends upon allowing staff to grow, and is different from a 'right first time' culture.

The student drop-out rate is a problem. Further work needs to be done on developing the curriculum (particularly relating to the issue of 'parity of esteem' between A-level and GNVQs), retention and value added, since a single methodology cannot currently be applied to further education. There is renewed interest in teaching and learning as the core component of college effectiveness.

## Systems for inspection and improvement

The ways in which inspection is designed to improve effectiveness in the schools and FE sectors are similar, and there appears to be a convergence in approach between the FEFC, FEFCW and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). There is a variation in emphasis between England and Wales, but both approaches are designed to produce a self-critical culture that will lead to improvement.

Of the factors identified by OFSTED as affecting pupil attainment, the most important is effective teaching, which has four times the effect of other significant factors such as internal and external relationships, quality of management and the quality of assessment. Current policy for the FE sector places more emphasis on student attainment, matching students to appropriate courses, and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

## Improving college effectiveness

It is essential that future research and development work on improving college effectiveness uses a theoretical framework that clarifies its relationship to FEFC policy and practice. Frameworks can be categorised, in terms of their characteristic assumptions and strategies, according to the extent to which they belong to the **effectiveness model** or the **improvement model**. Although

they contain elements of both models, FEFC procedures for funding and inspection currently fall rather more into the effectiveness paradigm than the improvement paradigm.

Funding concerns and low morale are sapping the energy and drive to improve effectiveness. This can be addressed by adopting strategies characteristic of the improvement paradigm in relation to: the model of change, the culture of the organisation and motivation of lecturing staff. The challenge is to do this while retaining strategies characteristic of the effectiveness paradigm in relation to other areas.

Research and development work needs to draw on the approaches of both paradigms, as they compensate for each other's weaknesses. This work needs to include the key indicators that can be used to judge effectiveness and improvement.

## Recommendations

There is an urgent need for both quantitative and qualitative research, carried out systematically with representative samples of colleges, to inform the development of policy and practice.

Research in the effectiveness paradigm carried out with colleges, using methods already proven to be robust with the much larger cohort of schools, will be of value in establishing trends:

- Longitudinal studies should be set up to compare 'like now' with 'like past' and 'like future'. These should involve a large sample of colleges to provide a systematic longitudinal study of the sector.
- There is also a need for studies which establish comparison of like with like; establish key indicators; enable value added to be taken into consideration; and enable improvement to be monitored.

This study has identified major gaps in the research so far carried out within the improvement paradigm. There is an urgent need for a firm knowledge base about the sector, in particular:

- high-quality case study research to be carried out systematically across a representative sample of colleges

- studies to monitor outcomes resulting from specific interventions
- a range of other studies on improvement in infrastructure support, in management and organisational structures, and in teaching and learning.

There is a need for an agency to provide leadership for development work in the FE sector, distinct from the monitoring role that is part of the FEFC's inspection remit, including:

- involvement of college staff in research as a form of staff development
- guidelines for carrying out research, to develop methods for supporting improvement in practice
- establishment of an improvement network of colleges to involve all colleges and to enable collaboration with a 'like' partner and dissemination of good practice between more and less effective colleges
- provision of support and consultancy at the request of colleges, to help them improve their effectiveness
- identification and assistance with the recording of good practice; development of strategies for disseminating good practice; and establishment of a database of examples of good practice and related research.

Chapter 1

# Introduction

## Aims and purposes of the study

During the period April to June 1998, we carried out a scoping study called *Improving college effectiveness in England and Wales*. The study aimed to:

- identify relevant work on improving effectiveness from the FE and school sectors and assess its relevance
- define the agenda for future work on improving college effectiveness
- recommend a set of options for future research and development activities.

This is an area of considerable importance because of the economic imperative to improve the level of skills and competence in the workforce. International comparisons show that the UK lags behind most other developed countries in the numbers of skilled technicians and the level of qualifications of blue collar workers generally (Otter, 1996). High levels of unemployment and low achievement among school leavers have given rise to problems of social exclusion; current Government policy places importance upon education as a means of combating these problems. The rapidly changing needs of society at the end of the twentieth century have led to the new concept of lifelong learning as a right of all citizens regardless of age. Further education must rise to all of these challenges.

As a result of these demands, the last year has seen the publication of influential reports that address issues relating to further education's development. Further education provides for all students aged 16 or over who are not in schools or HE institutions. In her introduction to *Learning Works: widening participation in further education* (FEFC, 1997a), which sets out the conclusions of the committee that she chaired, Helena Kennedy writes:

> *Defining further education exhaustively would be God's own challenge because it is such a large and fertile section of the education world. Yet, despite the formidable role played by further education, it is the least understood and celebrated part of the learning tapestry.* (Kennedy, 1997)

This study sets out to improve understanding of further education's current role and future potential through an investigation of the factors and mechanisms that define its effectiveness.

# Policy: context and trends

The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) brought about a revolution in the governance and funding of further education. Colleges were removed from the control of LEAs, and responsibility for their funding and provision became the province of the newly established FEFC. In addition to general and specialist FE colleges, the 1992 Act transferred responsibility for sixth-form colleges from LEAs to the FEFC. This group of colleges, traditionally closely related to schools, has to an extent retained a different culture from the rest of the sector. They are frequently described as being akin to grammar schools in ethos and traditions. Certainly for the purposes of this study they pose very different issues.

Since 1992, there has been an increase of about one-third in the number of student enrolments in FE colleges, and a 27% reduction in funding for full-time equivalent (FTE) students. Other notable changes following the act have included new staff contracts and new national data collection and monitoring systems established by the FEFC.

The adoption of the National Targets for Education and Training in 1991, followed by the White Paper *Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win* (DTI, 1994) created the need for improvements in the performance of the FE

sector, for the first time in relation to measurable targets. The review of these targets in 1995, and the report on progress published in 1997 (NACETT, 1997), continue to pose considerable challenges to both employers and colleges. The Conservative Government's White Paper *Learning to Compete* (DfEE, 1997) was the first ever on 14–19 education and laid the foundation for current ambitious policies.

Since the election of a Labour Government in May 1997, 'education, education and education' has become the top priority. Two significant reports, commissioned by the previous Government, have focused attention on the need to extend provision of further education. The report of the committee chaired by John Tomlinson, *Inclusive Learning* (FEFC, 1996c), brought it to public attention that the quality of learning opportunities for disabled students and those with learning difficulties was poorer than for other students; and that some groups of such learners were effectively deprived of the opportunity to attend college. In articulating the benefits of inclusive learning, the report properly establishes that making provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is an economic imperative as well as a moral one. The report identified the need for nationally planned and funded staff development, for both managers and teachers, as the most urgent of its recommendations. It called for the strengthening of inspection arrangements '... so that they can provide evidence of the match between student needs and a college-wide inclusive environment'. Tomlinson places the needs of those who had been generally neglected in society firmly on the quality and effectiveness agenda of further education.

*Learning Works* (FEFC, 1997a), published since the change of Government, recommended 'prioritising widening participation in the post-16 education agenda' and 'redistributing public resources towards those with less success in earlier learning, moving towards equity of funding in post-16 education'. In responding to both the Tomlinson and the Kennedy reports, the FEFC has published guidance (FEFC, 1997b) to assist colleges in identifying and addressing needs through gathering market intelligence; through the use of community profiles to provide a comparator with the current student body; and by ensuring the incorporation of needs and market analysis in strategic planning processes.

Both the Tomlinson and the Kennedy reports received an enthusiastic welcome from the sector. The Kennedy report, in particular, provided a

vision for the sector as a whole and celebrated its achievements. At a time when many staff felt that resources had been cut to the bone, Kennedy restated values which they hold dear:

> *The hallmark of a college's success is, as it should be, public trust, satisfaction of the 'stakeholders' and esteem rather than profitability. These colleges do not see their students merely as 'consumers', or learning merely as 'training'. They see education as being more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills. In a system so caught up in what is measurable, we can forget that learning is also about problem solving, learning to learn, acquiring the capability for intelligent choice in exercising personal responsibility. It is a weapon against poverty. It is a route to participation and active citizenship.*

The Government's response to Kennedy was a positive one (DfEE, 1998b): the commitment of £100 million additional funding to provide for an anticipated extra 80,000 students in further education, '... the great majority to be drawn from the educationally disadvantaged population'. Significantly for the development of the sector, the Government expressed its belief:

> *... that excessive emphasis in the past on market competition has inhibited collaboration; and that strong partnerships are now needed to develop efficient local strategies for learning.*

The 1997 report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, chaired by Bob Fryer, *Learning for the Twenty-first Century,* and the subsequent DfEE (1998a) consultation paper *The Learning Age* extend the debate to include the more general need to provide lifelong learning opportunities for all adults. Although encompassing a wider range of issues than those relating exclusively to the FE sector, these reports have immense implications for further education. The most important strategies include 500,000 additional people in further and higher education, the New Deal for the young and long-term unemployed, the University for Industry (UfI), Individual Learning Accounts and the National Grid for Learning. Every one of these will depend to an extent on further education for its implementation. While there will be some additional funding, it is generally recognised that colleges will be expected to improve their effectiveness to ensure that all these policies are delivered.

Chapter 5 of the Green Paper *Ensuring Standards, Quality and Accountability* sets out the vision that all learners:

> *... should be entitled to high quality learning that: delivers what it promises; gets them to their goals; and takes them as high up the ladder of achievement as they are able to go.*

Regarding further education, the Green Paper says that Government proposes to work with the FEFC and FEDA to get all colleges to:

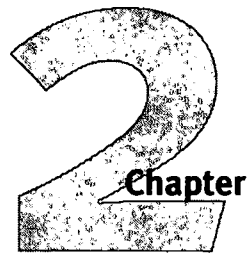
- 'adopt a rigorous approach to standards, with systematic assessment and target setting'
- ensure better teaching, to ensure that all new teachers acquire a 'recognised teacher training qualification'
- ensure both flexibility and continuity by a proper balance of full-time and part-time teachers in the workforce
- 'promote improvements in college management'.

Most recently, the report of the House of Commons Select Committee for Education and Employment (1998) has supported the development of further education along the lines recommended by Kennedy, and has called for further funding to enable this. It also endorses Government plans for a national qualifications framework and a common modular structure across A-levels and GNVQs, with individual certification of modules, to allow learners to build up credit towards qualifications that match their needs. This is broadly in line with the recommendations of the Dearing report, *Review of Qualifications for 16–19 Year Olds* (1996), and will make it easier to monitor the effectiveness of colleges.

Together, these reports and policy documents present a new agenda for further education, in line with the current Government's vision for education. They contain a new emphasis on inclusive education to serve the needs of a wide range of stakeholders. The old agenda of competition in the market place has been replaced by an agenda of partnership and collaboration, coupled with challenging targets to ensure that further education, like other sectors of education, ensures the maximum possible achievement for its students.

## Key points

- There has been an increase of about one-third in the number of students in further education since 1992, without any comparable increase in resources.
- There is a drive to improve performance in the FE sector using systematic assessment and target setting; there is a corresponding need for improved management techniques and better qualified staff.
- There is a need to improve the quality of learning opportunities for disabled students and those with learning difficulties, and to widen participation in further education; there is a corresponding need for staff development for managers and lecturers.
- The Government has made additional funding available for an increase in student numbers and further funding is likely to be forthcoming.
- The need to provide lifelong learning opportunities for adults will be met through initiatives such as the New Deal, the UfI, and Individual Learning Accounts, and through changes in the curriculum and qualifications framework.
- There is a need to establish an agenda that stresses partnership and collaboration within the FE sector based on challenging targets related to the maximisation of student achievement.




# The state of the colleges

The FEFC and FEFCW have divided FE sector colleges into six broad types:

- general FE and tertiary colleges (285 in 1997 – 64% of the total)
- sixth-form colleges (109 in 1997 – 24.5% of the total)
- agricultural and horticultural (30 in 1997 – 7% of the total)
- art and design (7 in 1997 – 1.5% of the total)
- designated colleges (with mainly adult provision) (13 in 1997 – 3% of the total)
- colleges in Wales (26 in 1997).

Perhaps it is not surprising that, given the wide range of kinds of colleges in the sector, there is lack of agreement over their purpose. This results in a lack of agreement about what constitutes effectiveness.

Immediately prior to incorporation, Rick Dearing (1994) identified 'the public service ethic' as still dominant among most FE staff. Two years later Halliday (1996) contrasts the value laden mission of traditional FE colleges with '... the perception that further education is a value-neutral commercial response to a presumed market in education'. Policy-makers tend to assume the latter. One of our respondents sees further education as 'a production activity' in which students have the right to acquire the qualification for which they enrol. He believes there should be 'zero tolerance of failure' and has little time for those who perceive student participation to be an end in

itself. In support of his views, he points out that nationally the average pass rate for those enrolling on a course in further education is probably as low as 50%; although pass rates for students who complete a course are generally higher, in some colleges they can be as low as 25%.

The question here is whose values count and whose interests do they serve? The argument that students are being 'robbed' if a college takes their money and fails to deliver a qualification is persuasive. Students may also be ill served if they are enrolled on courses with little prospect of leading to employment. At present, this happens too often as a result of the pressure on colleges to meet financial targets. Vulnerable students who are not from educationally aware backgrounds need advocates who will act in their interests. Another respondent pointed out that few teachers, managers or decision-makers in further education use the sector for significant aspects of their own vocational education or that of their offspring. In this sense, FE policies could be seen as 'middle-class schemes for working-class learners.' He wondered if this might have contributed to 'a situation wherein poor retention and achievement have rarely been challenged and mediocrity has been widely accepted.'

The lack of consensus on purpose among FE colleges is most obvious in the contrast between sixth-form colleges. The latter perceives academic achievement as the pinnacle of their provision, while general colleges tend to look for a broader range of goals, including social cohesion and inclusiveness, and a concern with citizenship and Europeanisation, as well as traditional academic values. Methods of measuring effectiveness generally rely on comparing like with like. This is difficult in a sector with such diversity.

The divisions lie in the curriculum itself. GNVQs were established to provide a competence-based alternative to the 'gold standard' of A-levels, but it has not been easy to establish their credibility. Despite frequent pleas from Government for equal status for vocational qualifications, not all universities give them recognition equal to A-levels. Research by Fitz-Gibbon (1997) suggests that the four most popular Advanced GNVQs are not entirely comparable with A-level because of differences in the philosophy and methods of assessment. These differences account in part for the difficulty of effectively deploying value added measurements in the mainstream of further education (Barnard and Dixon, 1998).

Colleges need to serve multiple stakeholders: young people, employers, those wishing to return to learning in late youth, middle age or later, local councils, TECs and central Government. However, the FEFC report on college responsiveness (FEFC, 1996a) suggests that, while colleges are broadly successful in responding to student demands and to community needs, they appear to give less priority to the needs of employers. Open learning facilities were found to be often under-used; few colleges surveyed employers' views; the move toward flexible delivery of modularised courses was slow; and marketing activities were, by and large, not properly evaluated. Links between FE colleges and employers are extensive in terms of college-workplace links at a functional level. However, many colleges have surprisingly few links with employers at the level of chief executive or managing director. It seems that employers have mainly established these links with schools and higher education, partly as a result of Government initiatives that have not included further education.

Since incorporation there have been great changes in the management of FE colleges. Colleges are now often perceived by their principals as business organisations whose business happens to be education. All colleges have mission statements and, following the publication of the *Charter for Further Education* (DFE, 1993), all colleges have their own charters as a condition of FEFC funding. Colleges are also involved in quality assurance procedures. As early as 1990, a survey (Sallis, 1990) showed that BS5750 had been adopted by 39% of respondents, and a further 33% were developing total quality management (TQM) approaches. This trend has continued. ISO9000 has since replaced BS5750. Meanwhile, most colleges are funded for some of their work by TECs, which are required by law to ensure compliance with *TEC Quality Assurance: Supplier Management* (Employment Department, 1993).

There is also widespread take-up of Investors in People. This award is made to organisations that can demonstrate:

- a commitment to develop employees
- an openly available business plan that incorporates a training policy, regular reviews of training and development for all the workforce
- action to train and develop individuals
- evaluation of investment in training and development.

In spring 1995, a special 'Quality For All' edition of the *NATFHE Journal* was devoted specifically to a critical review of what the editorial referred to as '... the maze of what has become a booming business of assessment and measurement'. Many writers have expressed concern regarding the implications of an uncritical adoption of 'managerialist' approaches, labour casualisation, inappropriate inspection and audit regimes, funding mechanisms based on crude performance indicators, and industrially derived quality ideologies (Elliott, 1993; Holmes, 1993; Elliott and Hall, 1994; Reeves, 1995; Avis, 1996; Elliott, 1996a; Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997; Avis, 1998).

In our survey of college principals, the areas they raised as major issues in the drive to improve college effectiveness were: finance and funding, staffing, management and quality assurance, and teaching and learning. What one principal called 'the downward convergence of finance' was generally agreed to have led to 'the worsening pay and conditions of FE lecturers', resulting in 'demoralised staff'. The most frequent comments on management and quality assurance involved the use and development of management information systems (MIS) and the training of middle managers. Comments on teaching and learning were exclusively about the need for staff to adopt new methods, including the use of IT for both college-based and home delivery.

The most frequent complaint from college lecturers is about the increase in bureaucracy and, specifically, the huge increase in paperwork in recent years. According to a senior civil servant with responsibility for further education, the volume of paperwork that colleges are producing has increased considerably. Some colleges that have achieved good inspection results have 'set up amazing systems with volumes and volumes of paper'. There is value in this accurate information on what is being done, but clearly it is also taking up time that might be spent on other things.

There appears to have been a corresponding falling away of professional development opportunities. Betts (1996), following an analysis of FEFC inspection reports and a review of appraisal schemes in seven colleges, argues that staff development in further education is not a high priority and suffers from short-termism. Ollin (1996) points to the dangers of current staff development practices in further education leading to the deskilling of lecturers as a consequence of college managers' failure to learn lessons from industry's approaches to investment in human resource development.

## Key points

- There is a wide range of colleges in the sector and a lack of agreement on their purpose.
- There can be no agreement, therefore, on what constitutes an effective or improving college.
- Methods of measuring effectiveness often depend on comparing like with like; this is difficult where the purpose, curricula and client groups within colleges are very diverse.
- Many principals now see themselves as managers of a business; many colleges have adopted quality assurance systems.
- The major issues that college principals see as obstacles to improving effectiveness are: lack of finance and funding, which has led to poor pay and conditions for staff; lack of management systems; the lack of training for middle managers; increased bureaucracy; and the lack of continuing professional development for lecturing staff.

Chapter 3

# Definition of terms

As noted in the previous chapter, there appears to be a lack of agreement about the purposes of colleges and what constitutes effectiveness. Before going any further, it may therefore be useful to define some of the terms we will be using. The following definitions are based on *Managing Colleges Efficiently* (DES/WO, 1998):

- **efficiency** is based on the relationship of inputs to outputs
- **effectiveness** is the extent to which objectives are achieved.

Birch and Latcham (1985a) explain that:

> *... an organisation is effective if it achieves its objectives which are appropriate to the needs of society. It is efficient if it achieves these objectives with the optimal use of resources. Thus it is possible to be effective without also being efficient, but it is not possible to be efficient without also being effective.*

Building on this basic distinction, we have found the following quotations useful in further clarifying terms:

> *A more effective institution is typically defined as one whose students make greater progress over time than comparable students in comparable institutions.* (John Gray, see Chapter 4 )

*It's difficult to concentrate on effectiveness when efficiency is so dominant.* (Questionnaire response from a college principal)

*School improvement is about raising student achievement through enhancing the teaching learning process and the conditions that support it. It is about strategies for improving the school's capacity for providing quality education.* (Hopkins, Ainscow and West, 1994)

*Quality. The delivery of a professional service in a consistent fashion to predefined standards and specifications which meet customer wants and needs and provide value for money.* (Sallis and Hingley, 1992)

*Continuous improvement – the involvement of everyone in process improvement, now and forever.* (Choppin, 1997)

These definitions of effectiveness, improvement and quality demonstrate the problematic relationship between theory and practice. Researchers are tentative about ascribing specific causal relationships between critical variables and outcomes. There are always indeterminate factors that are difficult to identify, let alone quantify. One can only be guided by the best available evidence.

In practice, we found that there is often confusion about the definition of effectiveness. For many college staff, the emphasis in recent years on reducing costs has made effectiveness more or less synonymous with efficiency. This is a confusion. Effective institutions may not be cheap to run, although value for money is obviously an important additional factor.

Neither is an improving school the same as an effective school. Much of the US and UK effectiveness literature focuses on factors associated with effective schools (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Sammons *et al.*, 1995). However, as Austin and Reynolds (1990) point out:

*We at present know more about the characteristics of effective schools than we know about the precise ways in which schools can be made more effective.*

Scheerens (1992) switches our attention from institutional to teacher level. Drawing on research undertaken in the Netherlands, he focuses on effectiveness factors at the critical instructional level. At this level, effectiveness

depends on the interrelationship of such factors as time available for learning, qualitative components of the instructional process, the instructional material, grouping and teaching behaviour.

In terms of improving effectiveness, focusing on the effectiveness of the teacher, rather than effectiveness at institutional level, makes it somewhat easier to relate behaviours to outcomes. The process of teaching can be seen to be the focal point for improvement and change (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991). However, the notion of continuous improvement in relation to students' learning makes it difficult to reach a common definition of quality; what is recognised as quality now will, by definition, not be quality tomorrow. This presumes a view of quality as directly related to the experience of the learner, or the quality of the student experience. Systematic attention to changing the learning conditions as a key focus for improvement recognises the need for planned and systematic approaches to change as a process taking place over time. Thus, continuous improvement of quality becomes the hallmark of effectiveness.

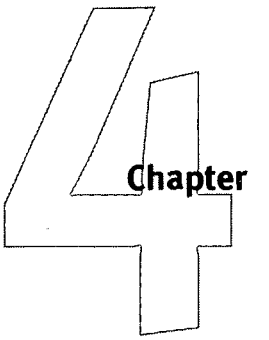
An understanding of how the terms are interpreted, applied and evaluated is crucial. Particular assumptions and ascribed meanings influence the very nature and use of the data.

> *The research design that is required to study school improvement from a school effectiveness perspective is quite difficult and time-consuming to construct and implement ... [It bears] out the old adage that the data one has tends to structure the way one sees the problems, and the way one sees the problems tends to structure the data one attempts to collect.* (Gray *et al.*, 1993)

## Key points

- There is confusion about the terms 'effectiveness' and 'improvement'.
- Efficiency is not the same as effectiveness. The former is concerned with the relationship between inputs and outputs, whereas the latter is concerned with whether the objectives or purposes of the institution have been achieved. Improvement implies change over time.

- An improving institution may not be an effective institution, and effective institutions may not be cheap or efficient.
- The focus for improving effectiveness may be best directed to the level of the teacher, where it may be relatively easier to relate outcomes to teaching behaviour.
- However, there has to be a generally agreed definition of quality; this can change over time.




# School effectiveness research

This chapter sets out the evidence from research about ways of identifying effective educational institutions and those that are improving, as well as the likely characteristics of effective educational institutions. There is an extensive body of research relating to the schools sector within the specific research paradigm known as SER. There is almost no comparable research relating to further education. However, a diffuse body of literature touches on educational effectiveness and improvement issues in relation to further education.

The defining features of SER are that:

- it is concerned with the outcomes of education
- institutions should be compared like with like
- processes are mainly of interest insofar as they are related to outcomes.

Much of the research within this paradigm has been of an essentially quantitative nature, but more recent qualitative studies have also made influential contributions.

## Definitions of effectiveness

A more effective institution is typically defined as one whose students make greater progress over time than comparable students in comparable institutions. Attending a more effective school, as opposed to a less effective one, seems to make up to eight to ten points difference to a student's overall exam points score (where seven is given for an A grade, six for a B, down to one for a G). In other words, a more effective school adds up two grade C passes more at GCSE per pupil than a less effective one (Gray and Wilcox, 1995). Higher figures are sometimes reported, but one needs to be sensitive to the nature of the comparisons, which have sometimes involved schools at different extremes.

Nearly all the secondary school studies use exam results as the outcome measure. These tend to be highly correlated with each other (0.85 and above). The measures in public use (such as five A–Cs at GCSE and two or more A-levels) may be convenient, but tend to have poor statistical characteristics. They may also encourage very focused behaviour on improving the results of 'borderline' students. Measures that reward effort equally anywhere along the scale are preferable (e.g. a rise from E to D is valued at one point, and a rise from D to C also scores one point).

Other outcome measures – such as students' attitudes toward their education, attendance and truancy rates, and post-school destinations – have also sometimes been used. The different measures are undoubtedly correlated (especially those relating to exam performance), suggesting that there is such a thing as a more effective school rather than schools that are more effective at this particular activity or that.

Rather than rely solely upon exam results, different researchers have identified a wide range of measures that could be used in addition. Often too many indicators are used. To counteract this, Gray and Wilcox (1995) suggest that just three performance indicators are capable of capturing all the most important components of a school's work. These are the proportions of students who:

- make more academic progress than expected
- are satisfied with the education they are receiving
- have a good or 'vital' relationship with one or more adults/teachers in their school.

In choosing such indicators, one needs to bear in mind the importance of 'stretching' institutions in different directions, rather than simply piling them up and measuring roughly the same set of institutional attributes.

## The importance of comparing like with like

School effectiveness studies have the premise that like is being compared with like. There is now fairly widespread agreement that the most appropriate control for differences in schools' intakes is connected with individual students' prior attainments at entry. For example, students' prior attainments at GCSE can be used for studies of 16–19 institutions (see below).

Information about prior performance is not always available. In these circumstances, other information about pupils' backgrounds is usually substituted, such as eligibility for free school meals. Drawing on census data, it is possible to establish the general characteristics of students in the area of the school. This makes it possible to construct 'families' of like schools.

How much information is needed depends, in practice, on what is available. With one or two 'good' controls (such as prior attainment), only a few additional items of information (such as students' gender and ethnic background) may be needed to capture most of the variation in student performance that can potentially be attributed to prior/background characteristics. Where such measures are not available, however, rather more information may be required to satisfy the expectation that like is truly being compared with like.

## Comparisons of institutional performance

School effectiveness researchers believe that, while some useful things can be said about institutions' effectiveness, there is a danger of over-interpreting the data. It is almost certainly inappropriate to divide institutions into more than three groups:

- those of average effectiveness, performing around the levels that would be predicted from knowledge of their intakes
- those that are more effective
- those that are less effective.

The groupings are determined by a statistical procedure that establishes whether the results for individual institutions depart sufficiently from the average to be of statistical significance. Usually between two-thirds and three-quarters of institutions are found to be of average effectiveness; the remaining third to a quarter are divided fairly equally between the more and less effective. In one such study, Gray *et al.* (1995) found evidence that some institutions did better with some kinds of candidates than others, and that the kind of institution candidates attended made some difference to the prediction of their examination performance (see below).

## Further issues

A recent study by Sammons, Thomas and Mortimore (1997) has shown that much of the variation in schools' effectiveness can best be explained in terms of differences between departments. In practice, very few schools appear to be equally effective across the board. Few, for example, perform equally well in English, Maths and Science; most have a mixture of stronger and weaker departments.

Most studies of school effectiveness have been based on single cohorts of students and have not usually been replicated. In general, such studies have found that schools that do well one year tend to do well in the subsequent year. (See Gray and Wilcox, 1995 for a fuller review.) More recently, however, the implications of stability for the study of school improvement have begun to be considered; if there is too much stability from year to year then the element of change needed for institutional improvement is ruled out.

## Factors that seem to make a difference

What makes one school more effective than another? This is not easy to determine. Scheerens (1992) provides a review of the international literature and concludes that very few variables indeed have received what he terms 'multiple empirical research confirmation'. By this he means that they have been found to be of importance in several studies (not just one) in explaining variations in student outcomes. Only two (the amount of 'structured teaching' pupils receive and 'effective learning time') survive this stringent criterion. Some additional measures are judged to have 'a reasonable empirical base',

| Table 1 Eleven factors associated with school effectiveness | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Participatory leadership | • firm and purposeful<br>• a participative approach<br>• the leading professional |
| 2 | Shared vision and goals | • unity of purpose<br>• consistent practice<br>• collegiality and collaboration |
| 3 | A learning environment | • an orderly atmosphere<br>• an attractive working environment |
| 4 | Emphasis on teaching and learning | • maximum learning time<br>• academic emphasis<br>• achievement focus |
| 5 | Purposeful teaching | • efficient organisation<br>• clarity of purpose<br>• structured lessons<br>• adaptive practice |
| 6 | High expectations | • high expectations for all<br>• expectations communicated<br>• intellectual challenge |
| 7 | Positive reinforcement | • clear and fair discipline<br>• feedback |
| 8 | Monitoring and enquiry | • monitoring pupil performance<br>• evaluating school performance |
| 9 | Pupil rights and responsibilities | • high pupil self-esteem<br>• positions of responsibility<br>• control of work |
| 10 | Home–school partnership | • parental involvement in their children's learning |
| 11 | Learning for all | • school-based staff development |
| Source: Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1994) | | |

including pupils' 'opportunity to learn', the 'pressure to achieve', the existence of 'high expectations', the extent of 'parental involvement'. These views have subsequently been updated by Scheerens and Bosker (1997).

A recent review of the international literature by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995) for OFSTED has been particularly influential. This identifies 11 factors (see Table 1, page 33). Some of these factors, however, are better supported than others. The general view is that they are a guide to good practice rather than a blueprint for it. Seven out of ten schools that do these sorts of things tend to get better results, but this is not inevitably the case. Critics have argued that some of these factors are 'obvious' and could have been deduced by other means (see, for example, White and Barber, 1997). Nonetheless, they do seem to have some empirical support.

A more humanistic perspective on what makes the difference is provided in Lightfoot's (1983) study of American high schools, based on case studies of six 'excellent' institutions (see Table 2). Relationships between teachers and students feature much more prominently in this study than in the others, which are more managerial and organisational in orientation.

**Table 2 Seven characteristics of 'goodness' in American high schools**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Conscious of their imperfections; willing to search for their origins and solutions. |
| 2 | Development of a visible and explicit ideology that involves both staff and pupils. |
| 3 | The headteacher is seen as the voice of the school providing vision. |
| 4 | The senior management hold teachers and their work in high regard – their satisfaction and nurturing is seen as critical. |
| 5 | There is an easy rapport between teachers and pupils; teachers are not 'afraid' of pupils. |
| 6 | There is a visible concern for the weakest members of the institution. |
| 7 | Opportunities are fostered for pupils to make a 'vital' relationship with one (or more) adults. |

Source: Lightfoot (1983)

## Developing management and teaching

Recently, the role of the headteacher and, in particular, the leadership styles of senior managers, have attracted particular attention in SER. No single leadership style seems to be universally appropriate. More effective schools, however, seem to have management teams that offer a clear sense of mission to their colleagues and a capacity to translate their visions into a series of goals and specific targets. Their headteachers command colleagues' respect even if they are not always popular. At the same time, effective management teams seem to have taken a variety of steps to ensure the active involvement of staff in planning the means to achieve the goals, through participatory decision-making processes. It is increasingly recognised that 'leadership' is required at other levels in the school, especially at departmental and classroom levels. The effective school, then, seems to have secured a balance between vertical push and horizontal pull, and between laterality and centralisation. Such factors seem to be especially important when the school considers the steps it needs to take to secure further improvements.

Recent statistical analyses have shown how variations in performance can be partitioned between the different levels of the school (Sammons *et al*, 1997). They have shown, in particular, the extent of variation between different classrooms in particular schools. In turn, these findings have fuelled interest in factors associated with effective teaching and some of the strategies that might help to support it. Again, as with leadership styles, no single approach has emerged as universally more effective (Cooper and McIntyre, 1996). There is now, however, greater awareness about the need for schools to develop a repertoire of strategies for supporting teaching (including a renewed interest in the potential of self-evaluation).

## From school effectiveness to school improvement

What is meant by school improvement? There is increasing interest in definitions that are related, in some way, to students' achievement. Borrowing from the school effectiveness tradition, an 'improving' institution is therefore one that 'improves in its effectiveness over time'. To realise this kind of definition empirically, data on at least three cohorts of students passing through the system is required.

In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in how school improvement occurs and which features of schools provide the key levers for change (see Stoll and Fink, 1996, for a comprehensive review).

One of the main reasons for this shift of perspective has been the realisation that the literature on school effectiveness factors may have been too static in its focus. What a school does to become more effective may differ from what it does to sustain effectiveness once it is achieved. Unfortunately, hardly any studies have looked at how schools have become more effective over time.

Researchers are currently addressing a range of issues. Which particular features of schools, for example, provide key levers for change? Are some features of schools easier to change than others? And are the things that a school does to get into the pack the same as, or different from, those that help it to pull ahead? The change process has turned out to be rather more difficult to study than the correlates of school effectiveness. In the process researchers have also come to realise that they need a more elaborate framework, in which schools' levels of effectiveness are integrated with their 'improvement trajectories'.

When schools start to change, they seem to have worked on any or all of the following things:

- attitude and approach to planning
- how the school is run and organised
- the way the curriculum is organised
- the ethos or culture of the school
- aspects of the quality of teaching and learning.

Indeed, they often launch change on several of these fronts at the same time.

In the recently completed *Improving schools* study, the schools that improved most rapidly focused on two things simultaneously (Gray *et al.*, in press). They adopted a series of 'tactics' in relation to improving exam performance; and they tried, at the same time, to facilitate discussions and work about the quality of teaching and learning in various subject departments. By contrast, schools that were less effective and improving only slowly, at best, spent a lot of time getting to the starting gate and dealing with 'cultures of resistance'.

## Key points

- There is an extensive body of research relating to the schools sector within the specific research paradigm known as SER.
- The defining features of SER are as follows:
  - it is concerned with with the outcomes of education; the most popular measures are examination results, but a range of other performance indicators have been developed
  - institutions should be compared like with like; this is usually achieved by comparing schools' intakes, e.g. individual students' prior attainments at entry
  - processes are mainly of interest insofar as they are related to outcomes.
- Several studies have identified factors that seem to make a difference. Those presented by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1994) and Lightfoot (1982) are of particular interest.
- There is increasing interest in research into how schools improve. Schools that start to change have usually worked on:
  - the school's attitude and approach to planning
  - the way the school is run and organised
  - the way the curriculum is organised
  - the ethos or culture of the school
  - aspects of the quality of teaching and learning.

# Research on issues relating to college effectiveness in further education

Chapter 5

## Overview

Relatively few publications deal with issues of quality, effectiveness and improvement specifically in relation to further education. An important early text is Theodossin's (1985) *In Search of the Responsive College*. It provides a concise overview of key factors affecting colleges before incorporation. Taking inspiration from the American management classic *In Search of Excellence* (Peters and Waterman, 1982), Theodossin initially planned to identify excellent innovative colleges with the aim of promoting dissemination of their characteristics across the FE system. Finding it impossible to create an authoritative list of excellent/responsive colleges, he settled on a presentation, based on his respondents' answers, of current thinking on the concept of responsiveness in relation to colleges.

Theodossin identified a tension in the system between traditional educational values (which he characterised as 'missionary' in nature), and those of industry/commerce (held by the 'marketeers'). It was felt that a responsive college would put client needs before provider needs, and it was evident that this growing perception was generating some anxiety in colleges. There was a strong feeling that improved market research was going to be crucial to future success. Theodossin also found that formal systematic quality control

data collection was generally absent and concluded that, in an increasingly competitive environment, '... performance indicators and output measures may come to be recognised as a hitherto ignored source of ammunition.'

John Stone's (1997) *Increasing Effectiveness: A Guide to Quality Management* has, despite having been published prior to the FEFC's (1997) new requirements for inspection, been credited with providing:

> ... *a very useful framework for colleges who are in the throes of preparing their own systems of self assessment and and assuring that they have a robust system of quality assurance in place.* (Parnham, 1998)

Stone outlines a range of possible approaches to the achievement of quality, drawing on his experience in the creation of quality systems at Swindon College. He provides definitions and overviews of the concept of quality, external quality awards, and of TQM, and then discusses issues arising from the implementation and management of quality control mechanisms. Containing checklists and examples of standard forms, this is a sound introductory text for those who are looking for a basic overview of the key principles of establishing and working with quality control systems.

*The Lecturer's Guide to Quality and Standards in Colleges and Universities* (Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck, 1995) is a practical handbook incorporating a range of 'enquiry tasks' designed to facilitate the exploration of issues in the reader's own workplace. Covering processes in quality and standards, and examining quality issues in relation to teaching and learning, student support, staffing and staff development, assessment and evaluation, course design, resource management, marketing and recruitment, and research, the book is relatively comprehensive. Focusing on the perspective of the lecturer, and employing a reflective practice model, it constitutes a useful staff development/quality consciousness-raising resource.

*500 Tips for Quality Enhancement in Universities and Colleges* (Brown, Race and Smith, 1997) provides a pragmatic approach to improvement. This book consists of a series of brief items of advice organised into broad categories, including valuing students, teaching and assessment, quality processes, preparation for quality assessment visits, and caring for the campus. The format facilitates quick reference and generates ideas, with a focus on quality enhancement rather than quality assurance.

A recent and useful collection of analytical papers focusing on the relationship between effectiveness and improvement in schools and colleges is contained in *Organisational Effectiveness and Improvement in Education* (Harris, Bennett, and Preedy, 1997a). Based on the premise that effective management is '... central to the professional development of all teachers and lecturers ...', the 25 papers featured present a range of perspectives to make management theory accessible. Although the balance of the papers veers toward schools, the issues explored apply across the sectors. The book provides a stimulating exploration of systems theories, the concepts of effectiveness and improvement, educational cultures, value added and change management. It offers a relevant insight into the wider literature on organisation theory. Several contributors articulate a multi-level conception of organisational effectiveness, incorporating the student, the classroom and institutional levels, and arguing the need for these to be dynamically interrelated.

Beyond the few books on college effectiveness lie the many papers published in academic journals. A highly relevant journal is *Quality Assurance in Education* (published by MCB University Press). Critically examining the issues surrounding quality in education, this journal seeks to feature papers from a range of stakeholders, both internal and external to education, to encourage dialogue around the meaning of 'quality' and to inform both practice and policy.

FE colleges have, of course, produced their own unpublished papers and documentation that are the basis of their management and systems. In addition to this 'functional documentation', colleges have increasingly undertaken – individually and collectively – research projects that have contributed directly to improving practice. For a recent overview of research activity in FE colleges, together with 10 case studies, see Johnson (1997). Johnson's survey of 150 colleges showed that 66% were involved in research to improve institutional performance or quality, the second highest area of research activity (behind marketing at 93%).

Although this study reviewed research over the past 25 years, this report is generally limited to studies produced since colleges became independent corporations in April 1993. The establishment of the FEFC and the new inspection regime, and the rapid expansion of the sector, have brought about very significant changes since that date, so that earlier studies inevitably have less relevance.

## Two studies in the school effectiveness paradigm

Our literature search uncovered only a handful of studies into college effectiveness in further education within the paradigm of SER reviewed above. We will discuss two of these here: the study carried out by Gray in collaboration with DfEE statisticians (Gray *et al.*, 1995), and the unpublished study by Conway of the achievements of students in the sixth-form college of which he is the principal. (For an account of the system, see Conway, 1997.) A detailed analysis of Gray's study is included as an example of the kind of analysis that is produced by this kind of research.

Value added monitoring, when embedded into student support and MIS, has been shown to offer substantial pedagogic and learning potential in relation to A-level programmes. However, it should be recognised that the diversity of the FE client group, together with the assessment regimes currently associated with the various vocational curricula, have made its broad application problematic (see FEU, 1993 and 1994; FEU/FEDA, 1995; Barnard and Dixon, 1998).

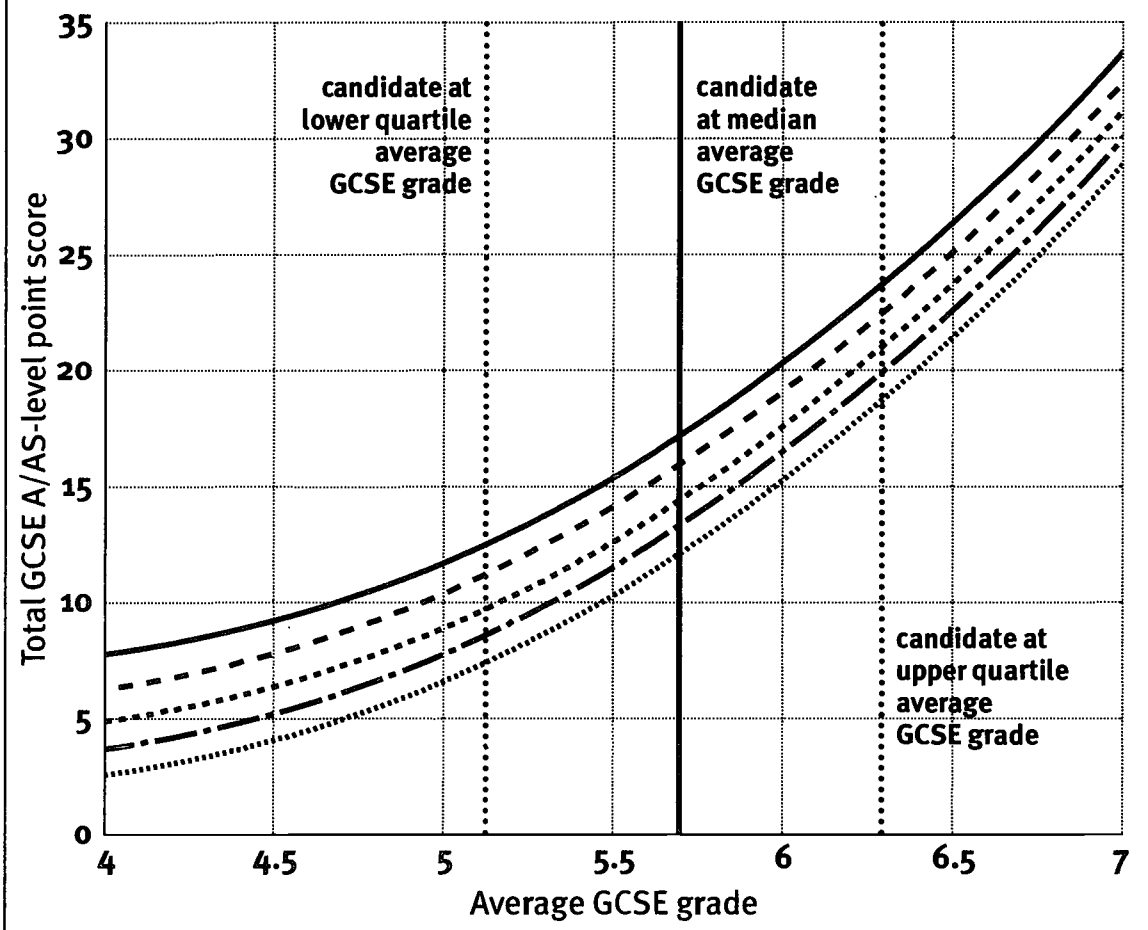
### *The development of a national framework for estimating value added at GCE A/AS-level*

The study by Gray *et al.* (1995) compares the institutional performance of 16–19 institutions. It can be said to compare like with like, because only students studying for A-levels were included. The data set used for this analysis covered virtually every post-16 institution in the country. It used students' A-level scores as the outcome measure and their prior performance at GCSE to account for their attainment at entry. Similar work has been undertaken using the A Level Information System (ALIS) data sets (Fitz-Gibbon, 1996).

Figure 1 (opposite) is drawn from the DfEE study (Gray *et al.*, 1995). It shows the relationships between pupils' performance at A/AS-level and their performance at GCSE, as well as other information about their background characteristics. Overall, there would seem to be a strong relationship between a student's performance at GCSE and subsequent performance at A/AS-level; the higher the performance at GCSE, the higher the performance at A/AS-level. The figure also shows the predicted results for five different institutions.

The lines on the figure show the results for the typical institution nationally (labelled C) as well as typical institutions at varying levels of 'effectiveness', including institutions just falling into the top and bottom deciles of effectiveness (A and E) and at the upper and lower quartiles (B and D). Only a relatively small proportion of institutions were significantly different from the national norm (about 28% of all institutions); these were fairly evenly divided between those that were doing considerably better than predicted and those that were doing considerably worse.

**Figure 1 Estimates of A/AS-level scores for candidates with different 'average GCSE grades' broken down by 'effectiveness' of their institution**



There was evidence from the analyses that some institutions did better with some kinds of candidates (girls or higher-attaining students, for example) than others. This phenomenon is known as differential effectiveness and is shown in Figure 2 (below). Institution A was one of those with the 'steepest' slopes ; it boosted the performance of higher-attaining candidates relative to lower-attaining ones. By contrast, institution E was one of those with the 'flattest' slopes; it tended to boost the performance of lower-attaining candidates relative to higher-attaining ones. The analysis suggested that about 11% of all institutions were differentially effective with respect to candidates' prior attainments; again roughly half of this group tended to do better with the more able candidates, while half did better with the less able ones.

**Figure 2 Estimates of A/AS-level scores for candidates with different 'average GCSE grades' broken down by extent of institution's 'differential effectiveness'**

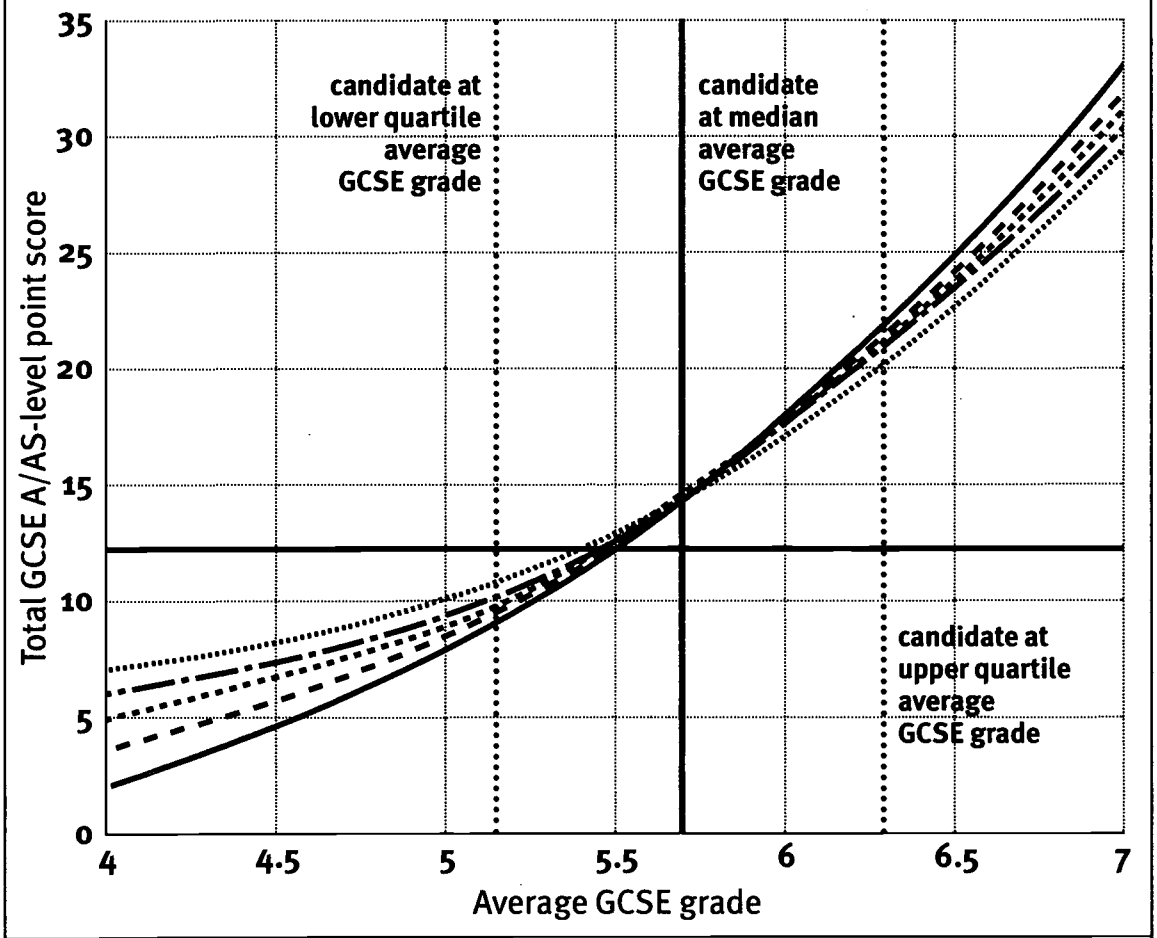
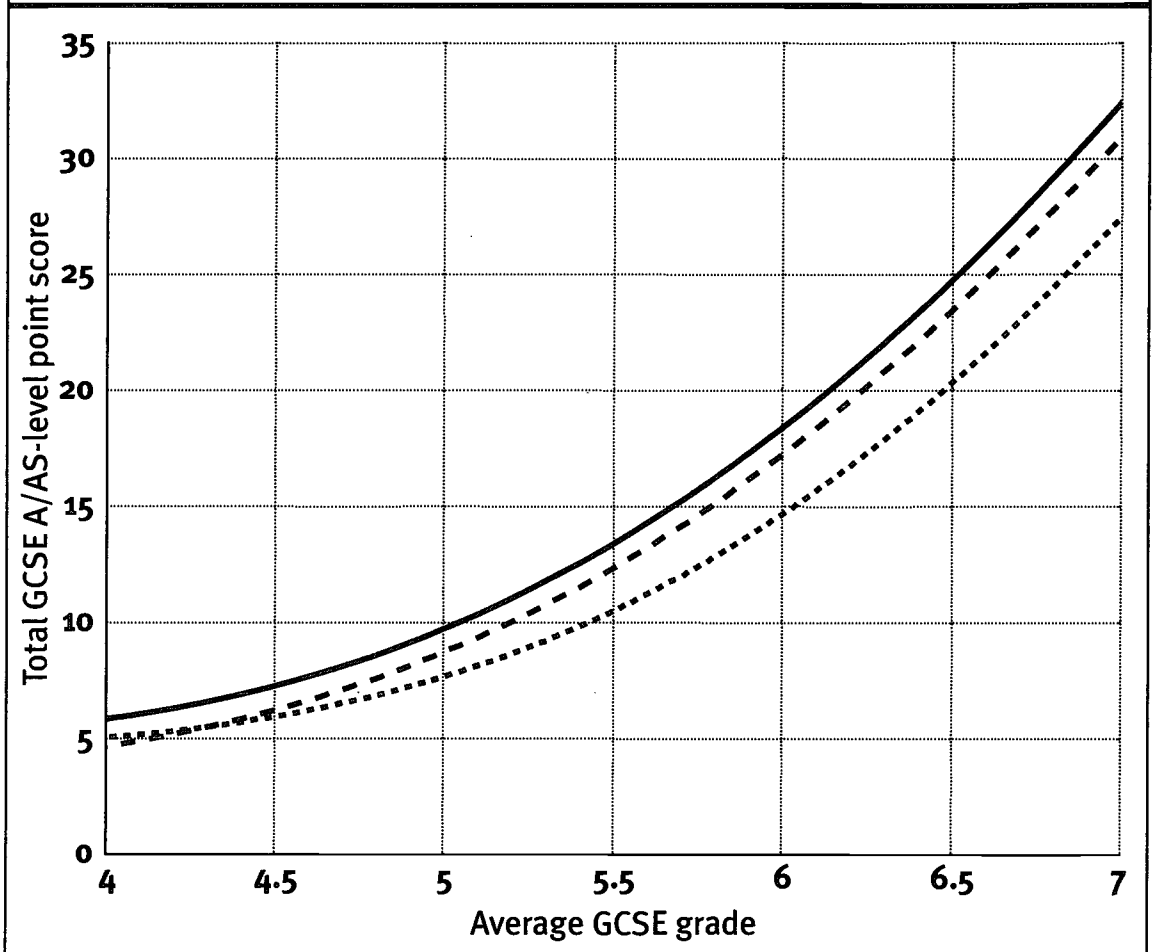


**Figure 3 Estimates of A/AS-level scores for institutions with differing missions**




The same analysis showed that the kind of institution candidates attended made some difference to the prediction of their A/AS-level performance (see Figure 3, above). Institutions whose main mission or focus was on A/AS-level exams, and that were able to select their students, did slightly better in terms of 'effectiveness' than other institutions that were mainly concerned with A/AS-levels and not able (for whatever reason) to select their students. Finally, both of these groups did slightly better than the third group, which combined preparing students for A/AS-level courses with preparation, at the same time, for more vocational courses. Interestingly, this third group (which included most FE colleges) tended to favour candidates with lower average GCSE grades compared with higher-attaining candidates.

Consideration of prior attainment accounts for a considerable proportion of the variation in students' performances. Nonetheless, some differences between institutions remain. The evidence in Figure 1 suggests that a candidate attending one of the institutions in the top 10% of effectiveness (Institution A) would secure nearly three more A/AS-level points than a candidate attending the typical national institution (labelled C). The latter would, in turn, secure just over two points more than a candidate attending an institution in the bottom 10% of effectiveness. The range between the top 10% and the bottom 10% of institutions in terms of their effectiveness is equivalent to about five points, or two and a half grades at A-level. (A difference of two points is equivalent to one grade at A-level.)

### *Quality is not a certificate: it is about continuous improvement everyday*

This study by Conway (1997) adopts a similar approach, but the analysis is much simpler. Five 16–19 institutions were compared, representing different 'types' of colleges categorised as follows:

- creamed comprehensive
- good fully comprehensive
- selective grammar school
- sixth-form college
- top independent school.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) scores for all students were analysed in relation to their GCSE points prior to commencing the course, using the standard points allocations:

GCSE: A=5, B=3, C=1
UCAS: A-level A=10, B=8, C=6, D=4, E=2
UCAS: AS-level A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, E=1.

Analysis showed that GCSE points were a consistently good predictor of A-level performance, regardless of which kind of institution the student attended. This provided a strong indication that all the institutions were equally effective despite their very different intakes and institutional cultures.

Conway was also able to use this data to identify an individual subject in which students were underperforming at A-level, and to take action to ensure improvement in student achievement in this subject in the following year.

In a working document, Conway (1997) describes the 'stunning' effects of putting his ideas into practice: the UCAS points score per student rose from 11.9 points in 1987 to 24.9 points in 1997. The analysis of A-level results is matched by an emphasis on valuing each student as an individual. Conway believes that his system can be used to assess value added on a national basis:

> *The scheme outlined is now tried, tested and simple. It is a practical process which values young human beings in much more than examination results... It is powerful as an analytical tool for those managing schools.*

## Self-assessment of quality and performance

One FEDA study relates specifically to self-assessment, which has since become integral to the FEFC inspection process. The focus on college self-assessment of quality and performance arose from the recognition that such procedures were fundamental to the dynamic of improvement, and from the sense that many '... would equate the ability to self-assess with the maturity of the FE sector' (Dixon, 1996). This study suggested that self-assessment was a key component of quality improvement. It pointed out, however, that many colleges had not yet developed a culture of judging quality performance, and this would be necessary if they were to become the '... self-critical institutions which set and achieve high standards ...' referred to by the FEFC's Chief Inspector (*Times Educational Supplement*, 1996).

## Changing the culture of the college

Among the most cited modern management texts are the Peters and Waterman classic *In Search of Excellence* (1982), and Peters' follow-up *Thriving on Chaos* (1989). The essential message of these texts is the need for organisations to focus on establishing an appropriate culture. *Changing the Culture of a College* (Gorringe and Toogood, 1994) provides eight accounts of change in different colleges, each written by a nationally prominent principal, director or chief executive. This collection is useful in

drawing together diverse views grounded in the management of change in colleges. There is no overarching theme or theory and, although the individual pieces are relatively short, each successfully evokes distinctive visions of college cultures and how to build them.

Ralph (1995), through an action learning study, provides a detailed and theoretically sophisticated account of innovation and change processes as experienced by change agents in a single college. This impressive contribution suggests, significantly in the context of a general FE climate influenced by classical industrial quality regimes, that:

> *The learning organisation develops out of the praxis and growth of its members and its promotion does not require a 'right first time' culture.*

Levačić and Glatter (1997) have edited a collection of papers focusing on change management issues in further education in England, Scotland and Wales. The five studies featured focus respectively on: the development of strategic management in three colleges; strategic responses to pressures of competition and cost-cutting; learning strategies adopted at three colleges; subjective views of change held by staff at different levels in five colleges; and cooperative partnerships between schools, colleges and universities (through nine case studies). The collection as a whole outlines a series of responses to the post-incorporation climate, including the impulse to create more learner-centred courses, more innovative marketing, improved administration and student support, and upgraded physical environments. Tensions arising from change are not ignored, and the collection as a whole concisely traverses the wide territory demanded by a study of management of change in further education.

## Management, leadership and organisational development

Three studies of leadership and organisational development are worth highlighting. Harper (1997) suggests that being a manager in a college is essentially the same as being a manager in other organisations. Certainly management may be regarded as a generic skill rather than as a specific occupation, and FE colleges are invariably substantial organisations with large budgets, significant numbers of staff, costly physical infrastructures, and challenging missions to accomplish. They are organisations for learning as well as learning organisations.

Jones (1994) has argued that hierarchical, class-based attitudes have prevented most British organisations from changing their cultures to the more successful and fundamentally more democratic ones evident in many competitor economies. According to Jones, these entrenched industrial attitudes are also prevalent in the education sector. It is suggested that:

> *... for all the rhetoric over recent years concerning quality, empowerment, TQM, customer care etc., most British organisations in education and industry show a fundamental misunderstanding of what is required for effective action, and continue in hierarchical working, teaching and learning practices.*

Crawford (1997), suggests:

> *All teams call for effective leading and following at every level. Thus leading is not a one-dimensional activity but a process in which more than one person is engaged, whether this is within a whole organisation or specific team setting. Proficient leading and team working is, therefore, central to effective performance within schools and colleges.*

## Student retention

The Audit Commission's (1993) report *Unfinished Business* highlighted the existence of a 'retention problem'. Many colleges have examined their internal mechanisms in relation to this phenomenon. Case study research (Martinez, 1995 and 1996) has found empirical support for some of the ideas from management of change theory:

> *Ownership by and support from senior managers is important. Action in conditions of partial and incomplete information is preferable to an endless search for perfect information. All the case study strategies were driven by people who adopted what can be described as change agent roles ... the successful strategies all embody elements of college transformation ...*

More recent FEDA publications relating to the retention issue are Barwauh, Green and Lawson (1997), Martinez (1997), and Martinez and Munday (1998). Martinez, Houghton and Krupska (1998) focus specifically on the question of professional development for college staff in relation to the

retention strategies issue. Martinez and Munday (1998) is based on a survey involving more than 9,000 students and staff in 31 colleges in England and Wales. It is the largest British retention study undertaken in further education and clearly indicates the significant effect that the quality of service provided by a college can have on rates of student retention. The most significant reason for students leaving prior to completion was their belief that the course was not appropriate to their needs. This and earlier research has shown that reasons for student withdrawal are multi-causal, and not always easy to categorise. Nonetheless, colleges can, through the provision of appropriate guidance and support, try to solve this problem.

A fine unpublished account of a collaborative research project on retention involving eight colleges and funded by North Yorkshire TEC is provided by Kenwright (1997). This study emphasised the need for advice and guidance procedures at entry, as well as the provision of on-programme support and tracking, including the use of targets. Earlier single college-based studies include Lambeth College (1994) and Stockport College (1995).

Spours (1997) provides a review of research based on student retention in further education, pointing to a strong concern with student attitudes. Based on a case study of five colleges, Spours argues that there is a need for a close examination of staff attitudes on a range issues involved in retention. Spours is critical of the influence exerted by FEFC funding methodologies, and convincingly argues for the need for colleges to focus on achievement and progression, as opposed to retention, thereby placing educational missions and the professionalism of lecturers at the core of their practices.

## Curriculum

In 1987 the Further Education Unit published its *Quality in NAFE* report on issues of quality in respect of work-related, non-advanced FE curricula (WRNAFE) for the Manpower Services Commission. FEU argued unequivocally that the key issue in quality was the curriculum, and that approaches to improving quality would therefore need to be curriculum led. The nature of the curricula deployed in colleges must necessarily have a fundamental effect on the quality of learning experienced by students. Smithers and Robinson (1993) points to the link between curricula and teacher effectiveness:

*The 'competence-based' approach has important implications for colleges. It reflects a belief that demonstrable 'competence' is the whole aim, so that how the competence is acquired is strictly speaking irrelevant. It requires assessment to be available on demand. It shifts the focus from curriculum and education to assessment and qualification. It has been suggested that such an approach, taken to an extreme, threatens colleges with becoming the education equivalent of driving test centres!*

Bloomer (1997) has, through a substantial study of the experience of the curriculum by students and teachers, attacked the technocratic processes of curriculum reform in post-16 education in the mid to late 1990s. Edwards *et al.* (1997) have examined the issue of 'parity of esteem' between vocational and academic curricula, pointing to an educationally damaging divide between the two.

Barnard and Dixon (1998) have recently discussed the application of value added data in the context of further education. They demonstrated the utility of pedagogic devices such as target setting and 'chance charts'. The latter enable students to see statistical information that can help them make an informed judgement regarding their individual likelihood of success should they make a particular subject choice. There is a need, however, for both effective MIS and for the careful use of the output data in the context of appropriately sensitive tutorial support. Barnard and Dixon (1998) stress that this:

*... requires tutorial staff who are able both to offer the interpersonal skills needed to motivate students by negotiating realistic targets and agreeing effective courses of action, and to cope with elementary statistical concepts.*

Notwithstanding this proviso, the diversity of the FE client group, taken together with the relative complexity of the FE curriculum and the nature of assessment associated with much of it, combine to make the effective application of value added techniques in colleges problematic, certainly for the time being. Barnard and Dixon (1998), following a two-year study of nearly 2,000 students in 10 colleges, state that:

*... it is not at present feasible to apply nationwide a single uniform methodology for the measurement of value added on vocational courses. [Nevertheless] ... colleges should not be discouraged from using local value-added measurements, provided they are based on a sound statistical methodology.*

## Teaching and learning

There is renewed interest in teaching and learning as the core component of college effectiveness. The emphasis in recent years has appeared to be more on structures, management practices and quality systems, but this is now changing.

> *[W]e need constantly to remind ourselves of the essentially moral and social purpose – not only of education but also of training. Jerome Bruner's three questions 'What makes people human?', 'How did they become so?', 'How might they be more so?' have sadly become instead 'What makes people wealthy?', 'How do they become so?' and 'How might they be more so?'* (Crombie White, Pring, and Brockington, 1995)

Cunningham (1997) has addressed the issue of problems experienced and caused by ineffective teachers in post-compulsory education. The highly competitive and monitored environment of further education is a context in which scrutiny of individual performance has been intensified. Charters have created a situation where it is the norm for poor performance to be reported. Monitoring of student retention can often lead directly to problem tutors. The 1996–97 FEFC Chief Inspector's annual report (FEFC, 1997d) indicated that strengths outweighed weaknesses in 61% of classes observed. Between 1993 and 1997 an average annual 8% of sessions observed had weaknesses that outweighed strengths. Most classes observed by inspectors then were deemed to be 'well planned and effective'.

Cunningham suggests that remedies for the problems facing failing teachers might include provision of support through peer observation and mentorship, together with the encouragement of reflective practice, through the maintenance of a diary or critical incident analysis.

Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck (1996) have perceptively observed that:

> *The process of framing professional and pedagogic development in terms of performance indicators and quality standards may be necessary to satisfy the need for accountability to outside institutions. The ability to describe action in these terms is a management skill, they [models of quality] may oversimplify reality, and an uncritical adherence can distort other aspects of quality. Reflective practitioners do not see*

*themselves as solely accountable to those with power, but also to those, including themselves, who have an interest in the educational process but limited opportunities to influence its overall direction.*

It is important that lecturers in further education are able to think of themselves as professionals. Elliott (1998) has persuasively made the connection between the working practices of lecturers and their sense of the value and worth of what they do. This underlines the necessity of recognising the centrality of processes of teaching and learning in questions of college effectiveness, and the crucial nature of the task of ensuring that these are given a higher profile than they have hitherto enjoyed in the debates surrounding quality in the sector.

## Equity, entitlement and inclusivity

The landmark Tomlinson report has been dealt with in an earlier chapter. There are an increasing number of studies dealing with the broad range of equity issues relevant to the sector. Here we shall, of necessity, mention just a few.

*Equal Opportunities in Colleges and Universities: Towards Better Practices* (Farish, McPake, Powney and Weiner, 1995) examines the effectiveness of equal opportunities initiatives, through case studies involving an FE college and two universities (one 'new' and one 'old'). The book is primarily concerned with staff rather than students; however the detailed case studies and careful analysis of data offer some theoretically informed insights (micro-political, post-structuralist and feminist) that would benefit those involved in the design and implementation of equal opportunities policies.

A persuasive rationale for an inclusive further education response to community needs, in the context of changes following incorporation, as well as in response to wider social trends, was first articulated by McGinty and Fish (1993). Choice involves knowing what options are available: FEU (1994) underlined the direct connection between the delivery of proper guidance to college students and the quality of their experience. Real choice in society also requires that individuals feel empowered to make and act on their own decisions. This often means that underprivilege and discrimination must be overcome. The views of some students with disabilities or learning difficulties may be found in *Student Voices* (Skill/SCPR/FEFC, 1996).

Franklin (1992) described how East Birmingham College used the notion of quality to advance education for a multicultural society, by making the rigorous pursuit of the college's equal opportunities policy an important part of the philosophy enshrined in its quality policy. Gray, Jesson and Tranmer's (1993) youth cohort study for England and Wales showed that more females stay in full-time post-16 education than males. It was also the case that young black people were '... at least as likely (and often more likely) to stay on post-16 than their white counterparts.' These facts may be partially explained by labour markets, but it seems that questions of access to educational opportunity for women and blacks may not be very different from those that apply to other groups. The particular ways in which education may be experienced by members of disadvantaged social categories is a more complex matter.

Stott and Lawson (1997) reported on a survey of 22 colleges conducted by the Network of Women Managers, which revealed that women constituted 83% of the student body, 58% of all employees, 38% of middle managers, and 27% of principals. Their study examines the strategies used by women principals to manage their work and thereby makes an important contribution to research on gender issues in further education.

Published in support of *Learning Works*, a useful volume of statistical information (FEFC, 1997f) incorporated a discussion of how to identify FE students requiring additional resources. The three options considered for this were:

- the social and economic characteristics of where students lived, as identified by postcode
- income level, as indicated by entitlement to benefit
- previous educational achievements.

It concluded that the latter provides the best option, but that data collection in this regard is currently a problem; until this can be remedied, postcodes will be used. A separate report, *How to Widen Participation: A guide to good practice* (FEFC, 1997g) provides a framework by which colleges can measure their performance in widening participation.

## Key points

Gray *et al.* (1995) compare the institutional performance of 16–19 institutions and show that:

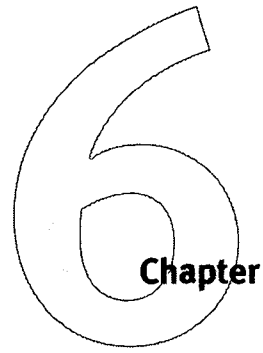
- about 11% of institutions appear to make a difference, about half of these doing better than average and about half less well
- the kind of institution does appear to have some effect on students' examination performance.

Conway (1997) describes how:

- GCSE scores can be used to predict students performance at A-level
- these data can be used to improve the work of underperforming departments
- the approach can be combined with valuing each student as an individual.

A diffuse body of literature touches on educational effectiveness and improvement issues in relation to further education. These studies suggest that:

- self-assessment is a key component of quality improvement, but it depends on college culture
- leadership and organisational development are important factors in college effectiveness
- developing the culture of a learning organisation depends on allowing staff to grow, and is different from a 'right first time' culture
- we now understand retention issues better and many colleges are succeeding in improving their retention rates
- further work needs to be done on developing the curriculum, particularly relating to the issue of parity of esteem between A-levels and GNVQs
- a single value-added methodology cannot currently be applied to further education
- there is renewed interest in teaching and learning as the core component of college effectiveness. The emphasis in recent years has appeared to be more on structures, management practices and quality systems, but this is now changing.




# Systems for inspection and improvement

This chapter outlines features of current policy initiatives and regimes for inspection in the FE and schools sectors which are designed to improve institutional effectiveness. While there are recognisable similarities between the policies and inspection regimes for each sector, there are also distinct differences. The sectors are, therefore, dealt with separately to enable us to:

- draw out messages from the schools sector that may be useful for further education
- clarify the current background for quality improvement work in the FE sector to make appropriate recommendations for future research and development work.

## Further education

The inspection regime established by the FEFC provides the framework for any quality improvement work that will be carried out in the FE sector in the immediate future. Inspection is a legal duty required of the FEFC and FEFCW by the Further and Higher Education Act (1992).

Approaches to inspection in Wales and England are similar. In Wales, institutional effectiveness is being considered via two strands of activity at institutions:

- the provision overall (educational effectiveness)
- the governance and management of the institution (functional effectiveness).

The relatively comprehensive nature of such assessment recognises the potential effect on quality and standards of all aspects of an institution's work. Acting on behalf of the FEFCW, and within the Council's quality assessment framework, educational effectiveness will be assessed by the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (Wales) (OHMCI(W)). FEFCW officers will undertake the assessment of functional effectiveness. Frameworks for both areas of assessment are being piloted during 1998–99 at three colleges.

The emphasis in Wales until recently has been on improving functional effectiveness. This is concerned with the good management, financial and governance practices in the colleges. Educational effectiveness could not be achieved until a sound and efficient management structure was established in the colleges. A framework for assessing educational effectiveness is now being developed, and will be piloted during the next academic year in three colleges.

In developing the procedures for assessing institutional effectiveness, the emphasis in Wales is on college self-assessment and helping colleges to address any areas of weakness. Once the latter has been identified, an action plan will be produced. Each college will be assessed in relation to its own particular context, taking account of its mission statement. Comparisons with national standards will be made as appropriate. Good practice is expected to be disseminated among institutions.

In England, a revised framework, drawn up following extensive consultation, was set out in Circular 97/12 (FEFC, 1997c). It replaced that which had been established by *Assessing Achievement* (FEFC, 1993a). The four-year cycle of inspection has been retained. The main purposes of inspection are now to:

- validate college self-assessment
- encourage continuous improvement of provision and raise standards
- enable colleges to compare performance
- assist the dissemination of good practice and identify nationally significant issues.

Circular 97/12 states that the overriding aim of the inspection process is to 'promote improvements in quality through regular inspection and the publication of inspection reports'. Colleges are also required to develop action plans as a result of inspection which now has a direct link with funding.

The inspection process incorporates college self-assessment, which is validated through FEFC inspection. Inspection principles detailed in Circular 97/12 emphasise that this multi-dimensional approach to inspection is intended to raise standards and the quality of students' experiences in sector colleges.

Inspection under the new framework is more strongly focused on the curriculum. By this means, the FEFC is able to redirect the energy and attention of college staff toward the curriculum. Curriculum inspectors make an independent judgement about provision in relation to four key quality indicators:

- teaching and learning
- students' achievement
- curriculum organisation and management
- staffing and specialist resources.

Auditors from the inspection team award separate grades for governance and management. Curriculum inspectors provide evidence for these grades, as they do for the grading of cross-college services.

Following consultation in 1997, the grade descriptors have been changed. They are now as follows:

- **grade 1** outstanding provision with many strengths and few weaknesses
- **grade 2** good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- **grade 3** satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- **grade 4** less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- **grade 5** poor provision with few strengths and many weaknesses.

The self-critical culture is intended to lead directly to improvement. Circular 97/13 (FEFC, 1997e) specifies that, to be effective, self-assessment must 'lead to actions which improve quality'. It makes clear that the most effective self-assessment reports (SARs) are concise and include references to quantifiable evidence that support judgements about strengths and weaknesses. In addition, there are clear indications of deadlines for action, review dates and lines of responsibility.

In carrying out self-assessment reviews, colleges are directed to a range of areas intended to improve their effectiveness. These include, for example, 'the development of appropriate key skills', the need to 'improve student retention and achievement', and better use of technology in teaching and learning. Circular 97/13 also draws attention to other quality assurance issues including the need to ensure the teaching skills of part-time teachers, and industrial updating opportunities for full-time teachers. The inspection process highlights the centrality of effective training, regular appraisal and appropriate forms of staff development for FE teachers as key indicators of college effectiveness.

A crucial part of the self-assessment process is the improved flow and use of management information, analysed by computer. The FEFC will shortly feed back to colleges information about students' achievements in a form that will enable them to compare their performance with that of other 'like colleges'.

There are also plans to award some colleges accredited status. This is seen as a way of enabling the Council to focus its support more effectively on colleges experiencing difficulty; but it also reflects what the FEFC describes as 'the growing maturity of the sector'. Accredited status will be awarded to colleges demonstrating:

> ... *comprehensive, rigorous and effective systems of management control and quality assurance which have a reputation for providing high quality educational provision.*

Accredited colleges will be asked to share annual self-assessments with the Council, and inspectors will make regular visits to maintain a programme of independent inspection and disseminate good practice. Accredited status may be withdrawn where the accreditation panel feels that the integrity of the awards is threatened.

## The schools sector

Like FEFC and the FE sector, the inspection regime established by OFSTED provides the framework for quality improvement work in the schools sector. However, there is not the same sense of there being a single, all-powerful body controlling schools. Responsibility for the schools sector has been

shared in recent years with other agencies with statutory powers (in particular, the Teacher Training Agency and the QCA – until recently the SCAA). The schools sector has also been subjected to more overt attention from politicians. The result has been the establishment of the strong Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the DfEE, which is concerned with quality improvement.

There has been considerable success in improving the effectiveness of schools since 1980. This is clear from GCSE results, which improved markedly during the 1980s and continue to improve, albeit at a slower rate. Recent research (SCAA, 1996) has not shown any decline in the standards of the exam, despite media claims to that effect.

In addition to inspection, improvement has been driven by the introduction of the national curriculum in 1988, tighter controls over initial teacher training, careful targeting of money for in-service training of teachers, and general erosion of the power of LEAs over schools through a series of legislative and financial changes.

Three main strategies are seen to be driving improvement:

- greater public accountability of individual schools
- assessment of individual schools against performance indicators
- increased autonomy of schools from LEAs, giving them ownership.

By comparison with these strategies, both curriculum change and teacher development are seen as too slow, though fundamentally important.

Although there are recognisable themes in this approach comparable to the FEFC inspection regime, there are also significant differences. The main difference is one of style. There is a stronger sense of involvement between the FEFC and colleges than between OFSTED and schools. Tensions surround the inspection process in colleges, but they are perhaps less extreme than those experienced in some schools. Two approaches used by OFSTED are indicators of the difference of style: 'naming and shaming' of failing schools, and placing a failing school on 'special measures'. Both are highly public procedures. The latter involves drafting into the school considerable support, with root and branch changes to the organisational structure and key personnel. Such measures have only recently been adopted by the FEFC.

### *The improvement process in relation to 'special measures'*

During 1993–97, 85 secondary schools judged to be failing were placed on special measures (OFSTED, 1998). According to OFSTED:

> *For schools to improve from such a low ebb, four prerequisites are necessary:*
>
> - *accepting the judgement*
> - *knowing what to do*
> - *knowing how to go about it*
> - *securing the support of all parties: the governors, teachers, pupils, parents and the LEA.*

Seven of these schools were judged after two to three years to have improved to the point of providing a satisfactory standard of education. OFSTED has this to say of the reasons for their rapid improvement:

> *Four of the seven appointed a new headteacher early on in the process; all made significant changes in the management structure. Changes were made to improve the quality of teachers' planning and the curriculum, and rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching were implemented, but not always sufficiently early to provide the impetus for rapid change.*

Other factors noted by OFSTED as important in achieving their success are:

- support from the LEA (for the six maintained schools)
- appointment of additional governors with specialist expertise
- provision of advice and consultancy, particularly in preparing the action plans, monitoring the schools' progress toward their targets, and evaluating the quality of teaching.

In one school 'significant funds' for staff development and building works was an important factor.

There have been some changes in policy since the change of Government in 1997. It is recognised that schools have experienced problems because of the number of things for which they were accountable. The present policy is to focus on fewer things, such as numeracy and literacy in the primary school. The market philosophy is discredited, because 'markets tolerate under-performance'. It has been replaced by the planning system, in which you:

- define the quality standards (national curriculum levels of attainment and OFSTED criteria)
- give responsibility to schools to deliver it
- hold them accountable, measuring performance and reporting this publicly.

A combined strategy of 'carrot and stick' is administered through support and inspection processes. The 'stick' involves strategies such as 'naming and shaming' and league tables; these work, even if they may sometimes seem unfair. It is not acceptable to protect teachers from public criticism if this means withholding information from parents that is known to the profession. The 'carrot' is support involving funding, providing schools with comparative data on their performance in relation to other 'like' schools. Other strategies have been added recently: beacon schools which will receive additional funding in return for providing staff development; knighthoods for outstanding headteachers; and awards for exceptional teachers.

The main performance indicators used by OFSTED are examination results. In raw form, these provide the quickest feedback on a school's performance. Value added data is more valuable potentially, but can be 'too slow' to produce and therefore less useful. Raw examination results provide a direct comparison between performance in one year and the next.

However, OFSTED has carried out significant work on the production of value added data for individual schools, working closely with school effectiveness researchers at the University of London Institute of Education (ULIE). A major review of SER work was commissioned (Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore, 1994), and this became the basis for the development of an analytical procedure to produce value added data on every school. To produce this data, examination results are analysed in relation to other contextual information about the school to give a profile of the 'value added' by the school to its pupils' attainment. The contextual information has been selected on the basis of the ULIE research. It comprises:

- type of school (grant maintained or not)
- numbers on free school meals
- numbers registered with special needs
- percentage of 15-year-old girls
- HE qualifications of parents

- ethnic origins of pupils
- whether there is a selective school in the area.

These are fed back to schools, which of course already have the raw data.

Improving effectiveness is seen as a complex business: 'It's no good just fixing one aspect, all aspects have to be fixed' (interview with a key respondent). The biggest single factor that affects pupil attainment is agreed to be effective teaching ('four times the impact of any other factor'). Effective teaching within the OFSTED framework is analysed in pedagogical terms (e.g. pace and challenge, quality of questioning, feedback to pupils, high expectations), rather than in terms of subject knowledge. There is interest in research knowledge about factors such as:

- matching task to pupil
- time on-task
- success rate
- total learning time.

Also of interest is how these need to be varied to 'get the right balance' for pupils of different abilities (e.g. less able pupils need to experience a higher success rate to maintain motivation).

Internal and external relationships, quality of management, and quality of assessment and its use (particularly 'diagnostic assessment') are the three next most important factors in terms of effect on pupils' attainment. By comparison, 'quality of the curriculum' and 'staff development and appraisal' have the least effect of the nine factors identified by OFSTED as 'contributing to standards of achievement in relation to pupils' capabilities'.

The relative importance of these factors in improving school effectiveness has been determined by OFSTED, using the data from inspections. Further research is needed to determine which factors most improve college effectiveness.

A key component of school management is seen by OFSTED as the ability to use the value added information it provides to inform decision making. An MIS is seen, therefore, as an essential tool for managers. Leadership is acknowledged to be important. The only quality assurance system widely used in schools is Investors in People, which is seen to be useful in encouraging teachers to participate and talk to each other. Other systems, such as TQM, are seen as:

*... dominated by structures and functions in a way that people would find bureaucratic* (interview with a key respondent)

Once effective schools have been identified, good practice can be disseminated to other schools. Each school may in some sense be unique, but like can be compared with like. In a recent National Foundation for Educational Research study (1997) funded by a London LEA, schools were categorised according to the relationship between their 'raw scores' and 'value added scores' on examination results. Those with high raw scores and low value added scores were seen to be in danger of becoming 'complacent' and needing to be challenged, and those with high value added scores and low raw scores were 'needing to keep morale high' (interview with a key respondent).

The overall message from the schools experience, according to one of our participants, is that if you clarify quality and tell people what you want, they will deliver it: 'People may complain but they will move towards those goals.'

## Proposed policy changes to improve the effectiveness of further education

Our interviews with key participants identified some new directions in policy. These are outlined in this section.

The agenda for improving college effectiveness has a new urgency following the publication of the Government Green Paper, *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998a). The positive response to the Kennedy Report (FEFC, 1997b), including promises to inject more money into the FE sector, is matched by clear demands for improvement in performance:

*Effective internal quality assurance systems, combined with regular independent inspections against a consistent framework of standards, are critical to raising quality and achievement and reducing drop-out rates.*

*The Learning Age* also includes a proposal:

*... to build on the best practice which already exists and harmonise post-16 inspection arrangements across schools, FE colleges, LEAs' adult education and training providers. We will work with inspectors and*

*providers and consult widely to develop a national framework and common procedures and marking systems. We propose to publish appropriate performance indicators and targets for individual providers.*

Two other significant changes to the thrust of policy are intended to complement the drive for widening participation set out in the Kennedy Report and *The Learning Age*. They are:

- a drive to ensure that every student achieves concrete outcomes from study in further education
- a drive to ensure that students are better matched to programmes of study.

These were not identified as major issues by college principals in our questionnaire survey, suggesting that the new agenda has not yet percolated through the system.

There is a perception that, until now, participation has sometimes been valued for its own sake. Although the achievement of qualifications has been the stated goal, there has been a tension between this and the open-access ethos. Colleges have welcomed allcomers and given students the chance to study what they want, without overly strong guidance to dissuade the over-ambitious. The culture is now shifting toward concentrating on student achievement.

Current policies are highly challenging to the traditional values of further education. For example, one of our respondents offered the view that college effectiveness can be seen as 'a production activity', in which students have a right to acquire the qualification for which they enrol. If one adopts this view, there should be 'zero tolerance for failure'. To achieve this, 10% of funding should be used to provide more sophisticated initial assessment procedures, for instance, computerised induction programmes (already widely used in the US), backed up with better ongoing support to enable students with a record of failure to cope with the course.

The same respondent felt that colleges have improved over recent years, but they have improved:

*... from an unacceptably low base. The average pass rate for students completing a course is low – below 40% in a small but significant*

*minority of colleges. The average pass rate expressed as a percentage of those enrolling on a course is probably as low as 50% nationally.*

The emphasis is now on ensuring effective learning for every student. Group sizes need to be increased: the average size of taught groups in further education is currently 11 students. Students need to be more fully occupied, although not necessarily in taught classes; it is currently possible for a full-time student to be in full-time work at the same time.

Another tension for further education is between providing students with choice – they are, after all, attending voluntarily – and giving stronger 'guidance' to ensure that students' programmes of work address both their own needs and those of the local community and UK plc. In considering this issue, there is a need to differentiate between 16 to 19-year-olds and adults engaged in lifelong learning.

From our interviews with policy makers, the current view appears to be that there should be an 'entitlement curriculum' for 16 to 19-year-olds, incorporating basic and key skills at one of three levels (academic, vocational, or fairly narrowly applied and leading to an apprenticeship). Adults could have greater freedom of choice, but the curriculum for 16 to 19-year-olds needs to be constrained so that the National Targets for Education and Training can be met. To bring additional students into further education, we need to create a better environment for study, rather than allowing them to opt for inappropriate programmes of study. According to one key respondent, there is a need for 'radical solutions' to overcome some students' long history of failure, for example by using a football stadium as the venue for study (which is currently being tried in Bristol).

## Key points

- The ways in which inspection is designed to improve effectiveness are similar in the schools and FE sectors. There appears to be a convergence in approach between the FEFC, FEFCW and OFSTED.
- In the FE sector, the main purposes of inspection are the validation of college self-assessments, the continuous improvement of provision and raising of standards, comparison of performance between colleges, and

the dissemination of good practice. These are mediated through an assessment of teaching and learning, students' achievement, curriculum organisation and management, and staffing and specialist resource provision. There is a variation in emphasis between England and Wales. These measures are designed to produce a self-critical culture leading to improvement.

- In the schools sector, there have been three main strategies in the drive to improvement: greater public accountability of individual schools; assessment of schools against quality standards (attainment targets, exam results and OFSTED inspection criteria); and increased responsibility for schools' own actions and policies.
- In both sectors, data related to value added is collected by the FEFC, FEFCW and OFSTED and supplied to schools and colleges for analysis to devise policies and practices that will lead to improvement.
- Of the factors identified as affecting pupil attainment by OFSTED, the most important is seen to be effective teaching, with four times the effect of any other factor. Other factors that are significant in this respect are internal and external relationships, quality of management and quality of assessment. The quality of the curriculum and staff development have relatively less impact on pupil attainment. The emphasis in the FE sector on student attainment is moving towards coping with even greater numbers of a greater diversity of clients, and providing them with an educational experience relevant to their needs and those of society.
- Current policy for the FE sector emphasises student attainment, matching students to appropriate courses, and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Chapter 7

# Frameworks for research and development

## The nature and purpose of frameworks

A framework for improving educational effectiveness sets out the procedures for action at all levels, from infrastructure, through organisational management, to the work of individual teachers and learners. It is grounded in a set of assumptions about educational values, for example the aims and purposes of education, including the relative importance of the interests of students, their parents, local businesses and the state as a whole. Underpinning these values are a variety of theories with explanatory and predictive power, ranging from theories about how people learn, to theories of social change and economic development. The extent to which these underpinning theories are explicit or implicit can vary considerably. As a set of procedures, the framework is usually fairly clear to policy makers. However, it is usually revealed to teachers and lecturers only through the implementation of a range of policies that make up the strategies to put the framework into place.

This study has revealed the existence of several different frameworks across the different educational sectors, partially overlapping, some emanating from policy makers at national level, others from policy makers (principals) at organisational level. The framework, set by Government, that governs the work of the schools sector is the most fully developed, since many of its elements have been in place for several years.

All frameworks are dynamic rather than fixed, since politicians and policy makers continually strive to improve them. All frameworks exist alongside other procedures, values and theories grounded in the experience and assumptions of the individuals and groups working in the educational institutions. It is, therefore, inevitable that any framework will be contested; to be effective, it needs to include mechanisms for control. Frameworks are, of course, more or less coercive depending on the value they place on individual freedom as opposed to 'the common good'.

To illustrate the point, Table 3 (pages 72–73) sets out the characteristics of two alternative models, or paradigms, for research and development. Captioned **effectiveness paradigm** and **improvement paradigm**, these are broadly in line with two recognisably different approaches to improving educational effectiveness. Although very much oversimplified, these two sets of characteristics contain all the elements that make up the various frameworks described in the earlier chapters. The table might best be read as a set of continua rather than a set of opposites, since all the frameworks contain some elements from both the effectiveness and the improvement paradigms.

## The existing FEFC and FEFCW frameworks

The FEFC (and broadly similar FEFCW) procedures for funding and inspection currently fall rather more into the effectiveness paradigm than the improvement paradigm. They emphasise, for example, identifying good practice, inspection, target setting, benchmarking and the measurement of performance, and the close links between funding and performance.

Looking down the list, one can identify further shifts along the continua toward the effectiveness paradigm as a result of current policy initiatives. These include, for example, the introduction of procedures for analysing student retention and achievement and comparing performance between one college and another as an integral part of inspection; and the likely introduction of mechanisms for publicly identifying failing colleges.

On the other hand, there have been shifts toward the improvement paradigm. One example is the move away from a market-led culture to one of partnership and collaboration.

In the course of this research, we have collected data that supports two different interpretations of the way in which colleges and their staff respond to the FEFC's procedures for improving effectiveness. All colleges are worried about the perceived low level of funding. This is certainly as true of principals as it is of other staff. However, in relation to inspection and related procedures, we have repeatedly been given two different accounts:

- According to the first account, the revised FEFC inspection framework recognises that the sector is 'maturing', gives more responsibility to colleges, and places more emphasis on partnership rather than control. Relationships between the FEFC and colleges are perceived to be good. Many principals subscribe to this view.

- According to the second account, the FEFC has used its funding mechanisms and inspection procedures to impose a high level of control on colleges. While this has produced the appearance of co-operation, in reality it is only compliance and hides deep-seated resistance. Staff have different criteria for educational quality from those that guide current FEFC policy and management practice. Morale of staff is very low, and the energy and will to drive the improvement of effectiveness are sadly lacking. Many, if not most, non-managerial staff subscribe to this view.

In planning an agenda for research and development work to improve college effectiveness, it is essential to take both of these accounts seriously. They illustrate a tension in the sector; both are true, despite the apparent conflict. To neglect the second account would be a mistake that might undermine the success of the drive to improve college effectiveness.

There is also a marked difference between the major priorities for action of college principals and those of policy makers. In questionnaire returns, principals identified the major issues in the drive to improve college effectiveness as:

- lack of finance and funding
- poor pay and conditions for staff leading to low morale
- lack of management systems
- lack of training for middle managers
- increased bureaucracy
- the need for staff to adopt new methods of teaching, including the use of IT for college-based and home delivery.

**Table 3 Characteristics of frameworks**

| | Effectiveness paradigm | Improvement paradigm |
|---|---|---|
| Model of change | • Presumed to be implemented by imitation of good practice | • Presumed to depend on participatory processes to be effective |
| Accountability | • Public – naming and shaming | • Semi-public – professional |
| Culture of the organisation | • Competitive<br>• Market-led<br>• Business organisation | • Collegial<br>• Partnership-led<br>• Educational organisation |
| Management style | • Business management | • Educational leadership |
| Quality assurance mechanisms | • Emphasis on external inspection<br>• Clear standards<br>• Target setting<br>• Benchmarking/performance indicators<br>• Measurement of performance<br>• Self-assessment required and centrally controlled | • Emphasis on external consultancy and advice<br>• Ownership of proposed change<br>• Understanding of purposes of change<br>• Self-assessment integral to reflective practice of professionals |
| QA systems | • ISO9000 series<br>• TQM | • Investors in People |
| Status of teaching staff | • Trained deliverer of learning | • Trusted professional |
| Motivation of teaching staff | • Presumed to be driven by mechanisms of reward and punishment<br>• Desire to avoid unpleasant consequences | • Presumed to be driven by professional values<br>• Ownership of change<br>• High morale, self-belief |

| | Effectiveness paradigm | Improvement paradigm |
|---|---|---|
| Examination results | • Examination results seen as key performance indicator | • Examination results seen as key and used as an indicator of teacher performance |
| Response to identified problems | • Public 'naming and shaming'<br>• 'Special measures' – external support and structural change imposed | • Advice and consultancy<br>• Change of key personnel encouraged |
| Funding | • Linked to performance | • Tailored to need |
| Funding mechanisms | • Student enrolment<br>• Student progression<br>• Student retention | • Prior estimates of student numbers<br>• Negotiation between principal and funding body |
| Widening participation | • Stakeholder responsive | • Socially responsive |
| Curriculum | • Fitted to the external needs (nation, employer, community) | • Fitted to individuals' needs |
| Approach to learning | • Student centred<br>• Teacher may become assessor only | • Teacher managed<br>• Teacher leads and challenges the learner |
| Role of assessment | • To measure performance | • To diagnose learning difficulties |
| Strengths of research in this paradigm | • Detailed analysis of statistical information to inform management decision-making<br>• Predictive power | • Detailed analysis of the processes that bring about, or serve as barriers to, change<br>• Explanatory power |

Policy-makers on the other hand, see the main issues as:

- student achievement
- better matching of students to courses
- self-assessment
- effective teaching and curriculum.

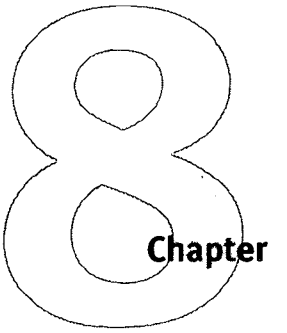
Although there is some overlap in the area of teaching and learning, this would suggest that, despite principals' positive view of the FEFC, they are not fully committed to the new directions of policy.

There is a need, therefore, to adopt different strategies in relation to some of the items in Table 3 (pages 72–73), in particular, the model of change, the culture of the organisation and motivation of lecturing staff. In all these areas, the assumptions of current FEFC policy and practice are characteristic of the effectiveness paradigm. The urgent need is to shift the emphasis towards the improvement paradigm in these areas, by increasing staff ownership and participation, generating professional values and raising morale through increasing the sense of self-worth. If this is done without changing the emphasis in other areas, the system will begin to combine the benefits of the improvement and effectiveness paradigms. This is difficult to achieve, but by no means impossible.

## Key points

- A framework for improving educational effectiveness sets out the procedures for action. It is grounded in a set of assumptions about educational values, underpinned by theories that have explanatory and predictive power.
- Several different frameworks exist across the different educational sectors. They are dynamic rather than fixed and, because they are contested, they contain mechanisms of control.
- Frameworks can be categorised, in terms of their characteristic assumptions and strategies, according to the extent to which they belong to the effectiveness or the improvement model (see Table 3).

- FEFC procedures for funding and inspection currently fall rather more into the effectiveness paradigm than the improvement paradigm, although they contain elements of both. Current policy changes show some shifts in both directions.
- Colleges are worried about the perceived low level of funding. Although principals are generally positive about the revised FEFC inspection framework, and staff appear to be co-operating, there is evidence that this may be little more than compliance and hides deep-seated resistance. Low morale is sapping the energy and will to drive the improvement of effectiveness.
- This can be addressed by adopting strategies characteristic of the improvement paradigm in relation to: the model of change, the culture of the organisation and motivation of lecturing staff. The challenge is to do this while retaining strategies characteristic of the effectiveness paradigm in relation to other areas.




# Recommendations

## Essential preparatory work

The points below are fundamental to all subsequent research and development activities. They need to be dealt with through a combination of research and development work, to draw all staff in the sector into the debate. Although the FEFC can already provide working answers to them all, these questions need to be given full consideration by the sector as a whole, especially where the views of the sector differ from current FEFC policy.

- There is a need to generate an agreed set of purposes for all colleges to which all staff can subscribe. This may necessitate generating agreed subsets for different 'families' of colleges that clearly have different missions.
- There is a need to agree a definition of effectiveness for all colleges, to which all staff can subscribe. This may need to vary according to the college's purposes. 'Effectiveness' refers to the relationship between means and ends, so an effective college will be one that makes best use of its resources to make the greatest possible progress toward its educational goals. SER defines this more simply: the more effective school is typically defined as one whose students make greater progress over time than comparable students in comparable institutions.

- Once there is agreement on the purposes of colleges and the definition of an effective college, there will be a need to establish the key indicators that can be used to judge effectiveness. If possible, this should be a short list. On the basis of this scoping study, a selection from the following are proposed for consideration:

**Outcomes-based measures**

- student achievement
- retention of students/low drop-out rates
- accurate matching of students to courses
- value for money
- flexibility of course provision to suit a range of stakeholders
- employment rates

**Qualitative measures**

- student satisfaction
- leadership style
- staff-student relationships
- community relations
- ethos/climate/culture
- quality of teaching and learning.

- In addition to establishing key indicators of effectiveness, there will be a need to establish key indicators of improvement. On the basis of the research relating to schools, we suggest that colleges are likely to start to change if they work on any or all of the following:

  - the college's attitude and approach to planning
  - the way the college is run and organised
  - the way the curriculum is organised
  - the ethos or culture of the college
  - aspects of the quality of teaching and learning.

## Future research

There is an urgent need for both quantitative and qualitative research, carried out systematically with representative samples of colleges, to inform the development of policy and practice. Up to now, almost no studies have

been carried out systematically on a large scale. There has been a tendency for research to focus on opportunity samples of colleges, mainly on a voluntary basis. Such work is illuminating, but insufficient as the basis for policy.

It is important to remember that research in this field can never give definitive answers. Research in the effectiveness paradigm, particularly the SER described in Chapter 6, has particular advantages because it provides a quantified basis for action. This research can tell us which characteristics are most likely to be a feature of effective schools and their relative importance, in statistical terms, compared with one another. Nevertheless, as we said earlier, they are a guide to good practice rather than a blueprint for it. Seven out of ten schools that do these sorts of things tend to get better results, but this is not inevitably the case.

Qualitative research carried out rigorously can provide more detailed insights. In particular, it can provide explanatory theories that are beyond the scope of quantitative measures.

There is also a need for research to be carried out in two different ways: in partnership with colleges, and independently of colleges. Participation in the process of carrying out research is an effective form of staff development, and teacher-researchers provide insights that are not available to 'outsider' researchers. Often the best way to support effective improvement is to involve teachers and lecturers as researchers (Somekh *et al.*, 1992; Somekh, 1993). However, some research, particularly case study research involving careful comparisons between cases, will need to be carried out by independent researchers who can design a set of closely comparable studies, as suggested by Yin (1993; 1994).

It is important to distinguish between the latter kind of qualitative research, which provides robust outcomes comparable in reliability to those produced by quantitative research, and the former, which have a different purpose.

### *Research within the effectiveness paradigm*

It is important to be clear that the research that needs to be carried out in this paradigm within the college sector will build directly on the extensive research already carried out within the schools sector. The small number of colleges is not sufficient to produce totally new, statistically significant

results. While there are 444 colleges, to compare like with like requires grouping them in smaller cohorts. However, work carried out with colleges, using methods already proven to be robust with the much larger cohort of schools, will be of value in establishing trends.

One effective way forward is to establish longitudinal studies to compare 'like now' with 'like past' and 'like future'. Data is available on the performance of all colleges for at least the last three years. This can be compared with data collected now and at agreed points in the future. Ideally, this work would be on a relatively large scale, involving a representative selection of colleges, to provide a systematic longitudinal study of the sector.

The following questions, which derive from the review of the SER literature contained earlier in this report, provide a research agenda. Some of them fall into the 'essential preparatory work' recommended above; but more detailed work will be needed to evaluate initial decisions.

**To enable comparison of like with like**

- Given that different institutions have different mixes of courses, are there enough commonalities in terms of outcome measures to make valid and useful comparisons?
- If comparisons do not seem appropriate across all/most institutions, can subgroups of institutions be constructed which might more suitably be compared because they have the same basic missions? If so, should this be done on the basis of purpose and/or location, or on the basis of college intakes?
- Are there any particularly distinctive features of the student constituency for FE colleges? An early mapping exercise on some of the major characteristics of the student populations of different FE colleges might help to provide a firmer basis for deciding what kinds of comparisons might eventually be suitable. In due course, this might be developed into a typology of the different kinds of institutions in the sector.

**To establish key indicators**

- In comparing institutions, which aspects of college performance should be taken into account?

- Are there any obvious parallels between the factors identified as contributing to school effectiveness and those which are likely to affect college effectiveness?
- What status should be given to evidence from inspections? The evidence from inspections of schools has mirrored that from research in some respects. However, there have also been issues where inspectors and researchers have adopted rather different procedures.
- How many outcome measures should be prioritised? Current work is limited to a large extent by the relative absence of attention to measures other than A-levels, and by the methodological and statistical difficulties arising from the client base and assessment regimes of most vocational programmes. A good deal more work will be needed to ensure that other measures of outcomes have comparable characteristics.

**To enable value added to be taken into consideration**

- What salient aspects of colleges' intakes could be captured from information readily available from existing sources? Would these be sufficient, or would further data need to be collected?
- Could further studies of value added by institutions be undertaken for other major qualifications studied in colleges, such as GNVQs? Can any comparisons across the different qualifications be usefully made?
- Are there any systematic differences between the student bodies in different colleges that ought to be taken systematically into account?

**To enable improvement to be monitored**

- What is meant by 'improvement' in the college context? What criteria might usefully be employed and what is available at the current time?
- Could some colleges that are widely recognised as having improved be identified, with a view to exploring the nature of the changes and improvements they have undergone?
- How could suitable estimates of the effectiveness of different departments in a college be constructed?
- Do any particular features of college structures and organisation suggest that research should concentrate on variations in institutions rather than between them?

## *Research within the improvement paradigm*

This scoping study has identified major gaps in the research so far carried out. There is an urgent need for a range of studies to provide a firm knowledge base about the sector.

### Case studies of institutions

There is an urgent need for high-quality case study research to be carried out systematically across a representative sample of colleges to:

- investigate the appropriateness of the outcomes of SER in relation to colleges, since the cohort is too small to make it possible to use the SER approach alone
- identify the key processes that drive improvement of college effectiveness, and relate these to the characteristics of different kinds of colleges, to develop robust explanatory theories.

A starting point for this research might be the seven characteristics of 'goodness' in American high schools (see Table 2, page 34) derived from the research of Lightfoot, a MacArthur Prize Fellow at Harvard University. These would form the basis for case study research to determine the characteristics of effective colleges. This study, which won the American Educational Research Association Award in 1994, provides a model for rigorous case study research. Another model for the multi-site case study approach is provided by Yin (1993).

Although colleges might be asked to participate in some aspects of this research, it needs to be carefully designed and carried out to a high standard to enable useful comparisons between case studies. Such research will be sufficiently robust to form the basis for policy development, though unuseable for definitive predictions.

### Intervention studies related to quantitative studies

The proposed longitudinal studies (see above) should incorporate some intervention work; this should be researched using qualitative methods, in order to enable the monitoring of outcomes resulting from specific interventions. There is a particular need for research that tracks students into employment after they leave the college and looks at the various strategies that can be used to prepare students effectively for work. This information should be fed back into colleges to inform curricular provision.

### Other studies

In the course of carrying out this study, we have been given numerous suggestions for specific studies in the improvement paradigm. Others have emerged as a result of identifying gaps in the literature. Some ideas are listed below, but this should not be seen as a definitive list.

- Studies into the role of external agencies in improving college effectiveness would be helpful in enabling improvement in infrastructure support.
- Research to enable improvement in management and organisational structures might include: characteristics of different styles of leadership and their impact on improving college effectiveness; the effect of the ethos and culture of the institutions/department on improving college effectiveness; and the role of quality assurance systems in improving college effectiveness.
- Improvement in teaching and learning might be supported by research to determine the characteristics of effective teaching and learning, and of effective teaching and support for those with disabilities or learning difficulties. Evaluations would be useful of: the guidance offered to students, and its effectiveness in matching students to courses appropriate to their needs, abilities and employment opportunities; the quality of the whole student learning experience, including taught time, supported self-study and independent working; and the contribution that ICT can make to teaching and learning in further education, and identification of strategies for using it effectively.

## Future development work

There is a need for an agency to provide leadership for development work in the FE sector. FEDA is already fulfilling this need to an extent and is well placed to develop this role.

Colleges require assistance with target setting and the implementation of action plans, which are now requirements of the FEFC. This role would be distinct from the monitoring role that is part of the FEFC's inspection remit.

In practice, this development work is likely to be most effective if it incorporates a research element because of the effect of involvement in research on staff development (discussed earlier in this chapter).

There is a need for guidelines for carrying out action research into effective practice, both by individuals and within departments, to develop methods for supporting improvement in practice. Without this work, there is a danger that lecturers identified as weak will be left floundering and unable to take the necessary action to improve.

We recommend the establishment of an improvement network involving all colleges. Its organisation would need to be given very careful consideration, but it should involve all colleges and enable collaboration with a 'like' partner and dissemination of good practice between more and less effective colleges. It has been suggested that an improvement network might:

- operate on a regional basis
- require all colleges in the region to establish a partnership with a 'like' college (judged by the FEFC analysis of the individualised student records data)
- require all departments in a partnership teaching the same subjects to allocate some time and resources to working together for mutual learning
- provide a framework of research activities for colleges to carry out in their partnerships
- require all partnerships to group with two other partnerships (to make up six colleges, spanning the 'more effective', 'average' and 'less effective' according to the FEFC analysis); and to develop an annual programme of shared events
- hold regional conferences for sharing the outcomes from the research studies
- publish succinct, high quality accounts of the research studies and their outcomes for circulation to all colleges and for use within teacher training and staff development.

There is also a need for support and consultancy to be made available at the request of colleges, to help them improve their effectiveness.

Finally, there is a need for colleges to be visited regularly to identify and record instances of good practice. This must be done with care, since not all that passes for good practice may currently be worthy of the description. Strategies for disseminating good practice should then be developed, using a

range of methods including accounts on the web and paper-based publications. A database of accounts of good practice and related research should be established and made available to all colleges via the internet.

## Key points

### *Essential preparatory work*

- The following work is fundamental to all subsequent research and development activities. It requires a combination of research and development work to draw all staff in the sector into the debate:
  - generating an agreed set of purposes for all colleges, and sub-sets for different 'families' of colleges
  - reaching an agreed definition of effectiveness for all colleges, with variations for 'families' of colleges
  - establishing the key indicators that can be used to judge effectiveness
  - establishing key indicators of improvement.

### *Future research*

- There is an urgent need for both quantitative and qualitative research, carried out systematically with representative samples of colleges, to inform the development of policy and practice.
- Research can never give definitive answers.
- Research in the effectiveness paradigm provides a quantified basis for action.
- Qualitative research provides more detailed insights and explanatory theories that are beyond the scope of quantitative measures.
- There is also a need for research to be carried out:
  - independently of the colleges, because some research, particularly case study research which involves careful comparisons between cases, needs to be carried out by independent researchers
  - in partnership with the colleges, because participation in the process of carrying out research is an effective form of staff development and teacher-researchers provide insights not available to external researchers.

### Research within the effectiveness paradigm

- This work will need to build directly on the extensive research already carried out in the schools sector. Work carried out with colleges, using methods already proved to be robust with the much larger group of schools, will be of value in establishing trends.
- Longitudinal studies should be set up to compare 'like now' with 'like past' (using existing data) and 'like future'. These should involve a large sample of colleges to provide a systematic longitudinal study of the sector.
- There is also a need for studies which: establish comparison of like with like; establish key indicators; enable value added to be taken into consideration; and enable improvement to be monitored. Some of these are included in the essential preparatory work (above) but there will be a need for more detailed work to evaluate initial decisions.

### Research within the improvement paradigm

- This scoping study has identified major gaps in the research so far carried out. There is an urgent need for a range of studies to provide a firm knowledge base about the sector.
- High quality case study research needs to be carried out systematically across a representative sample of colleges to investigate the appropriateness of the outcomes of SER in relation to colleges, and to identify and explain the key processes which are driving the improvement of college effectiveness.
- Intervention studies, linked to the longitudinal studies, are needed to monitor outcomes resulting from specific interventions.
- A range of other studies are in the areas of: improvement in infrastructure support; improvement in management and organisational structures; and improvement in teaching and learning.

### *Future development work*

- There is a need for an agency to provide leadership for development work in the FE sector; FEDA is well-placed to develop this role. This might include assisting colleges with target setting and implementation of action plans, which are now requirements of the FEFC. The role would be distinct from the monitoring role that is part of the FEFC's inspection remit.

- We recommend, in addition:
  - involvement of college staff in research as a form of staff development
  - provision of guidelines for carrying out action research into effective practice, to develop methods for supporting improvement in practice
  - establishment of an improvement network of colleges, involving all colleges, to enable collaboration with a 'like' partner and dissemination of good practice between more and less effective colleges
  - support and consultancy at the request of colleges, to help them improve their effectiveness
  - identification and recording of good practice; dissemination of good practice; and establishment of a database of accounts of good practice and related research.

# Appendices

# Appendix 1: Methods of study

The study was carried out over a 10-week period between mid-April and the end of June 1998, by a group of six researchers who, among them, had the background and experience in both the FE and schools sectors to access the necessary information quickly and easily. Close collaboration between members of the FEDA steering group and the university team was maintained throughout the period of the study. The university group of researchers was supported by an 'internal advisory group' of colleagues at the university who were carrying out research in related areas.

Four methods of study were used by the university research team after consultation with the FEDA steering group:

- a literature review in the area of improving the effectiveness of educational institutions which encompassed both the FE and schools sectors
- a questionnaire to all FE college principals (including sixth-form colleges)
- an expert seminar and face-to-face and telephone interviews to elicit the opinions of key participants in a position to influence educational policy
- a focus group with participants at a FEDA forum for middle managers, and face-to-face interviews with a range of staff in four colleges.

### The literature review

The literature review was divided into two parts. That devoted to the FE sector provided the background to work on improving college effectiveness; it reviewed a range of research and development activities, much of it carried out without any co-ordinated purpose. The work in the schools sector concentrated on reviewing the main themes emerging from the extensive literature in the specialist field of SER and highlighting outcomes which might be applied in the FE sector.

### The questionnaire

All college principals in England and Wales received a short, open-ended questionnaire informing them about the study and its purposes, and asking for their views. This was intended to raise awareness of the study and ensure wide-ranging consultation. As expected, the response rate to this was low. Initially colleges in Wales and sixth-form colleges were under-represented, so a follow-up letter was sent to these two groups, resulting in the return of some additional questionnaires. The final response rate was 18%, but was representative of the sector as a whole. The poor response rate, which had been anticipated, may have been caused by colleges being continually asked to supply information to outside bodies.

### The expert seminar and interviews with key respondents

The original research design included interviews with high-level representatives of all major agencies with responsibility for the schools, higher and FE sectors, and representatives of employers. The original intention was to collect their unique perceptions of progress and future challenges in improving the effectiveness of schools and colleges. This was changed to an expert seminar to reduce costs. In the event, only representatives from the FE sector attended: three principals, an FEFC inspector and a representative of the AoC. To cover other agencies we carried out individual face-to-face and telephone interviews, lasting between 30 and 60 minutes, with key players, as follows:

- a senior inspector from OFSTED
- a member of the DfEE Standards and Effectiveness Unit

- a senior civil servant with responsibility for further education at DfEE
- a senior representative of the UCOSDA
- a senior officer from the FEFCW
- a representative of the Confederation of British Industry

### *Focus group and interviews with a range of college staff*

The original research design included telephone interviews with 'quality managers' in a sample of colleges. To cut costs, this was to be replaced by focus groups arranged to follow FEDA's Quality Forum meetings. The researchers were able to attend only one of these meetings, during which a focus group was established, notes were taken and a questionnaire distributed and collected. The co-ordinators of the other Quality Forums were asked to form a focus group and distribute the questionnaires at their next meeting. Where a focus group could not be established, co-ordinators were asked to distribute the questionnaires, which would be returned either to them or the university. Only three questionnaires were returned in this part of the exercise. To compensate for this very poor response, resulting in part from logistical difficulties, two of the researchers undertook face-to-face interviews with a range of staff in four colleges.

# Appendix 2: Bibliography


Ainley P, Bailey B (1997) *The Business of Learning: Staff and Student Experiences of Further Education in the 1990s.* Cassell

Ashcroft K, Foreman-Peck L (1995) *The Lecturer's Guide to Quality and Standards in Colleges and Universities.* Falmer Press

Ashcroft K, Foreman-Peck L (1996) Quality standards and the reflective tutor. *Quality Assurance in Education* Vol 4 No 4 pp17–25

Audit Commission/OFSTED (1993) *Unfinished Business – full-time educational courses for 16–19 year olds.* HMSO

Avis J (1996) The enemy within: quality and managerialism in education. In Avis J *et al.* (1996) *Knowledge and Nationhood: Education, Politics and Work.* Cassell

Avis J (1998) (Im)possible dream: post-Fordism, stakeholding and post-compulsory education. *Journal of Educational Policy* Vol 13 No 2 pp251–263

Barnard P, Dixon S (1998) *Value Added: beyond A-levels to vocational programmes?* FEDA

Barwuah A, Green M, Lawson L (1997) *Additional Support, Retention and Guidance in Urban Colleges.* FEDA

Betts D (1996) Staff appraisal and staff development in the corporate college. In Robson J (ed.) (1996) *The Professional FE Teacher.* Avebury

Birch D, Latcham J (1985) *Measuring College Performance.* Coombe Lodge Report Vol 18 No 3 pp97–121. The Staff College

Birch D, Latcham J (1985) *The Audit Commission and FE Value for Money and the Audit Ratios.* Coombe Lodge Report 18:3?? pp122–137. The Staff College

Bloomer M (1997) *Curriculum Making in Post-16 Education: The Social Conditions of Studentship.* Routledge

Brown S, Race P, Smith B (1997) *500 Tips for Quality Enhancement in Universities and Colleges*. Kogan Page

Choppin J (1997) *Total Quality through People*. Rushmere Wynne

Conway K (1997) *Quality is not a certificate: it is about continuous improvement every day.* Unpublished. (Available from the author, Greenhead College, Huddersfield)

Cooper P, McIntyre D (1996) *Effective Teaching and Learning: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives*. Open University Press

Crawford M (1997) Introduction. In Crawford M, Kydd L, Riches C (eds) (1997) *Leadership and Teams in Educational Management*. Open University Press

Creemers (1992) School effectiveness and effective institution – the need for a further relationship. In Bashi J, Sass Z (eds) *School Effectiveness and Improvement*. Hebrew University Press

Crombie White R, Pring R, Brockington D (1995) *14–19 Education and Training: Implementing a Unified System of Learning*. Royal Society of Arts

Cunningham B (1997) The failing teacher in further education. *NASD Journal* No 36 pp5–12

Davies P (1994) *Research into student retention at Lambeth College: final report*. The Staff College

Dearing R (1994) *Strategic Planning in FE: the impact of incorporation*. The Staff College

Dearing R (1996) *Review of Qualifications for 16–19 Year Olds*. Schools Curriculum Assessment Authority

Department for Education (1993) *Further Choice and Quality: the Charter for Further Education*. DFE

Department for Education and Employment (1997) *Learning to Compete: education and training for 14–19 year olds*. The Stationery Office CM 3486

Department for Education and Employment (1997) *Guidance on Disability Statements for LEAs*. The Stationery Office

Department for Education and Employment (1998a) *The Learning Age: a renaissance for a new Britain*. The Stationery Office CM3790

Department for Education and Employment (1998b) *Further Education for the New Millennium: response to the Kennedy Report*. DfEE

Department of Education and Science/The Welsh Office (1987) *Managing Colleges Efficiently*. HMSO

Department for Trade and Industry (1994) *Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win*. HMSO

Dixon S (1996) *Towards Self-assessing Colleges*. FEDA

Dixon S (1999) *More and Better for Less*. FEDA

Edwards T *et al.* (1997) *Separate But Equal? A-Levels and GNVQs*. Routledge

Elliott G (1993) Whose quality is it anyway? Assumptions underlying quality models in further education. *Quality Assurance in Education* Vol 1 No 1 pp34–40

Elliott G (1996a) *Crisis and Change in Vocational Education and Training*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Elliott G (1996b) Educational management and the crisis of reform in further education. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* Vol 48 No 1 pp5–23

Elliott G (1998) Lecturing in post-compulsory education: profession, occupation or reflective practice? *Teachers and Training: theory and practice* Vol 4 No 1 pp161–175

Elliott G, Hall V (1994) FE Inc – business orientation in further education and the introduction of human resource management. *School Organisation* Vol 14 No 1 pp3–10

Employment Department (1993) *TEC Quality Assurance: Supplier Management: Requirements of the Employment Department.* Employment Department Quality Assurance Division

Farish M, McPake J, Powney J, Weiner G (1995) *Equal Opportunities in Colleges and Universities: Towards Better Practices.* SRHE/ Open University Press

Fitz-Gibbon CT (1996) *Monitoring Education.* Cassell

Fitz-Gibbon CT (1997) Listening to students and the 50 per cent framework. In Edwards T *et al., Separate but Equal: A Levels and GNVQs* pp. 29–61. Routledge

Fryer RH (1997) *Learning for the 21st Century: First Report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning.* DfEE

Further and Higher Education Act (1992) C 13. HMSO

Further Education Funding Council (1993a) *Assessing Achievement.* Circular 93/28. FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1993b) *The Review of the Further Education Unit and the Staff College: report of the review group jointly established by FEFC and FEFCW.* FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1994) *Measuring Achievement.* Circular 94/31. FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1996a) *College Responsiveness: National Survey Report.* FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1996b) [The Tomlinson Report] *Inclusive Learning: Report of the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee.* FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1997a) [The Kennedy Report] *Learning Works: widening participation in further education.* FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1997b) *Identifying and Addressing Needs: A Practical Guide.* FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1996c) *Review of the Further Education Funding Council's Inspection Framework*. Circular 96/12. FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1997c) *Validating Self-Assessment. Circular 97/12*. FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1997d) *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996–97: the Chief Inspector's Annual Report*. FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1997e) *Self-Assessment and Inspection*. Circular 97/13. FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1997f) *Widening Participation in Further Education: Statistical Evidence*. FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1997g) *How to Widen Participation: a guide to good practice*. FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1998) *FEFC–College Relations Survey: Report Summary and FEFC Action Plan*. FEFC

Further Education Unit (1987) *Quality in Non-advanced Further Education*. FEU

Further Education Unit (1993) *Value Added in Further Education: one aspect of FEU's continuing quality work*. FEU

Further Education Unit (1994) *Value Added – an update*. FEU

Further Education Unit (1994) *Managing the Delivery of Guidance in Colleges*. FEU/Employment Department

Further Education Unit/Further Education Development Agency (1995) *Current Developments in Value Added*. FEDA

Gorringe R, Toogood P (eds) (1994) *Changing the Culture of a College*. Coombe Lodge Report Vol 24 No 3. The Staff College

Gray J, Jesson D, Goldstein H, Hedger K (1993) The statistics of school improvement: establishing the agenda. Paper presented to the ESRC seminar series on school effectiveness and school improvement. Sheffield University

Gray J, Jesson D, Tranmer M (1993) *England and Wales Youth Cohort Study: Boosting post-16 participation in full-time education: A study of some key factors*. Employment Department

Gray J, Wilcox B (1995) *'Good School, Bad School': Evaluating Performance and Encouraging Improvement*. Open University Press

Gray J, Allnutt D, Gardner J, Blackman C, Frost B (1995) The development of a national framework for estimating value-added at GCE A/AS-level. Technical annex to *GCSE to GCE A/AS Value-Added – Briefing for Schools and Colleges*. Department for Education and Employment

Gray J, Hopkins D, Reynolds D, Wilcox B, Farrell S, Jesson D (in press) *The Improving School: Performance and Potential*. Open University Press

Green M, Bartram D (1998) *Initial Assessment to Identify Learning Needs*. FEDA

Halliday J (1996) Values and further education. *British Journal of Educational Studies* Vol 44 No 1 pp66–81

Hargreaves DH, Hopkins D (1991) *The Empowered School*. Cassell

Harper H (1997) *Management in Further Education: Theory and Practice*. David Fulton Publishers

Harris A, Bennet N, Preedy M (eds) (1997) *Organisational Effectiveness and Improvement in Education*. Open University Press

Holmes G (1993) Quality assurance in further and higher education: a sacrificial lamb on the altar of managerialism. *Quality Assurance in Education* Vol 1 No 1 pp4–8

Hopkins D, Ainscow M, West M (1994) *School Improvement in an Era of Change*. Cassell

House of Commons Education and Employment Committee (1998) *Sixth Report: Further Education*. The Stationery Office.

Johnson M (1997) *Research in FE Colleges*. Research Report No 1. FEDA

Jones S (1994) Quality through equality. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* Vol 18 No 2 pp37–42

Kenwright H (1997) *Holding out the safety net: retention strategies in further education.* Unpublished report on North Yorkshire Retention Project funded by North Yorkshire TEC (copies £5). For information, contact Helen Kenwright at York College Tel: 01904 770441)

Lambeth College (1994) *Research into Student Retention at Lambeth College: final report*. Lambeth College

Levačić R, Glatter R (eds) (1997) *Managing Change in Further Education.* FEDA/The Open University

Levine D, Lezotte C (1990) Unusually effective schools: a review and analysis of research and practice. *International Journal of Educational Research* Vol 13 No 7 pp815–25

Lightfoot S (1983) *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture*. Basic Books

Martinez P (1995) *Student Retention in Further and Adult Education: the evidence*. Staff College/FEDA

Martinez P (1996) *Student Retention: case studies of strategies that work*. FEDA

Martinez P (1997) *Improving Student Retention – a guide to successful strategies*. FEDA

Martinez P, Houghton J, Krupska M (1998) *Staff Development for Student Retention in Further and Adult Education*. FEDA

Martinez P, Munday F (1998) *9,000 voices: student persistence and drop out in FE*. FEDA

McGinty J, Fish J (1993) *Further Education in the Market Place: Equity, Opportunity, and Individual Learning*. Routledge

Moorse R, Dixon S (1999) *Measuring performance – improving quality.* FEDA

NACET (1997) *Skills for 2000: report on progress towards the National Targets for Education and Training.* National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets

National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (1995) This quality business. *NATFHE Journal* Vol 20 No 1 p3

National Foundation for Educational Research (1997) *Raising Achievement in Newham Schools: a review by NFER on behalf of Newham LEA.* NFER

OFSTED (1998) *Secondary Education 1993–97: a review of secondary schools in England.* The Stationery Office

Ollin R (1996) Learning from industry: human resource development and the quality of lecturing staff in further education. *Quality Assurance in Education* Vol 4 No 4 pp29–36

Otter S (1996) Learning at work: the policy context. Paper presented at the European Conference for Educational Research, Seville

Parnham JD (1998) Review of Stone J (1997) Increasing effectiveness: a guide to quality management. In *Education Management and Administration* Vol 26 No 2 pp 221–222

Peters T (1989) *Thriving on Chaos.* Pan

Peters T, Waterman B (1982) *In Search of Excellence.* Harper and Row

Ralph M (1995) *Developing the College as a Learning Organisation.* Coombe Lodge Report Vol 27 Nos 7 and 8. The Staff College

Randle K, Brady N (1997) Further education and the new managerialism. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* Vol 21 No 2 pp229–240

Reeves F (1995) *The Modernity of Further Education.* Bilston College Publications and Education Now

Sallis E (1990) *The National Quality Survey.* The Staff College

Sallis E, Hingley P (1992) *Total Quality Management*. Coombe Lodge Report Vol 23 No 1. The Staff College

Sammons P, Thomas S, Mortimore P, Cairns R, Bauser J, Walker, A (1995) *Understanding school and departmental differences in academic effectiveness: findings from case studies of selected outlier secondary schools in inner London*. Paper presented to the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands

Sammons P, Hillman J, Mortimore, P (1995) *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools: A Review of School Effectiveness Research*. Institute of Education/OFSTED

Sammons P, Thomas S, Mortimore P (1997) *Forging Links: Effective Schools and Effective Departments*. Paul Chapman

Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (1995?) *GCSE Results: an analysis of the 1995 GCSE results and trends over time*. SCAA

Scheerens J (1992) *Effective Schooling: Research, Theory and Practice*. Cassell

Scheerens J, Bosker R (1997) *The Foundations of Educational Effectiveness*. Pergamon

Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, SCPR: Social and Community Planning Research, FEFC (1996) *Student Voices: The Views of Further Education Students With Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities*. Skill/SCPR/FEFC

Smithers A, Robinson P (1993) *Changing Colleges: Further Education in the Market Place*. CIHE

Somekh B, Blackmore M *et al.* (1992) A research approach to information technology development in initial teacher education. *Journal of Information Technology in Teacher Education* Vol 1 No 1

Somekh B (1993) *Project INTENT, 1990–92: Final Report*. National Council for Educational Technology

Spours K (1997) Issues of student retention: an initial study of staff perceptions. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* Vol 2 No 2 pp 109–119

Stockport College (1995) *Non-starters and Early Leavers from College Courses – August to November 1994*. Stockport College of FHE

Stoll L, Fink D (1996) *Changing Our Schools*. Open University Press

Stone J (1997) *Increasing Effectiveness: A Guide to Quality Management*. Falmer Press

Stott C, Lawson L (1997) *Women at the Top in Further Education*. FEDA

Theodossin E (1986) *In Search of the Responsive College*. The Further Education Staff College

Times Educational Supplement (1996) Melia gets tough on complacency. *Times Educational Supplement* 16 February 1996 p25

White J, Barber M (eds) (1997) *Perspectives on School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. Institute of Education

Yin RK (1993) *Applications of Case Study Research*. Sage

Yin RK (1994) *Case Study Reseach*. Second edition. Sage

# Appendix 3: The authors

### *Professor Bridget Somekh, University of Huddersfield*

Professor Bridget Somekh, who was formerly the Deputy Director of the Scottish Council for Research in Education, is an experienced researcher and evaluator. She has published widely in the fields of self-evaluation and the management of change, the latter at both individual and organisational levels. During the 1980s, while at the Cambridge Institute of Education, she worked with Suffolk and Norfolk LEAs on an MSC-funded project to support the implementation of innovations in large secondary schools. Later, at the University of East Anglia, she led two major projects funded by the National Council for Educational Technology. These focused on improving the use of IT as a tool for learning in, respectively, schools and teacher training institutions. In Scotland she was involved in several Government-sponsored evaluations, including the National Record of Achievement in Scotland (1997), the Standard Entrance Test for the Scottish Police (1996), the Career Entry Profiles Pilot Project for the Teacher Training Agency (1996) and the Scottish projects in the Education Department's Superhighways Initiative (1998). Professor Somekh's present position is Dean of the School of Education and Professional Development at the University of Huddersfield.

### *Dr Andy Convery, Redcar and Cleveland College*

Dr Andy Convery has an extensive research background using qualitative methods. His recent research interests focus on practitioner research and collaborative enquiry between teachers, and promoting reflective teaching practice in FE colleges. At present he is actively engaged in exploring how to encourage college-wide practitioner research and how this can contribute to a self-assessing culture in colleges. He has a publication in press in which he considers how links with higher education can promote institutional development in further education.

### *Jean Delany*

Jean Delany retired as a senior lecturer in Vocational Education in March 1997, having completed 25 years' service in teacher training aimed at the post-compulsory sector. She has continued as a senior research associate. In 1994, she was invited to attend the training events for registered FEFC Inspectors and was subsequently added to the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional register, taking part in significant number of inspections related to the Hotel and Catering specialist area, during the first four-year cycle. She continues to be involved under the revised inspection arrangements. Her main area of interest focuses on research into quality of the learning process and work-based learning and assessment. Jean Delaney has strong links with colleges of further education in a specialist context and, through the inspection process, has assisted colleges in their preparation for inspection as a consultant.

### *Roy Fisher, University of Huddersfield*

Roy Fisher has worked at the University of Huddersfield since 1996. Previous experience includes four years in the electricity supply industry, incorporating work in work measurement/organisation and methods. As a college lecturer and manager from 1978–92 and 1994–96 (both before and after incorporation), he developed and analysed college quality assurance and evaluation systems. His experience of research includes Employment Department-funded projects on good practice in GNVQ induction and on work-based learning. He has authored and co-authored papers that have been published in respected journals. He is currently a member of the British Educational Research Association and joint-chair of FEDA's Yorkshire and Humberside Region Further Education Research Network.

### *Professor John Gray, Homerton College Cambridge*

Professor John Gray (MA Oxon, EdM Harvard, DPhil Sussex) is Director of Research at Homerton College, Cambridge and a Visiting Professor at the London University Institute of Education. He was previously Professor of Education at Sheffield University. He has served on various committees of the Economic and Social Research Council connected with education and has been a member of numerous steering groups for Government-funded research projects. He has held grants for policy-related research from organisations including the Audit Commission, the DfEE, various LEAs and the Scottish Office. A leading researcher in the fields of effectiveness and improvement, he has made influential contributions to the creation of value-added approaches to judging performance, institutional evaluation, transitions from school to training and further education, and the effect of inspection on institutional development. He is currently completing a major ESRC-funded study of 'improving' schools. He is the author of five books and some 150 other publications.

### *Stan Gunn, University of Huddersfield*

Early in his career, Stan Gunn had extensive experience of evaluation studies for the Schools Council. Although his main experience has been in the schools sector, he has also taught in further education on secondment. He has carried out an evaluation of departmental structures for an FE college. He has worked closely with Professor Somekh since she joined the School of Education in 1997. His current projects include consultancies for Calderdale LEA focused on school improvement and performance, an area which has become his specialism, with an expertise in quantitative methods.

### *Dr Andrew Henworth, Bishop Burton College*

Dr Andrew Henworth is a lecturer in agriculture at Bishop Burton College. His main research interest is into the demands for quality in further education. His masters degree concentrated on evaluating and reviewing further education and training. For his PhD, he investigated quality in further education and training, looking at the demands for quality by the stakeholders in further education and training. Among the groups he investigated were FEFC, BTEC, NCVQ and City and Guilds, as well as students, parents, employers, college staff, and ex-students.

### *Loraine Powell, University of Huddersfield*

Loraine Powell is Head of the Research Unit on the Management of Change. Her main interest lies in Educational Management. Previously, as Project Manager for the West Yorkshire Open Learning Federation, she was responsible for accreditation procedures in 11 colleges of further education and 12 training organisations. Her work as regional educational consultant for a DoE-funded project on business/education links gave her responsibility for the staff development in eight institutes of higher education in the region. She was also responsible for research into cross-institutional evaluations. Her current interest is in self-evaluation as a conduit for CPD.

## Other titles in the series

| Developing FE ● Volume 1 | |
|---|---|
| 1 | **Student tracking** Kevin Donovan |
| 2 | **Caseloading** Sue Carroll and contributors |
| 3 | **Assessing the impact: provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities** Sally Faraday |
| 4 | **Adults and GNVQs** Aidan Pettitt |
| 5 | **On course for next steps: careers education and guidance for students in FE** Jackie Sadler and Anna Reisenberger |
| 6 | **Marketing planning** Denis McAteer, Kevin Willis and Lynette Cutting. Edited by Ernest Theodossin |
| 7 | **Managing change in FE** Edited by Rosalind Levačić and Ron Glatter |
| | Traditional strengths of further education include its diversity and inclusiveness. This collection of five sets of case studies, produced in collaboration with the Open University, testifies to that achievement and examines various models in relation to internal processes, competitive advantage, learning, human resource management and boundaries. |
| 8 | **The effective college library** David Streatfield and Sharon Markless |
| 9 | **Appraisal in FE – where are we now?** Elizabeth Walker |
| 10 | **Clarity is power: learner outcomes, learner autonomy and transferable skills** Francesca Wilde and Roger Hardaker |

| FEDA Reports (formerly Developing FE) ● Volume 2 | |
|---|---|
| 1 | **Investing partners: further education, economic development and regional policy** Simon James and Greg Clark |
| 2 | **Women at the top in further education** Clare Stott and Liz Lawson |
| 3 | **Moving into FE: the voice of the learner** Martin Bloomer and Phil Hodkinson |
| 4 | **Additional support, retention and guidance in urban colleges** Adjei Barwuah, Muriel Green and Liz Lawson |
| 5 | **Qualifications for the future: a study of tripartite and other divisions in post-16 education and training** edited Geoff Stanton and William Richardson |
| 6 | **FE: aspects of economic development** edited by Simon James |
| 7 | **9,000 voices: student persistence and drop-out in further education** Paul Martinez and Felicity Munday |
| 8 | **Changing college cultures** edited by Graham Peeke |
| | Changing the culture of a college is a difficult issue – but one that is increasingly popular on management agendas. This publication offers a collection of reports from authors working in further education who have tackled these issues from the frontline. The areas covered are diverse:<br>• how to adapt the new corporate culture following a merger<br>• how to promote a customer services culture<br>• the effect Investors in People can have on an organisation's culture<br>• the factors which influence a change of structure at a college.<br>Evaluations of efforts to achieve cultural change are scarce. *Changing college cultures* provides a rare chance to learn from the experiences of those who have already travelled the road. |
| 9 | **Key skills: strategies in action** Felicity Munday and Sally Faraday |
| 10 | **College life: the voice of the learner** Martin Bloomer and Phil Hodkinson |
| 11 | **Community profiling to improve college responsiveness** Adjei Barwuah and Ian McCallum |

To place an order or for further information please contact
**FEDA publications, Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH**
**Tel: 0207 840 5302/4 Fax: 0207 840 5401 e-mail: publications@feda.ac.uk**

feda report

Since incorporation, a key demand on colleges has been improved efficiency. There is now professional and political consensus that further education needs to be more effective and to focus sharply on the achievements of learners. This timely report is based on research for FEDA by a team from the University of Huddersfield. It contains a robust, critical review of previous research, inspection and development activities, and summarises the extensive work on effectiveness and improvement in the school sector as it applied to colleges. The authors confront the difficulties and complexities head on, with vigorous analysis and recommendations for future work. If understanding a problem is halfway to resolving it, this report takes us some way forward.





ISSN 1460 7034 Vol 2 No 12 Price £12.00

**U.S. Department of Education**
*Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*
*National Library of Education (NLE)*
*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*

# NOTICE

## REPRODUCTION BASIS

☒ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket) form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☐ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").