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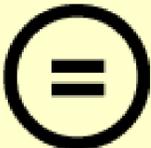
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Management of Change in Further Education:
Some Perceptions of College Principals

VOLUME II

Chapter 4X

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS

This volume contains details of analysed data corresponding with chapters 4.3 and 4.4 in the main thesis

4.3X contains data associated with the analysis summarised in chapter 4.3 in the main thesis

4.4X contains data associated with the analysis summarised in chapter 4.4 in the main thesis

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of
Philosophy of the Loughborough University of Technology

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4.3X Responses to the 1989 Questionnaire to East Midlands College

Principals¹

4.3.1 The East Midlands Colleges

4.3.1.1 Burnham Group sizes of colleges²

The question 1(a), what is the group size of your college, brought the following responses:

Figure 4.3.001³

Responses given to Question 1(a)

<u>Group Size</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
<4.....	[4]
4.....	[5]
5.....	[7]
6.....	[7]
7.....	[5]
8.....	[1]
>8.....	[]
Don't know	[2]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire (figure 7.2.3 in chapter 7) and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet graph 7.1.401G (The associated table may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.401).

¹ See chapter 4.3 in Volume 1 for summary of analysis.

² Designations recommended by the Burnham Committee for Further Education using taught student hours and grades of courses (agreed by the Committee) as bases for LEA calculations.

³ Corresponding Figures 7.1.401-438 and those having the suffix G may be found on attached disk. (See list of Figures and computer Files in Vol 1).

Figure 7.1.401G, using the quantities contained in the responses given (figure 4.3.001), shows the number of colleges plotted against their 'Burnham' group sizes, a system mainly using weighted student-hour calculations as the basis of its structure¹. From figure 7.1.401G it can be seen that 66% of the colleges fell into the Burnham group sizes 5 to 7. The chart indicates that the largest category of colleges is between groups 5 and 6 (45%). Two principals who indicated that they did not know which group size they were in, were from small specialist colleges using a different method of categorisation.

4.3.1.2 The AMS² (FTE) sizes of colleges

In 1989 a further indicator of college size used the Annual Monitoring Survey (AMS) return to the Department of Education and Science of full-time equivalent students (FTEs).

Question 1(b) asked principals what is the size of your college in FTEs.³

and the results were as follows:

¹ Burnham group sizes for colleges were abandoned in 1989.

² Department of Education & Science (DES) Annual Monitoring Survey (AMS) of further education statistics using full-time-equivalent students as the basis of calculations. (See figure 7.1.102 for further details of acronyms).

³ Full-time equivalent students, calculated by formulae agreed by the Department of Education and Science.

Figure 4.3.002
Responses given to Question 1(b)

<u>Size in FTEs</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
<1000.....	8
1000-1500...	6
1500-2000...	8
>2000.....	9
Don't know..	

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.402G (The associated table may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.402).

The results are illustrated in graphical form in figure 7.1.402G. The least number of colleges lay within the 1000- 1500 FTEs range and the highest number at about 2000 FTEs. The change to the AMS system suggested a significant, but not unexpected¹, shift in the parameters for funding colleges which no longer supported the concept of `grading' of courses, or their length in hours per week; rewarding colleges with the highest number of FTEs rather than the highest taught hours per week. The charts² indicated a clearly different trend in relationship between number of colleges and their sizes in FTEs compared with Burnham gradings. It was apparent from figure 7.1.402.G, however, that most colleges in the cohort (74%) were larger than 1000 FTEs and nearly 55% had more than 1500. The average size of college, estimated using the computer

¹ For example see `Further Education Costing - Final Report' and the attached `Manual of Guidance Annex' para 130, by Coopers and Lybrand Associates Limited June 1987; and `Managing Colleges Efficiently' DES 1987 chapter 4 Efficiency Indicators.

² Figures 7.1.401G and 7.1.402G.

spreadsheet (figure 7.1.402), was about 1500 - 2000 FTEs. Discerned from a closer investigation of the returns was the knowledge that, of the colleges with less than 1000 FTEs, four were specialist rural colleges, three were colleges in small towns, and one a college on the outskirts of a city containing other larger colleges. The nine colleges having more than 2000 FTEs included seven inner city colleges with large urban populations and one college with centres in more than one large town. A further college, stated to have more than 2000 FTEs was set in a medium sized urban area so it may be marginally greater than 2000, caused by undisclosed local factors, or was perhaps inaccurately assessed (the latter supposition was subsequently corroborated by checking the appropriate LEA statistics).

4.3.1.3 Numbers of teaching staff in colleges

The returns for teaching staff were divided into two categories, full-time and part-time. **Question 1(c) asked how many teaching staff do you employ in your college, to** which the replies were:

Figure 4.3.003

Responses given to Question 1(c)

	<u>Size in FTEs</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Full-time	<100.....	<u>13</u>
	100-150.....	<u>7</u>
	150-200.....	<u>6</u>
	>200.....	<u>5</u>

Figure 4.3.004

Responses given to Question 1(c)

	<u>Size in FTEs</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Part-time		
	<100.....	[11]
	100-150.....	[7]
	150-200.....	[5]
	>200.....	[8]

Note: The quantities in the above tables correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figures 7.1.403G - 404G (The associated tables may be found on the attached computer disk as figures 7.1.403 & 4).

From figure 7.1.403 the average full-time staffing level was estimated to be about 120. It can be seen from figure 7.1.404, that 65% of colleges in the cohort each employed more than 100 part-time teachers, nearly 42% employed more than 150 and over a quarter of the colleges more than 200. Further analysis showed that those colleges having more than 200 full-time staff were all inner-city colleges with the exception of one, which had a multi-town catchment. These colleges all had more than 2000 FTE students and at least 150 part-time staff (with one inner-city exception having 100-150 part-time staff). All were within the Burnham group size categories 7 or 8.

4.3.1.4 Titles of colleges

The next question 1(d) asked is your college a...

Figure 4.3.005

Responses given to Question 1(d)

<u>Type of College</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
tertiary college	<u> 3 </u>
college of FE	<u> 25 </u>
other please state (Agricultural Colleges)	<u> 3 </u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3.

The replies indicated that the majority of colleges in the cohort were classified as 'colleges of further education'¹ (nearly 81%). Less than 10% were described as tertiary colleges and a further 10% as 'other' (these specialised in rural crafts)². Thus the questionnaire returns indicated that the 'average' East Midlands college was likely to be designated a 'college of further education' (although numerous titles were used *see note below for further details), categorised as Burnham group 5 or 6, with 1500 to 2000 full-time equivalent students (FTEs), employing approximately 120 full-time and some 100 to 200 part-time teaching staff³.

¹ A formal DES designation, sometimes described as 'major colleges of further education'.

² Formally designated as Agricultural Colleges but, with widening curricula, broadening their educational base to include other than purely agricultural courses.

³ See figures 7.1.403 and 7.1.404 on attached computer disk for further details.

*Note:- Nine different college titles were used by the East Midlands cohort¹:

1. College of Technology
2. College of Technology and Art
3. Technical College
4. Agricultural College
5. College of Agriculture & Horticulture
6. College of Further Education
7. College for Further Education
8. Tertiary College
9. College

Further investigation of the data disclosed that seventeen colleges used the title 'college of further education' in their literature, although of these at least six had made some attempts to avoid using the phrase - 'of further education' - describing themselves simply as 'college'.

¹ See figure 7.1.350 in chapter 7 for further details of the East Midlands colleges.

4.3.2 The East Midlands college principals

Questions 2(a) to 2(c) were set to elicit information about the holders of principals' posts in the cohort.

4.3.2.1 Principals' length of service Question 2(a) asked how long have you been Principal in your present college, to which the replies were:

Figure 4.3.006

Responses given to Question 2(a)

<u>Years in Present Post</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
<1 year.....	<u>4</u>
1-5 years...	<u>14</u>
5-10 years..	<u>4</u>
>10 years...	<u>9</u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.405G (The associated table may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.405).

Eighteen respondents (58%) had been in the post for less than five years and nine (nearly 30%) longer than ten years. The bar chart (figure 7.1.405G) shows principals' length of service in their present posts, from which it may be estimated that the 'average' length of service of principals in the East Midlands cohort was approximately 7 years. It was noted that principals who had been in post for more than ten years held responsibilities for colleges in all LEAs in the cohort, some in inner-city colleges, others in smaller towns; giving a broad spread of colleges and lending little significance to a relationship between length

of service and 'type' of college or environment. One thing which may have some significance is that all longer serving principals were male. Those in post from 1 to 5 years were spread throughout all LEAs involved and included two female principals.

4.3.2.2 Principals' previous experience

Next, **question 2(b) inquired of each principal: what was your previous post,** to which the replies were:

Figure 4.3.007

Responses given to Question 2(b)

<u>Previous Post</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
vice-principal	[24]
principal of another college.	[4]
head of department.	[2]
other (please state).. (1 HMI)	

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - see figure 7.2.3.

From the above results (figure 4.3.007G) it can be seen that over three-quarters of East Midlands principals came to their posts via a vice-principal position. Three of the four who were 'principal of another college' were appointed in one LEA, the fourth from an acting principal post in a different authority. One of the four was appointed to a tertiary college and two were clearly appointed to

'promotion' principalships. The two principals from head of department posts were to smaller colleges, one in a smaller town, the other to a rural environment.

4.3.2.3 Principals' training for management

To discover aspects of principals' formal management training, **question 2(c)** **asked did you receive any formal training in Management before taking up your present post**, which brought the replies:

Figure 4.3.008

Responses given to Question 2(c)

<u>Management Training</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
yes.....	<u>21</u>
no.....	<u>10</u>

Note: The quantities in the above tables correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figures 7.1.406G - 407G (The associated tables may be found on the attached computer disk as figures 7.1.406 & 7).

Of those who responded, 68% replied in the affirmative without further explanation, the 31% who said they had none is unequivocal. This latter category is a significant proportion of people who are chief executives in their institutions. The two-thirds who replied 'yes' were not asked for any further information on the type and length of such training. This ambiguity could have encouraged replies from those whose training spanned a range comprising full

professional courses of a year or more duration at postgraduate level, to short courses of a more specific job orientated nature, lasting a few days. The vagueness of the above question left much to be discovered before forming firm conclusions on this aspect of principals' training. It is however an indictment of a system in which nearly 1/3 of those appointed to senior positions admitted to having no prior formal management training. A further analysis of the returns produced the bar chart shown in figure 7.1.406G. This indicates the relationship between perceived prior formal management training and years of service in the present post. It also displays the relationship between this training and, by implication, the date of appointment to the present post. From the figure it can be discerned that the highest percentage of both 'trained' and 'untrained' principals is in the 1-5 year banding¹. It shows an 8% difference between these two groups, the higher percentage being 'trained' principals. A comparison between the two groups, at the less than 1 year (<1) level also showed the 'trained' principals as 4% higher than the untrained. Comparing the 5-10 year group revealed an opposite tendency, with the 'untrained' (at 20%) much greater than the 9% 'trained'. The >10 years service grouping shows little difference between 'trained' and 'untrained'. Because of the small numbers involved it would be impossible to declare any statistical significance in the figures. However, the evidence suggests that newer (less than 5 years) East Midlands principals in post tend to be 'better' management trained than their colleagues who have been in post longer. This observation is supported by the bar chart presentation in figure 7.1.407G. This diagram also shows that the categories <1 year and 1-5 years in present principal's post (the trained incumbents) were above a 66% 'norm' for the total 'trained' principals in the cohort. It also

¹ This accords with numbers of respondents in figure 4.3.006.

illustrates that the >10 years in post group was about the same as the cohort 'norm' at 66%, and the 5-10 years group is seen in the bar chart to be considerably 'under- trained' at 50% (the group 'norm' being 34%).

4.3.3 College management structures

The third section of the questionnaire, questions 3(a) to 3(c), dealt with college management and its structure.

4.3.3.1 Current college management structures

Question 3(a) what is your college management structure elicited the replies:

Figure 4.3.009

Responses given to Question 3(a)

<u>Management Structure</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
traditional..	<u>16</u>
non-department	<u>10</u>
other.....	<u>5</u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.408G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.408 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

The results show that over half (52%) had traditional departmental structures, nearly one-third (32%) non- departmental and sixteen per-cent of the cohort had 'other' structures described as:

1. combinations of traditional departments in 'schools' (with "cross-college roles for heads of

departments and supporting staff and committee structures");

2. "half and half" traditional departments and non-departments;
3. combinations of the above;
4. overlays of course teams on a departmental base;
5. "matrix with some departments".

Of the colleges who declared non-departmental structures, four were inner-city colleges, one a city-outskirts college, two were large colleges in large towns and three were smaller colleges in differing smaller urban and rural environments.

There may be some significance in the fact that 71% of the colleges from within one authority had other than departmental organisation structures and the remaining colleges in that authority were planning changes to their management structures. A number of principals who responded saying that they had traditional departmental structures went to some lengths to stress that they were in the process of change¹. Some qualified their structures, stating variations from the traditional; the main variation given being cross-college roles² for all, or some of, their heads of departments.

¹ See chapter 4.3.3.2; also chapters 4.4.4.1.1.(j), 4.4.4.3.3 and 4.4.4.6 for later evidence of changes.

² For example, responsibility for overseeing college resources or for student counselling for the college as a whole.

4.3.3.2 Changes to senior management team structures

Replies to questions **3(b) Has your management structure been changed recently;** and **3(c) Are you considering changing your management structure;** are included in the following table:

Figure 4.3.010

Responses given to Questions 3(b) & (c)

<u>Changes to Management Structure</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Yes recently	<u>[18]</u>
No recently	<u>[13]</u>
Yes considering	<u>[19]</u>
Not considering	<u>[12]</u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.409G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.409 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

These results showed that 18 of the 31 principals (58%) had made recent changes to their college management structures (further information indicated that this was usually within the previous five years)¹, and 19 out of 31 (61%) were considering changes. Further analysis of the eighteen questionnaires of those colleges which had undergone recent change in structures, revealed that

¹ For further details about changes to college SMTs see also chapters 4.4.1.1; 4.4.4.6 and 4.4.5.5.

one-third of the principals questioned were anticipating further changes to their management structures. One possible explanation lay in the fact that although recent changes had taken place, five of the six still retained some form of traditional departmental structure. The main trend of the recent changes was shown to be towards a non-departmental structure¹ (56%) with a further 5% actively undergoing change (at the time of the questionnaire) towards a non-departmental structure².

The thirteen colleges not considering future change included eight which had recently changed to non-departmental structures, together with four having traditional departmental structures from three of the five LEAs involved in the survey. The thirteenth was in the process of change at the time of the inquiry.

4.3.4 Timing and membership of senior management team (SMT) meetings

The following **questions 4(a) and 4(b)** were designed to elicit information about college senior management teams³.

¹ These took a number of forms, including functional line management, faculties, and several variations of matrix structure; accepted formally by DES, see Circular 9/88 chapter 3.1.iii and Note iv.

² See Theodossin 1984 chapter 2 and Coombe Lodge Report Vol.21 No 2 Part V; also Nelson J 1978 pp19-21.

³ Teams of college senior staff appointed by the principal to advise on management aspects within the institution.

4.3.4.1 Frequency of SMT meetings

Figure 4.3.011 illustrates the results arising from question 4(a) How often does your senior management team meet, intended to determine the frequency of senior management team meetings.

Figure 4.3.011

Responses given to Question 4(a)

<u>Frequency of SMT Meetings</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Weekly.....	17
Every Two Weeks	11
Monthly.....	2
As need arises	1

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.410G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.410 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

This figure indicates that the overwhelming majority (over 90%) of SMTs met at least once in two weeks, with over half (55%) meeting weekly, 7% monthly and one team on an irregular basis 'as the need arises'. These latter two groups of colleges spanned the complete size range and included large town and rural, however, none were inner city colleges.

4.3.4.2 Membership of college SMTs

Question **4(b)** asked: **who is in membership of your senior management team** and the following figure contains the tabulated replies:

Figure 4.3.012

Responses given to Question 4(b)

<u>Membership of SMTs</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Principal.....	[31]
Vice-principal	[31]
CAO.....	[29]
Heads of Depts	[24]
Others.....	[11]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.411G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.411 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

The membership of senior management teams (which were variously described in different colleges¹) in all cases included the principal and vice-principal (Figure 4.3.012) and nearly all (94%) colleges included the chief administrative officer. Twenty-four of the thirty-one replies received (77%) included heads of

¹ Examples of different titles for these teams are included in the analysis of the 1992 interviews. See chapters 4.4.4.6; 4.4.5.1; 4.4.5.5 and full text on the attached computer disk for further details.

departments in the team and eleven colleges (over 35%) included 'other' members of staff. These 'other staff' included¹:

- (*) Curriculum directors
- (*) Directors with cross-college functions
- (*) Deans
- (*) Functional heads
- (*) Heads of faculty
- (*) Heads of student services
- (*) Directors of resources
- (*) Heads of college services
- (*) Directors of industrial training
- (*) Directors of study
- (*) College development officers
- (*) Staff development officers
- (*) School liaison officers
- (*) Industrial liaison officers.

Other titles were also mentioned but it was felt that they held posts similar to those listed above and were therefore not added to the list. A further interrogation of the survey results revealed that colleges with SMTs which included 'other members' were divided between traditional departmentally structured colleges (46%) and colleges with a non-departmental structure (55%). The 'traditional' colleges involving these 'other members' in their SMTs include two colleges on large city perimeters, one small town college and two

¹ Further, more detailed mention of these 'other staff' was made in the 1992 follow-up interviews. For further information see chapter 4 of the thesis and full details on attached computer disk in the TEXT files.

rural crafts colleges. The seven colleges which did not have heads of departments in their SMTs included the non-departmental colleges mentioned above (with one inner city college exception) together with two rural crafts colleges. The survey indicated that, by and large, departmentally structured colleges, irrespective of size or location, included heads of departments in their SMTs.

4.3.5 College development plans

Questions 5(a) Have you drawn up a college development plan, 5(b) If you have a college development plan were your senior management involved in its preparation and 5(c) Has your plan been submitted for support/approval to SMT, academic board, governing body or LEA... asked principals about what action they had taken on college development plans.

4.3.5.1 The drawing up of college plans

Figure 4.3.013

Responses given to Questions 5(a) & (b)

<u>Possess Coll</u> <u>Devt Plan</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
1. Yes.....	{ 29 }
2. No.....	{ 2 }
=====	
Senior Management Involved in Preparation	
=====	
3. Yes.....	{ 28 }
4. No.....	{ 3 }
=====	

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.412G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.412 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

From figure 7.1.412G it can be seen that replies to question 5(a) show that (94%) declared they had drawn up a college plan and (7%) stated they had not

done so. However, additional information included in some of the returned questionnaires, together with oral information from other principals¹ clarified that in a number of cases the college development plans referred to were WRNAFE² plans drawn up for the Training Agency. As one principal put it: "We have submitted planning material to the LEA and in Annual plans for WRNAFE etc. But they do not amount to my idea of a systematic Development Plan"³. In discussions with some principals⁴ it was discovered that in a number of colleges very little information had been required or requested from them for WRNAFE plans submitted to the Training Agency by the authorities concerned⁵. It was also clear that in some colleges a great deal of time, effort and planning had gone into producing very comprehensive development plans for internal use by college managements. The two colleges in the survey which said they had not produced college development plans were an inner city college and a small town college. Both these colleges and a further inner city college made up the three colleges (all from separate LEAs) which had not involved their SMTs in the preparation of the plan. One college who said it had not produced a development plan had produced a WRNAFE plan, thereby overtly differentiating between the two types of plan. One of the inner city college principals explained

¹ A number of checks and inquiries were carried out informally by the author with individuals at various meetings of principals in the Midlands in 1989 but, not being documented, may only be taken to give a general, though fairly firm impression of the situation at the time of the survey.

² Work related non-advanced further education (sometimes referred to as NAFE). See also chapter 4.4.3.6.5. See figure 7.1.102 for further information about acronyms.

³ Remark appended to the questionnaire response from respondent 1222501, a college in a small town with a supportive LEA.

⁴ Referring to informal discussions with Midlands principals at a meeting on 11 December 1989 at Beaumanor Hall Leicestershire.

⁵ Implying that some LEAs submitted plans to the Training Agency with little or no meaningful consultation with their colleges.

that the college development plan had been drawn up as part of a plan for a newly constituted college and was not discussed with the SMT. The third, a large inner city college, simply stated that a plan had not been produced nor had such a plan been discussed with college's SMT.

4.3.5.2 Senior management's involvement in the preparation of college development plans

From figure 7.1.412G it can also be seen that in over 90% of colleges questioned the returns showed that senior management teams had been involved in the preparation of college development plans, only 10% of respondents said that SMTs were not involved.

4.3.5.3 Consultation with senior management about college development plans

Question 5(c) sought further information about the consultation process undertaken in drawing up college development plans and the results are tabulated in the following figure:

Figure 4.3.014

Responses given to Question 5(c)

<u>Coll Devt</u> <u>Plans</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
=====	
Support for College Development Plan from:	
=====	
1. SMT.....	[27]
2. Acc Brd...	[18]
3. Govg Body.	[23]
4. LEA.....	[18]
5. No one yet	[1]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.413G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.413 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

From the above and figure 7.1.413G it can be seen that in 87% of cases development plans had been submitted to the college senior management team for support or approval. 58% of principals said they had obtained the support of their academic board for the plan. In 74% of colleges, principals had sought the support or approval of their governing bodies and in 58% of cases the plan had been submitted to the LEA for their support or approval. Only one small college (in a small town) had submitted its plan to 'no-one yet'.

A deeper analysis of question 5(c) showed that of the 31 replies received 11 colleges said they had submitted their college development plan to each of the four groups: (senior management team, academic board, the college governors

and the local education authority.) Twenty (65% of the cohort) gave varied responses and these are tabulated in figure 4.3.015. This illustrates that only two colleges did not submit their development plans to any of the four groups¹ and one college gave a qualified submission to all four groups². In the other sixteen cases, 8 colleges had submitted their plans to all but one of the four groups, 4 to two of the groups and 5 to one group only.

Figure 4.3.015

**Twenty Varied Responses to Question 5(c)
In the Questionnaire to College Principals**

COLLEGE	SMT	AC BOARD	GOVERNORS	LEA
1511401		*		
1310401	*	*	*	*
1222501(a)	Q	Q	Q	Q
1511601		*		*
1221101		*	*	
1222101				*
1520501	*	*		*
1422901		*		
1310201				*
1521001(b)	*	*	*	*
1323401	*			*
1320001				*
1521801		*(c)	*	*
1422001				*
1313001				*
1311901		*	*	*
1322201		*	*	*
1120301		*	*	*

¹ In both cases no explanations were given but on a number of occasions the author heard one principal at meetings make sceptical comments about the value to the college of development plans.

² The respondent commented ' We have submitted planning material to the LEA and in annual plans for WRNAFE etc. but they do not amount to my idea of a systematic development plan".

1222301	*	*
1110801	*	

Notes:-

* = Not submitted to...

- (a) Q is qualified yes to all four in group.
- (b) Replied: submitted to no one yet.
- (c) The Academic board was author of report but no longer in existence at time of question.

It is interesting to note from the above figure (4.3.015) that 42% of principals did not submit their college development plans to the college academic board and that in 42% of cases the plans were not submitted to the local education authority. These two clusters of thirteen did not coincide and were manifestly different to the cluster of eight colleges which did not submit their plans to their governing bodies. Figure 4.3.015 therefore highlights an inconsistency of approach which has been applied to the compilation and monitoring of college development plans across all LEAs throughout the East Midlands.

4.3.6 Strategic planning¹ and funding in colleges

Questions 6(a) to 6(e) explored some of the issues associated with strategic planning and funding in colleges.

¹ For further information about strategic planning see chapter 4.3.6.2.

4.3.6.1 Selection of new governors

Figure 4.3.016

Responses given to Questions 6(a)

<u>Selection of</u> <u>New Governors</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
Yes Involved..	[27]
Not Involved..	[4]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7 2.37.

Twenty-seven principals (87%), when asked **6(a) Have you been involved in selecting the new governors for the college under ERA¹**, replied that they were. Four principals declared that they had no involvement in this selection. Three of these were from one authority and were from singularly different types of institution, the fourth uninvolved principal was in a small college on the outskirts of a city within a separate LEA in which other colleges had replied positively. In addition to these four, two principals gave a qualified response. One admitted to an "unofficial" involvement in governors' selection, the other described involvement as selecting the new governors' "nominating bodies"². It was thought that this last remark applied to most cases, as many college

¹ The 1988 Education Reform Act.

² The DES suggested that nominating bodies comprising local industrialists be set up to help select people to serve on college governing bodies (ERA Section 152 (6) to (9). Further information may be found in the DES Circular 8/88 12 September 1988 p5 para 24. In this context they were sometimes referred to as search committees.

governors were actually 'nominated' by bodies or groups external to the college¹.

4.3.6.2 LEA strategic plans - principals' involvement

Question **6(b)** asked **To what extent were you personally involved in drawing up your LEA strategic plan² before its submission to the DES** and the responses are shown below and figure 7.1.414G.

Figure 4.3.017
Responses given to Questions 6(b) & 6(c)

<u>Personal Involvement</u> <u>in Strategic Plans</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
1. Very much	[11]
2. To some extent	[17]
3. Very little	[3]
4. Not at all	[0]
=====	
<u>In Drawing up Strategic Plans</u> <u>Would you have liked....</u>	
=====	
5. More Involvement	[13]
6. Less Involvement	[0]
7. Same Involvement	[18]
=====	

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire -

¹ Examples of this practice included the local chambers of commerce, employers' organisations, local organisations, local councils and the local employees' associations.

² For further information about strategic plans see DES Circular 9/88 part 2, particularly paragraphs 2.1 to 2.10. See also figure 7.1.504 in chapter 7 of thesis for details of an individual LEA strategic planning procedure.

figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figures 7.1.414G and 415G(The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figures 7.1.414 and 7.1.415 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

Following the 1988 Education Reform Act¹ the DES required LEAs to produce a statement of procedures for planning the further and higher education provision to be made in colleges in their area. This statement was to provide the framework for particular issues such as a cycle of longer term planning, the range of provision and collaboration². Those who replied that they were 'very much involved' were a sizeable minority (36%). Nearly 55% expressed caution in their confirmation by choosing the 'to some extent' option and three colleges declared they had 'very little' involvement. As no college said it was 'not at all' involved, there was shown to be involvement to some degree in all cases. The cautious responses of nearly 65% of the cohort to some extent questioned the usefulness of much of this process and in nearly 10% of cases dissatisfaction was indicated³.

4.3.6.3 Reflections on principals' involvement in strategic plans

This theme was pursued in the following question, **6(c) In drawing up the LEA strategic plan would you have liked...** (see figures 4.3.017(5-7) and 7.1.415G), when 42% of the cohort declared they would have liked more personal involvement in drawing up the LEA strategic plan. Whilst no one

¹ See Education Reform Act 188 Chapter III Part II Sections 1.39; 1.40 and 1.41 for further details.

² See DES Circular 9/88 1988 Appendix B for further details.

³ This was also alluded to during the 1992 interviews. See particularly chapters 4.4.1; 4.4.2; 4.4.8; 4.4.14 and 4.4.15 together with information in the TEXT files on the attached computer disk.

wished for less involvement, 58% of respondents expressed contentment with their degree of participation in devising the plans. Further analysis of these two questions reveals that those who would have liked more involvement included nine who were involved 'to some extent', the three who had 'very little involvement' and, inconsistently, one who had been 'very much involved'. It was observed that 50% of colleges in one LEA would have liked more involvement. It was also noted that 47% of principals who were involved 'to some extent' were contented with their involvement.

4.3.6.4 Adequacy of ERA funding to colleges

The next question, **6(d)**, asked **Will the proposed 'ERA' funding for your college be adequate...**

Figure 4.3.018

Responses given to Question 6(d)

<u>Adequacy of College Funding</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
More than adequate	<u>1</u>
Adequate	<u>7</u>
Less than adequate	<u>8</u>
Don't know yet	<u>15</u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.416G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.416 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

Perhaps not surprisingly, as figures 4.3.018 and 7.1.416 show, only one principal, from a large college, thought the allocation would be 'more than adequate'¹. Nearly half of the colleges (48%), of all types and sizes and from four of the five authorities involved in the research, did not know at the time of questioning what their funding status was to be. In these four authorities, other colleges said their proposed funding was adequate. This apparent uncertainty might also have implied a coyness, or cautious unwillingness on the part of the 48% of colleges to express an opinion on this issue at the time². One responded with a question mark rather than a specific indication, which might have suggested misunderstanding of the situation, or simply echoed the majority view of 'don't know'.

¹ In the opinion of the author this respondent usually presented a thoughtful, rational approach to college management. This response was, therefore, not regarded as facetious and was accepted as an honest observation at the time of asking.

² The author's knowledge of the respondents and the current situation, tended to incline analysis in this direction.

4.3.6.5 Management of full-cost courses¹ in colleges

Figure 4.3.019
Responses given to Question 6(e)

<u>Management of</u> <u>Full-cost courses</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
The principal	[1]
The Vice-principal	[2]
A Head of dept	[14]
An appointed manager	[15]
Not got one yet	[1]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.417G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.417 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

This section finished with the question, **6(e) Who manages the 'full-cost courses unit' in your college.** Only one college stated that it had 'not got one yet'². The importance of such a facility in colleges was underlined by the fact that over half the colleges in the cohort had a senior manager - at head of department (or above) level - responsible for its management (figure 7.1.417G). In 48% of colleges a manager had been 'appointed', which implied a separate section or department in the college, again stressing the significance attached to this aspect of the college's work. Further analysis of the responses showed that in three

¹ These courses were, at the time of the questionnaire, seen as an important development in colleges, encouraged by Government, see DES Circular 9/88 p34 paras 3.68 to 3.70 'Earned Income'. See also chapters 2.47 and 4.4.3.3.5 of thesis.

² Meaning the colleges did not have a full-cost courses unit yet.

cases the responsibility was a shared one, coupled with other management responsibilities, such as those of a head of department or director of resources. It was interesting to observe that the three colleges which had the principal or vice-principal as full-cost courses unit manager¹ and the college which had 'not got one yet' were in geographically adjacent authorities but other principals in both LEAs showed strong support for the concept of attracting 'full cost courses' to their colleges².

¹ Intimating that at the time no special unit had been clearly designated.

² Indicated by their willingness to delegate the responsibility and appoint other senior staff as managers to specialist college sectors or departments providing this service.

4.3.7 Computerised Management Information Systems in Colleges

Questions 7(a) to 7(b) queried the usefulness and uses of computers by principals in the management of colleges.

4.3.7.1 Use of computers for FESR¹ returns

Question 7(a) asked principals: Are you using computers for your FESR returns and they replied as in 4.3.020(1 & 2) below:

Figure 4.3.020

Responses given to Questions 7(a) & (b) & (e)

<u>Use of</u> <u>Computers</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
For College FESR Returns	
1. Yes.....	28
2. No.....	3
For Other College Management Purposes	
3. Yes.....	26
4. No.....	5
Yourself	
5. Yes.....	16
6. No.....	15

¹ FESR returns were statistical returns submitted annually by colleges to the Department of Education and Science.

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.418G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.418 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

Although figure 7.1.418G shows over 90% of the sample stated that computers in their colleges were used for the purpose of compiling these returns, more than 16% of the replies indicated a less than positive response. Colleges not using computers in their compilation included two colleges from one authority: one large and one small college from medium town areas, together with a small town college from a separate authority. An interesting discovery, on further analysis, was that two of these non-FESR-user colleges used computers for other purposes in their colleges and the third admitted to using a commercial software package for college management purposes.

4.3.7.2 Use of computers for other college management purposes

Question 7(b) asked: **Are you using computers for other college management information systems** and principals replied as in figure 4.3.020(3 & 4). This and figure 7.1.418G showed that about 84% of principals used computers for 'other CMIS'¹. Nearly 20% of principals either did not use computers for this purpose or qualified their responses: "half and half" or "in part". The responses indicated some possible misunderstandings of the use of the devices².

¹ College Management Information Systems. See figure 7.1.102 for further details about acronyms.

² This was supported by later evidence (see chapter 4.3.7.4) and by the 1992 interviews, in particular see chapter 4.4.4.1.(f).

4.3.7.3 Types of computer systems used in colleges

Question 7(c) asked What admin' computer system(s)¹ are you using... which elicited the replies shown in the following figure:

Figure 4.3.021

Responses given to Question 7(c)

<u>College Admin</u> <u>Types Used</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
FEMIS.....	[11]
EMIS.....	[11]
Fretwell Downing	[18]
HITIME.....	[4]
Other (please state)	[4]
None.....	[]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.419G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.419 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

These responses are presented in figure 7.1.419G which showed that use of the software packages available for further education management information systems (MIS) was fairly evenly divided between the Further Education Staff College products² (FEMIS and EMIS), and the Fretwell Downing software³,

¹ Referring to named software packages. See figure 7.2.3 for details.

² The FEMIS (Further Education Management Information System) was further developed by the Coombe Modge (FE Staff College) team into the more advanced modular (but still developing) EMIS (Education Management Information System) for use in colleges.

with HITIME¹ being used by few East Midlands college principals. Eighty-seven per-cent of the colleges using 'other' software also used one or both of these two major further education systems. Some colleges used specialist systems for timetables or budgeting which had been devised or adapted locally, examples being: "off the shelf software adapted for in-house use" and "in house developed time-table module". However, in a number of cases changes from one system to another were anticipated: "... to be replaced by EMIS".

It was not clear in some cases which of the FEMIS (or later EMIS) systems were being deployed. Some principals interchanged the two acronyms, compounding the ambiguity. It was thought that generally all colleges using these FE Staff College systems were working towards the newer modules being produced under EMIS. Although over half the sample (51%) used the Fretwell Downing system, more than half of these also used the FE Staff College software, and some colleges expressed an intention to change to FEMIS. None of the FEMIS/EMIS users indicated any intention of changing to other software systems.

4.3.7.4 Principals' thoughts on usefulness of computer information

Question **7(d)** asked: **Do you find computer information... (useful or otherwise)** and the following figure contains the responses:

³ A computer software package created and developed by a group of private consultants to assist educational managements with administrative tasks such as budget control, students' records, staff and course timetables.

¹ A software package created and developed by a Nottinghamshire college principal as a complete staff timetabling system.

Figure 4.3.022

Responses given to Questions 7(d)

<u>Usefulness of Computer Info</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Very Useful.....	<u> 9 </u>
Useful.....	<u> 14 </u>
Occasionally Useful	<u> 7 </u>
Unhelpful.....	<u> 1 </u>
Confusing.....	<u> </u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.420G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.420 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

The replies presented in figure 7.1.420G showed that although 74% said they found the information at least useful, nearly 71% avoided describing it as 'very useful', 25% finding it less than useful, albeit none found it confusing. This less than enthusiastic response indicated a cautious approach by principals to the information generated by computers. Those who found it useful included 56% of the respondents, consisting of all types and sizes of college from one large authority. It is perhaps not surprising that no college in this LEA found computer information less than useful. It was felt to be significant that all colleges in two LEAs used the Fretwell Downing system¹. Each of the colleges in one of these authorities also used FEMIS packages and in a third authority,

¹ It was known that this was the result of LEA encouragement, although there was no evidence of pressure or subsidy.

where the majority of colleges used Fretwell Downing, there were strong indications of movement towards the Coombe Lodge FEMIS system¹.

4.3.7.5 Principals as computer users

Question **7(e)** asked **Are you a computer user yourself**, and the replies are illustrated in figures 4.3.020(5 & 6) and 7.1.418G.

This fairly evenly divided response, showing that over 48% of principals admitted to not using computers themselves, does not indicate the degree of competence of the 51% who responded positively or whether extensive or intensive use was made of them.

4.3.8 Colleges' capacities for diversification

Questions 8(a) to 8(h) sought information about colleges' capacities to offer opportunities to students from a wide diversity of backgrounds.

4.3.8.1 Colleges' links with the Training Agency

Question **8(a)** asked **Is your college a managing agent for...** and the replies are shown in the following table:

¹ There were strong feelings at the time that this was the only system which could match the requirements for information needed by management following ERA. It also had the full support and financial assistance of the DES.

Figure 4.3.023

Responses given to Question 8(a)

<u>Managing Agent</u> <u>For...</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
<u>=====</u>	
Youth Training Scheme	
<u>=====</u>	
1. Yes.....	[17]
2. No.....	[14]
3. Don't Know	[0]
<u>=====</u>	
Employment Training	
<u>=====</u>	
4. Yes.....	[3]
5. No.....	[26]
6. Don't know	[2]
<u>=====</u>	

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.421G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.421 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

The replies portrayed in figure 7.1.421G showed that although nearly 55% of the sample were managing agents for YTS, less than 10% managed ET schemes. The colleges not offering YTS as managing agents were from all five LEAs and were of all sizes. It was noticeable, however, that the rural craft colleges in all five authorities were managing agents for YTS. Two of the three colleges managing ET¹ also managed YTS, the third did not. The two 'don't knows'

¹ The author was left with the impression that many principals were not as aware of the details of Employment Training (ET) as they were of YTS. This was reinforced by the 'don't know' responses to the questionnaire and subsequent informal discussions at principals' meetings in the Midlands region.

included a rural crafts college managing YTS and a small town college in a different LEA. It was interesting to note that two of the three ET managers were in one LEA.

4.3.8.2 Consortia arrangements with other schools and colleges

Question **8(b)** inquired: **Is your college part of a consortium of...**

Figure 4.3.024

Responses given to Question 8(b)

<u>In Consortium with..</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Schools.....	[19]
Other Colls..	[6]
TVEI Partners	[20]
None/No Reply	[3]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.422G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.422 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

The replies shown in the above and figure 7.1.422G indicate that 61% of principals who responded considered themselves to be in close partnership with local schools and nearly 65% were partners in TVEI¹ schemes. Eleven of the thirty-one respondents were both partners with schools and members of TVEI

¹ Technical and Vocational Education Initiative. See figure 7.1.102 for further details about acronyms.

schemes. Interestingly, 8 of the 20 who were TVEI partners did not perceive themselves as being in consortia with local schools. Less than one-fifth (19%) of respondents saw themselves as partnering other colleges and in one of these cases only 'loosely'. It was difficult in some cases to identify the 'other college partner' in the above cases and in one instance the partner college was identified as a secondary institution¹. It was also observed that in at least two cases where the principal had declared 'no partnership' with local schools, there existed some quite close relationships with a school or schools².

4.3.8.3 Link courses with local schools

Question **8(c)** asked **Do you operate link courses with local schools..** and the replies showed that all colleges declared that they operated link courses with local schools as indicated in the following figure:

Figure 4.3.025

Responses given to Question 8(c)

<u>Operate school link courses</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Yes.....	<u>31</u>
No.....	<u> </u>
Don't Know...	<u> </u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3.

¹ A local sixth-form college. Later (1993) these institutions were absorbed into the FE system under incorporation following the 1992 FHE Act.

² Information gleaned from a closer analysis of the questionnaire data together with the author's knowledge of the colleges and schools concerned.

4.3.8.4 College Companies¹

Question **8(d)** asked **Does your college operate a college company (or companies)** to which principals replied:

Figure 4.3.026

Responses given to Question 8(d)

<u>College Operates Local Company</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Yes (One)....	[2]
Yes (More than one)	[3]
No.....	[26]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.423G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.423 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

Figure 7.1.423G shows that sixteen per-cent of the thirty- one colleges said they operated a college company or companies *and a further college indicated that it would be setting up a college company 'soon'*. One of the above 5 colleges clarified that it had college companies 'but not registered' and one of the two rural crafts colleges who declared college companies stated that they 'operate a complex business'. Another college stated that they had "set up a private company" as a managing agent for YTS training.

¹ The 1985 Education Act enabled colleges to set up companies to bring business into the college and support the profit motive. Further information may be obtained from the FESC Coombe Lodge Report Vol 20 No 9 1988.

4.3.8.5 College marketing managers

Almost 81% of colleges (see figure 7.1.424G) responding to question **8(e) Do you have access to a marketing manager**, admitted to having a college marketing manager and of these, five colleges also received marketing support from their authority:

Figure 4.3.027

Responses given to Question 8(e)

<u>College Has</u> <u>Marketing Manager</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
At LEA Level.....	[8]
At College Level..	[25]
No-one designated	[3]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.424G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.424 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

It was clear from the replies that one LEA offered this support to all its colleges, the only LEA to do so. One other college in another authority also received LEA marketing support although, as the principal put it, this "depends on definition". One college, replying that no one was designated yet, also said that it was the "responsibility of all Directors and Principalship" in the college. The other two 'nil returns' were city colleges from one authority which did not appear to offer a marketing service to its FE colleges.

4.3.8.6 Additional facilities offered by colleges

Questions 8(f) 8(g) and 8(h) asked:

Figure 4.3.028

Responses given to Questions 8(f) & (g) & (h)

<u>Does your</u> <u>College Offer</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
<u>===== An Open Learning Facility =====</u>	
1. Yes.....	<u> 27 </u>
2. No.....	<u> 4 </u>
3. Don't Know	<u> </u>
<u>===== Access to HE Courses =====</u>	
4. Yes.....	<u> 29 </u>
5. No.....	<u> 2 </u>
6. Don't Know	<u> </u>
<u>===== Open Access Workshops On a 'Drop-in' Basis =====</u>	
7. Yes.....	<u> 24 </u>
8. No.....	<u> 7 </u>
9. Don't Know	<u> </u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.425G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.425 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

The replies depicted in figure 7.1.425G showed that 87% of colleges offered an open learning facility¹. Those which did not, included two rural crafts colleges. An even higher (93%) of colleges offered Access to HE² courses and a lesser but still substantial 72% offered 'drop-in'³ learning facilities. Three of the seven colleges not offering 'drop-in' open access workshops also did not offer any open learning facilities. Moreover, four colleges, whilst offering open learning did not extend this to open access on a 'drop-in' learning basis. It was discovered⁴ that there were plans in at least one of these colleges, however, to develop this facility.

¹ Facilities set up with the aid of additional Government funding to encourage attendance of students who otherwise might not be *attracted to traditional* college courses.

² Courses developed in conjunction with nearby polytechnics or other higher education colleges to encourage mature people to aim for HE entry who had not achieved the traditional entry requirements.

³ 'Workshops' in the wider educational sense. Set up to encourage students to attend on an ad-hoc basis and learn at their own pace, generally using computers and other learning aids, with the minimum of supervision.

⁴ From subsequent informal discussions with college principals at meetings in the East Midlands.

4.3.9 Staff appointments and induction procedures

4.3.9.1 Staff appointments to colleges

In response to question 9(a) Do you appoint the staff to your college¹, principals replied:

Figure 4.3.029

Responses given to Question 9(a)

<u>Do You Appoint Staff to College</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
<u>Senior Teaching Staff</u>	
By Yourself	[2]
With Governors	[26]
With other Sen Staff	[16]
<u>Other Teaching</u>	
By Yourself	[3]
With Governors	[2]
With other Sen Staff	[31]
<u>Non-Teaching</u>	
By Yourself	[2]
With Governors	[2]
With other Sen Staff	[31]

¹ Set to investigate the differing degrees of responsibility held by principals or shared with others in the task of staff appointments in colleges. Further information about staff appointments following the 1988 Education Reform Act may be obtained from DES Circular 9/88 sections 5,6,7 and 8.

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.426G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.426 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

The responses illustrated in figure 7.1.426G show quite clearly that very few staff appointments were made by principals acting alone. Governors were involved to a large extent with senior teaching appointments, as were other senior staff, but to a lesser extent with other teaching and non-teaching appointments. All colleges involved senior staff in other teaching and non-teaching appointments. Principals who stated that they appointed senior staff 'by themselves' were limited to two colleges in the same LEA; both, however, contradictorily involved other senior staff in appointments and in one college governors were also involved¹. Five colleges indicated that they did not involve governors in senior teaching appointments, three from one LEA, but on closer investigation² it was discovered that governors were involved in all appointments of head of department and above³. Nearly 52% of colleges involved other senior staff in these appointments and the 42% who did not were spread across the five LEAs. Those who did not involve governors in making senior appointments did involve other senior staff. All colleges involved senior staff in other teaching and non-teaching appointments and in some colleges 'other junior staff' were also

¹ In both these cases the respondents had apparently assumed a wide range of senior staff appointments, involving governors in some and college senior staff in others. For example governors were involved in a head of department appointment but not for a head of section at senior lecturer level where a head of department was involved.

² Subsequently followed up by the author in unrecorded discussions with the principals concerned and with LEA officers.

³ In a number of cases LEA members and officers were involved in the process of senior staff appointments.

involved in this process. In some cases¹ these appointments were delegated to 'other senior staff' in the college. It was plain from further analysis that in no case did principals appoint staff without other senior (sometimes also junior) staff being involved in them.

4.3.9.2 Induction programmes for staff entering colleges

Question 9(b) asked **Do you have a formal induction programme for new staff².**

Figure 4.3.030

Responses given to Question 9(b)

<u>Do You Have Staff Induction Programme</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Yes	<u>26</u>
No	<u>5</u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.427G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.427 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

¹ This fact was determined from questionnaire responses and supported by subsequent informal unrecorded discussions by the author with many principals in the 1989 cohort. See also chapter 4.4.2.2 of thesis and attached TEXT disk for further ongoing evidence of the procedure.

² Induction programmes took various forms but possibly included introductions to and discussions with senior college staff, visits to the relevant parts of the college, and depending on the level of appointment, discussions with LEA officers, inspectors /advisors and governors. Some colleges also appointed a mentor to assist new entrants during initial weeks.

The replies illustrated in figure 7.1.427G indicate that nearly 84% of principals stated that a formal induction programme for new staff existed in their colleges. The five colleges declaring no formal programme comprised three rural crafts and two small town colleges.

4.3.9.3 Responsibilities for staff development

The responses to question **9(c) Do you have a member of staff designated as college staff development officer...**^{1 2} are included in the table below:

Figure 4.3.031

Responses given to Question 9(c)

<u>Do You Have Staff Development Officer</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Yes	_31_
No	_
What Grade (6HD 1PL 6SL 5LII 1LI)	_(19)

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.427G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.427 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

¹ The appointment of staff development officers arose mainly as a result of the Government funded initiative INSET (In Service Training) and, later LEATGS (LEA Training Grants Scheme). Their duties varied between colleges but included overseeing college staff development programmes, managing the staff development budget and liaising with LEA officials responsible for staff development policy.

² See 'Staff Development in Further Education', report of a joint ACFHE/ APTI working party 1973 pp16-17 for further details.

Figure 7.1.427G again denotes the results showing that all 31 colleges who replied had a designated staff development officer. The posts varied in seniority between colleges: six at head of department level, one principal lecturer, six senior lecturers, five lecturers grade 2 and one lecturer grade 1. In other cases¹ this responsibility was part of the role of a deputy director, a vice-principal or an assistant principal. Twelve colleges did not stipulate the 'rank' of the staff development officer but it was felt that this may have been overlooked by some respondents, due in part to inadequacies in the question design.

4.3.10 Academic boards and governors' advisory committees

The questions in **section 10** of the questionnaire asked principals about the style and quality of the college academic boards² and governors' advisory committees³ in their colleges.

¹ Additional information supported informally by follow up personal unrecorded contact by the author with colleges and through details sought at principals' meetings and seminars in the East Midlands during 1989/90.

² Academic boards germinated in the further education sector during the 1970's mainly as a result of DES Circular 7/70, which applied initially to higher education establishments. They were formalised in the 1988 Education Reform Act (see Part II Section 152 and DES Circular 9/88 section 3.1).

³ Most colleges during this period appeared to have governors' advisory committees based on college departments. Their membership was drawn from local industry and commerce, other interested parties and departmental teaching staff.

4.3.10.1 College academic board responsibilities

Question 10(a) inquired is your present academic board... and the following figure contains the aggregated replies:

Figure 4.3.032

Responses given to Question 10(a)

<u>Is Your Academic Board Advisory to..</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
The Principal	<u>20</u>
The Governors	<u>4</u>
Decision Making	<u>3</u>
None	<u>2</u>
No Reply	<u>2</u> *

- Notes: 1. The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.428G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.428 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).
2. (*) This response was taken to mean that no academic board existed in the colleges concerned.

The figure (7.1.428G) shows that about two-thirds of colleges had an academic board which was advisory to the principal, whilst a small minority had boards with decision making powers. The results also show that 13% of colleges had no academic board - in two cases this was temporary during re-organisation. At least one principal assigned more power to the academic board than the college articles prescribed, which was advisory to the principal "in theory, executive in

practice". Two of the decision making boards were in one large LEA, the third in an adjacent LEA's inner city college. A number of principals described the board as advisory to them but a closer scrutiny of articles of government revealed they were in fact also advisory to the college governors. Replies indicated that many regarded their present academic boards as temporary, pending the new ERA proposals.

4.3.10.2 Frequency of academic board meetings

Question 10(b) asked How often does your academic board meet...

Figure 4.3.033

Responses given to Question 10(b)

<u>How Often Does Academic Brd Meet</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Frequently	<input type="text"/>
Monthly	<input type="text" value="4"/>
Termly	<input type="text" value="25"/>
Occasionally	<input type="text"/>
None or No Reply	<input type="text" value="2"/> *

- Notes: 1. The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.429G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.429 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).
2. (*) See notes to figure 4.3.032 above.

Figure 7.1.429G shows that nearly 81% of academic boards met termly on a regular basis. Four colleges from three LEAs met monthly, one twice termly and

a further college termly but "monthly in future". At least one principal made the point that "committees of the board (met) more often"¹.

4.3.10.3 Quality of academic board advice

Question 10(c) asked Do you feel the quality of advice from your academic board is...

Figure 4.3.034

Responses given to Question 10(c)

<u>Advice From</u> <u>Academic Board</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
Very Good	[4]
Good	[8]
Reasonable	[11]
Poor	[4]
No Comment	[2]*

Notes: 1. The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.430G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.430 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

2. (*) See notes to figures 4.3.032/3 above.

¹ Most academic boards of the period had committees which drew on a wider college staff for membership, advising the board on specialist aspects of the college's work.

It may be observed from figure 7.1.430G that less than 40% of colleges described their advice as good or very good, and a sobering 55% of respondents replied that academic board advice was less than good. It was a salutary fact that 87% of responding principals gave their academic boards less than top marks for advice and 13% went so far as to describe academic board advice as poor.

4.3.10.4 Anticipated academic board effectiveness after ERA

Following on from this, **question 10(d)** asked **Do you anticipate that after ERA the Board will be..**

Figure 4.3.035

Responses given to Question 10(d)

<u>Anticipated Board After ERA</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
More Effective	[5]
Less Effective	[3]
Equally Effective	[19]
Not Effective	[2]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.431G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.431 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

These results portrayed in figure 7.1.431G indicate that 77% of principals felt that the quality of academic board advice would not improve after ERA.

4.3.10.5/6 Frequency and quality of governors' advisory committee

meetings

Question 10(e), asked **How often do your governors' advisory committees¹**
meet. . .

Figure 4.3.036

Responses given to Question 10(e)

<u>How Often Governors'</u> <u>Advis Comms Meet</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
Frequently	<input type="text"/>
Monthly	<input type="text"/>
Termly	<input type="text" value="21"/>
As Need Arises	<input type="text" value="10"/>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.429G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.429 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

This elicited the information depicted in figure 7.1.429G that nearly 30% of these committees met on an irregular basis. Followed by **Question 10(f): do you feel the quality of their advice is...**

¹ Often chaired by a college governor, these committees were sometimes mandated by the governors on their constitutions and frequency of meetings but in many cases these decisions were left with the committee chairman and/or the college principal.

Figure 4.3.037

Responses given to Question 10(f)

<u>Advice quality of Govs' Advis Comms</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Very Good	{ 4 }
Good	{ 10 }
Reasonable	{ 5 }
Variable	{ 7 }
Poor	{ 1 }
Don't Have - N/A	{ 4 }

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.430G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.430 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

A straightforward interpretation of the above results shows that 45% of respondents thought that governors' advisory committees advice was good or very good. The question could, however, be interpreted as revealing the salutary replies, which figure 7.1.430G shows, that principals thought that in 87% of cases their advice was less than very good and that in 26% it was less than reasonable. Two of the principals who described advisory committee advice as very good were rural crafts colleges and only two LEAs were involved in the very good category. One principal whose committees met as the need arose and who anticipated that after ERA they would be more effective, simply stated "not applicable", another principal baldly stated "we don't have any"¹.

¹ These enigmatic responses were taken up in the next question and pursued with some vigour in the 1992 interviews.

4.3.10.7 Post ERA expectations of governors' advisory committees' effectiveness

Question **10(g)** asked **Do you anticipate that after ERA they will be...** as listed in Figure 4.3.038.

The following responses, as illustrated in figure 7.1.431G, indicated that 77% of principals did not expect this situation to improve¹, with a further 13% anticipating that they would be ineffective.

Figure 4.3.038

Responses given to Question 10(g)

<u>Anticipated Gov's Comms After ERA</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
More Effective	<u>7</u>
Less Effective	<u> </u>
Equally Effective	<u>20</u>
Not Effective	<u>4</u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.431G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.431 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

¹ This attitude prevailed, steadily gaining ground during the ensuing years of the research. See chapters 4.4.3.3.4 and full transcript of the 1992 interviews on the attached disk for further evidence of principals' sceptical reactions on this matter (shared by many governors) throughout this period.

4.3.11 College development factors

The two questions 11(a) and 11(b) were designed to ascertain the directions of some contemporary trends in college size.

4.3.11.1 College development

Question 11(a) queried: How is your college developing at the moment..¹

Figure 4.3.039

Responses given to Question 11(a)

<u>Current Development of College...</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Growing Rapidly	[8]
Growing Slowly	[13]
Maintaining size	[9]
Getting Smaller	[1]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.432G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.432 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

¹ Meaning during the academic year 1989/90.

Figure 7.1.432G showed that two-thirds of the principals saw their colleges expanding at the time, a quarter of the sample were developing rapidly and 29% were maintaining their size. Only one principal perceived a reduction in college size. Those declaring rapid growth included colleges of various size and type, from four of the five LEAs, and contained two rural craft colleges. A spread of college types existed in the other growth categories. The one college which admitted to getting smaller was a small town college. One interesting feature was that all the colleges in one LEA supportive of the current changes saw themselves as growing.

4.3.11.2 College student/staff ratios (SSRs)¹

Question **11(b)** asked **What is your current college SSR...**

Figure 4.3.040

Responses given to Question 11(b)

<u>Current SSR of College is...</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
<8.....	[3]
8-9.....	[6]
9-10.....	[6]
>10.....	[16]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure

¹ A ratio relating numbers of lecturers to the number of full-time equivalent students. For further details see the Audit Commission report HMSO June 1985.

7.1.433G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.433 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

Perhaps not surprisingly the responses illustrated in figure 7.1.433G indicated that all principals knew their college SSRs for that year¹. Most colleges (52%) had SSRs greater than 10 but SSRs of less than 10 posed future problems for 48% of colleges. A significant proportion had still to achieve the government's declared targets of 10.3:1 in 1985 to 11.4:1 by 1991/92². Three-quarters of colleges with SSRs >10 were in the growth categories but interestingly the one college decreasing in size also had an SSR >10. It can be shown from further analysis of the questionnaires that 56% of colleges with SSR >10 were large city colleges, or, put another way, nearly 70% of the large city colleges had an SSR >10 and in some cases more than marginally greater. One LEA had achieved an SSR >10 in all its colleges, except the Authority's rural crafts college which also had the shared highest SSR in its type and was also a rapid growth college.

4.3.12 LEA support for colleges

Question **12** asked, **How would you describe your LEA support at the moment**

¹ The academic year 1989/90.

² For further information see 'Managing Colleges Efficiently' HMSO August 1987 paras 5.12 to 5.20. LEAs were advised to inform colleges of the recommendations of the above Joint Efficiency Study report (see DES Circular 9/88 para 5.14).

Figure 4.3.041

Responses given to Question 12

<u>LEA support for College is...</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
Very Good.....	[7]
Good.....	[7]
Reasonable.....	[5]
Variable.....	[8]
Poor.....	[4]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.434G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.434 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

More than half (54%) of the principals, as indicated in figure 7.1.434G, thought that LEA support for colleges was less than good and a large minority (nearly 39%) thought it was less than reasonable. The colleges which described support as poor were, in the main, large city colleges. On further investigation of the responses it was discovered that all the colleges in one LEA, *except the rural crafts college*, described support as less than good and three described it as poor. On the other hand all but one college in another LEA described support as very good. Three of the rural crafts colleges (there was one sited in each of five LEAs) thought their LEA support was good or very good, a fourth described it as reasonable, none thought it was poor.

4.3.13 Personal perspectives of the job of principal

Question 13 asked, Do you enjoy your work as a principal...

Figure 4.3.042

Responses given to Question 13

<u>Principals' Enjoyment of Present Job...</u>	<u>No of responses</u>
A Great Deal..	<u>18</u>
Up to a Point..	<u>12</u>
Not Very Much..	<u> </u>
Not Any Longer.	<u> 1</u>

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.435G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.435 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

Figure 7.1.435G shows that 58% of responding principals enjoyed their work a great deal, 38% reacting with some caution in this respect. Only one principal replied in the negative. It is interesting to observe that two-thirds of those who enjoyed their work as a principal also thought highly of their LEA support and 61% had been in post less than five years. It is also of interest that 44% of principals who had been in post for more than ten years enjoyed their work a great deal, compared with 75% of the principals who had been in post for less than one year

4.3.14 Principals' personal views of the immediate future

Question **14** asked, **How do you personally view the next two years...**¹

Figure 4.3.043

Responses given to Question 14

<u>Principals' View of</u> <u>Following Two Years</u>	<u>No of</u> <u>responses</u>
An Exciting Challenge	[23]
Business as Usual....	[2]
Worrying.....	[10]

Note: The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.436G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.436 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

Although figure 7.1.436 shows that 32% of principals questioned viewed the following two years as worrying, 30% of these also saw this period as an exciting challenge. Nevertheless, nearly 30% of principals surveyed were worried at some prospects of changes taking place in the FE system. However, a resounding 74% saw the near future as an exciting challenge, a group which included nearly 86% of those principals who rated their LEAs' support highly. It was interesting to observe that 47% of those who rated their LEAs' support as less than good saw the immediate future as worrying. Nearly 20% of those who perceived a worrying two years ahead were the newer breed of principals who

¹ Referring to the academic years 1989/90 and 1990/91.

had been in post for less than five years. On further investigation, it emerged that seven of the nine (78%) principals who had been in post for longer than ten years saw the forthcoming two years as an exciting challenge, only one of these, from a rural crafts college, viewing the situation also as worrying. Three-quarters of principals who had been in post for 5-10 years saw this period as an exciting challenge.

4.3.15 Principals' identification of main factors of FE development in the immediate future

Question 15 asked **What do you think are the main factors which will affect the development of further education during the next three years...**¹

Figure 4.3.044

Responses given to Question 15

<u>Principals' Choices of Main Factors of Change</u> Choices ² ...	<u>No of responses</u>		
	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>
(i) Demographic trends.....	10	5	5
(ii) The education reform act	11	4	3
(iii) Other central government policies	2	6	2
(iv) LEA policy changes	4	3	3
(v) Competition from private providers.....	2	1	3
(vi) Competition from schools		2	3
(vii) Labour market trends eg employment/unemployment	1	6	4

¹ A more general term indicating the foreseeable future.

² The choices listed in the questionnaire (see figure 7.2.3 in chapter 7) were compiled by the author in consultation with principals and others not involved in the 1989 cohort. See chapter 3.5.1 of thesis for further details of the methodology involved.

(viii) Changing industrial technology		1	
(ix) Changing assessment techniques	2	1	4
(x) Other (please state)...	1	1	2

Notes: 1. The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.437G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.437 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

2. Principals were asked, please RANK your first three choices in order of importance resulting in the above replies.

These results, illustrated in figure 7.1.437G, were then 'weighted' to take into account the emphases of the first second and third choices of the respondents as follows:

- 'Weighted Points' 3 for first choice
- 2 for second choice
- 1 for third choice

giving 3 times 1st choices score; 2 times 2nd choices score and 1 times 3rd choices score as indicated in the ensuing table:

Figure 4.3.045

Responses given to Question 15

Principals' Choices of Main Factors of Change	Weighted responses			
	1st	2nd	3rd	Tot
Choices...				
(i)	30	+ 10	+ 5	= 45
(ii)	33	+ 8	+ 3	= 44
(iii)	6	+ 12	+ 2	= 20
(iv)	12	+ 6	+ 3	= 21
(v)	6	+ 2	+ 3	= 11
(vi)	0	+ 4	+ 3	= 7
(vii)	3	+ 12	+ 4	= 19
(viii)	0	+ 2	+ 0	= 2
(ix)	6	+ 2	+ 4	= 12
(x)	3	+ 2	+ 2	= 7

Notes: 1. The quantities in the above table correspond with the aggregated replies given to the questionnaire - figure 7.2.3 and with the LOTUS 123 spreadsheet figure 7.1.438G (The associated calculations may be found on the attached computer disk as figure 7.1.438 in file CHAP4_01.WK1).

The above analysis (illustrated in figure 7.1.438G) indicated that East Midlands college principals thought that the main factors which would affect the development of further education during the following three years in 'weighted' rank order were:

1. Demographic trends
2. The Education Reform Act
3. Other Central Government policies
4. Local Education Authority policy changes
5. Labour market trends eg employment/unemployment
6. Changing assessment techniques

7. Competition from private providers
- 8) Competition from schools
- 8) Other eg. "NCVQ work place assessment", "TEC staff attitudes", "NVQ.3", "changing delivery systems based on flexible, modular delivery"
10. Changing industrial technology

That these were difficult choices to make was evidenced by comments and emphases made by respondents: " I found it very difficult to rank order only three factors in question 15. They are all major factors that are going to affect FE and tertiary colleges". Some correspondents emphasised their choices by 'ringing' them, some made more than three choices and others did not 'take up' three. Those whose first choice was 'demographic trends' were principals in all types and sizes of college from all LEAs except one. The same LEA distinction applied to those who listed the 'Education Reform Act' as their number one concern. The colleges in this 'exceptional' LEA spread their first choices between (iii), (iv), (ix) and (X)¹, with the exception of the authority's rural craft college whose first choice was the 'education reform act'. Sixty-per-cent of the principals in this LEA did, however, list (i) or (ii) in subsequent choices and one of these expressed their main concerns as "TEC staff attitudes" and the LEA "deciding the size of the FE budget".

¹ See figure 4.3.044 for details.

**4.4X Responses to the Follow-up Interviews with
Selected East Midlands College Principals¹**

4.4.1 Students

4.4.1.1 College recruitment

First, interviewees were asked about students: **(1.1) has your college recruitment increased/decreased during the last two years? and can you explain why²**. A quantitative assessment of their responses is illustrated in figure 7.1.45^{3 4} Descriptions in expanding colleges ranged from:

Steady increase [Int 2] to Fantastically [Int 12],

another revealing:

An expansion of 35% in one year within an overall growth of 70% over a three year period [Int 14].

Principals interviewed regarded this question as important, going into lengthy explanations about how they had achieved growth, or avoided decline, summarised as:

This is the key question about how a college sees its business profile for the future [Int 7].

Reasons given for growth in student numbers included:

1. Better marketing

¹ See chapter 4.4.in volume 1 for summary of analyses.

² See also chapter 4.4.5.3 for further information about college size.

³ See chapter 7 for figure.

⁴ References to interview comments or views are indicated in the form [Int1,2..], with interlocations indented, numbers have been ascribed in itinerary order.

2. Entrepreneurial activities by the principal and college staff
3. Diversified curriculum
4. Closure of some private providers in the area
5. More opportunities for mature students
6. General trend towards more vocationally orientated courses
7. Higher retention rates in education
8. Open access policy of the college
9. Socioeconomic changes
10. Chronic lack of employment opportunities
11. Provision of transport to college¹
 - (i) [Ints 1,2,3,4,9,10,11,14]
 - (ii) [Ints 2,3,4,10,11,12,14]
 - (iii) [Ints 1,2,3,6,9,10,11,12,13,14]
 - (iv) [Ints 8,13 + see Q3.4]
 - (v) [Ints 3,5,8,10,12,13]
 - (vi) [Ints 1,2,6,9,10,11]
 - (vii) Ints 2,11,12,13,14,15]
 - (viii) [Ints 3,12,13(see Q2.2)]
 - (ix) [Ints 1,4,6,9,11,13,14]
 - (x) [Ints 1,4,6,11,13,14,15]
 - (xi) [Ints 9,14,15]

¹ The following interviews were related to the above reasons using the nexus (i) equates to 1. etc.

4.4.1.2 Entrepreneurial activities

Eight declared marketing to be one of the main (but not the sole) reasons for growth:

Setting out to establish a higher profile in the market place - before the 1988 Act, so that people couldn't forget that we actually existed [Int 3].

Some [Ints 3,7,8] expressed feelings of isolation within the education and training system, but many [Ints 1,2,3,9,10,11, 12,14] went on to say how much the situation had improved recently, due it was thought to a higher national profile. The counterpoint of this argument, however, was that most¹ saw their own personal relations with other competitors in this enterprise as healthy and cooperative. One comment epitomised much of this feeling:

I have appointed a full-time Director of Marketing, and this has made an enormous difference to the college, who can get into key areas and key meetings - a member of the Senior Management Team on the management (salary) spine [Int 3].

Little doubt was felt that marketing, and other activities promoting the college, was part of a principal's entrepreneurial responsibility [Ints 1,2,3,9,10,11,12,14]. The success or failure of these ventures was perceived as being supported (or opposed) by key members of staff in their establishment, with other factors strengthening or diluting the process. There were indications in the sample [Ints

¹ See questions in chapter 4.4.3.

4,6,7,15] that colleges lacking this technique suffered setbacks in recruiting students in what had clearly become a competitive market:

We are having a tremendous struggle on full-time (student recruitment) because the sixteen year old population has been falling and local schools are recruiting hard [Int 4].

4.4.1.3 Growth in student numbers

Numerous courses for the September 1991 start were reported in early interviews to be already filled and closed [Int 2]. One stated that applications for full-time courses had increased by over 50% and they had to refuse a lot [Int 8]. Another reported a waiting list of 230 students for full-time courses [Int 9]. This trend was seen as contrasting with national forecasts:

The demographic decline means we should be about 12% down and we are not [Int 15].

Unanticipated growth was accommodated in most cases [Ints 1, 2,3,8, 9,10,11,12,13,14] within existing resource allocations, using increased part-time staff. One example cited that this had been possible for the following reasons:

1. because we had a 'nice contingency' sitting, which we hoped to use for other things;
2. we also got a lower pay settlement, which saved quite a lot of money; and
3. we were able to appoint to a (lower) category for

all classes, which we are using to a maximum¹ [Int 13]. Colleges had developed learning resource centres for 'drop-in' and 'packaged learning', and made extra provision for specialist courses for industry [Ints 1,2,3,10,11,12,14]. Some had received developmental support from business and industry; providing equipment, expertise, and in some cases substantial sums of money for the construction of training centres on college sites [Ints 10,11,12]. These developments had also undoubtedly contributed to the increases in college student numbers. Students aged 19-25 were increasing in numbers in most colleges, some institutions declaring a deliberate targeting of this sector of the population [Ints 8,5,12]. Twenty-four per-cent of students are classed as mature... so that's been a bit of a change [Ints 8,5].

4.4.1.4 Links with other institutions

Several colleges were offering advanced courses enfranchised by polytechnics and universities not necessarily located near their area. These included HNCs, HNDs and first degrees, undertaken in colleges which hitherto had only provided non-advanced further education [Ints 1,10,12]. Development of courses for overseas students was also an expanding feature of some college portfolios². One actively marketed overseas students by setting up an international office and promoting courses:

To recruit 'groups' through organisations, rather than

¹ It was explained that all existing staff grades were protected within these changes.

² Extensive overseas developments, as well as college based developments for visiting overseas students, were expanding in many parts of the country. See for example Times Educational Supplement 29 January 1993 p10.

individuals, from France, Greece, Italy, Spain, as well as the Middle East and other regions [Int 2].

Another had forged links with Eastern European countries for specialist training programmes [Int 7].

4.4.1.5 Recessionary factors affecting recruitment

Noticeable effects of the current recession were detected in replies mentioning reductions in numbers in some part-time courses [Ints 1,4,5,13], including business studies and:

Particularly in construction, where training had declined but was picking up again [Int 15].

Engineering courses in many colleges [Ints 1,4,9,12,13,15] had reduced substantially during the previous decade, thought to be influenced by changes in technology and training methods as well as the recession; summed up by the declaration:

Engineering part-time is suffering ... [Int 1].

In some colleges motor vehicle courses were described as 'all but disappeared', forecasting that this section of their work would inevitably be closed in the foreseeable future [Ints 1,14].

4.4.1.6 Recruitment and the smaller colleges¹

It was apparent that many colleges were undergoing change at rates commensurate with those in general further education. A contemporary HMI report² referred to colleges' responding to changing circumstances; and excursions into training for leisure amenities, horticulture, business studies and equestrian and other activities [Ints 1,2,6,11,14,15] were reported in this context. There were moves by LEAs to regard rural crafts colleges as providing more general further education than hitherto, causing concerns to be expressed (covertly and overtly) by other FE colleges³. One general comment about colleges in the national context was:

Larger colleges are getting larger and smaller colleges probably getting smaller [Int 11].

¹ This term includes those colleges which offered specialist courses including agriculture and/or horticulture but which were currently widening their curriculum to include other, more general further education.

² Referred to in interview 6.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

4.4.2. Staffing

4.4.2.1 Staff remission from teaching duties

The second series of questions dealt with aspects of staffing in the colleges.

Leading with question **(2.1) which inquired what do you think is the future of college staff remission.**¹ There were full answers to this question² and Figure 7.1.452³ shows a synthesis of the responses. Strong reactions indicated antipathetic and some sympathetic attitudes to the system of awarding remission.

It's still dreadful - there is still what could be regarded as a struggle [Int 13].

It is still a burning issue to me in that the cost of it bothers us. It's still a burning issue with staff in that time is a pressure, more important than money - and is a specific issue at senior lecturer level, still teaching 17 or 18 hours per week ... [Int 10].

Colleges [Ints 8,12,14] viewing remission as an advantage included a large city college and two smaller colleges on the outskirts of large conurbations. Each gave different reasons for their choice. One admitted to market orientated considerations⁴. Another made allocations to lower grade staff covering duties, usually disbursed to senior staff in larger institutions. The third, a large tertiary

¹ Remission in this context means an agreed reduction in teaching hours for individuals within guidelines negotiated by unions and management.

² See full text on disk for further comments about this issue.

³ See chapter 7 for figure.

⁴ Remission was allocated to staff specifically for duties allied to marketing the college and its courses.

college with few ostensible financial problems, offered a wide, open access choice to students and provided sophisticated counselling services to match. The three colleges allocating greater amounts of remission included two of the above, together with a rural crafts college explaining:

We've had to fall into line with other FE colleges in county agreements... [Int 6].

4.4.2.1.2 Changes affecting remission

A number demonstrated a marked reluctance to radically alter existing remission arrangements, although almost all foresaw its demise as inevitable if colleges achieved corporate status under the impending legislation. Several were also actively seeking to replace teaching staff with non-teaching appointments for many tasks [Ints 1,2,6,14,15]. Some [Ints 1,3,5,12], indicated the need to accompany remission allocations with specific job descriptions and to target tasks which were student centred, or cross college functions such as quality, the TEC, NVQ, APL,¹ and students services:

which previously we had not focussed too much on [Int 3].

The task of developing new study programmes also brought:

extra demands for staff remission where rapid expansion was taking place [Int 12].

¹ See figure 7.1.102 for further information on abbreviations.

Interviewees were conscious of the fact that 'one line budgets'¹ dictated what levels of staff remission colleges could afford. The principal of a large college said:

The current remission level is about 150 hours per week, costing the college some £150,000 in the year, its real money isn't it? [Int 5]

Another, summing up feelings expressed by many respondents admitted:

I fear we're going to be under such pressure - unit costs, class sizes, etcetera - that we're going to have to start talking a wholly different approach [Int 14].

Asked how union branches reacted to this particular issue, it was thought that most accepted there had been a change of attitude and when colleges went corporate, staff conditions of service and contracts would come under scrutiny:

The unions realise there has been a great change [Int 9].

There's now more of a union awareness of the new situation ... as an undercurrent ..., but not in NATFHE meetings [Int 10].

It was, however, emphasised that:

It doesn't work that way any more [Int 9].

whilst another reflected:

We've just completed this year's round with the union... but of course now its all a budget exercise - what you can afford [Int 1].

¹ Budgets which included all the elements of finance within the college under one heading. Previously budgets were compartmentalised into spending headings, eg full-time staffing, part-time staffing, cleaning etc.

Some larger specialist colleges, with distinct responsibilities, allocated what they regarded as generous amounts of remission:

We have this in a big way really [Int 11].

However, in some specialist colleges visited during the research, principals, mindful of the need to consider this aspect, and conscious of financial parameters, were also reorganising their management structures and engaging non-teaching staff for responsibilities in various practical work sections which hitherto had been administered by senior academic staff with remission allocations [Ints 6,11].

4.4.2.2 Staff recruitment and formulae

Next, each was asked **(2.2) have you recruited the maximum number of teaching staff for your college,** in the categories full-time and part-time.

From replies it was discerned that two-thirds admitted to reductions in full-time staffing levels since LMC was implemented [Ints 1,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,15], in most cases directly related to college budget considerations. Some also linked staff reductions with changes in student numbers in various areas of work [Ints 8,11,15].

4.4.2.2.3 Formularisation of staffing

It was emphasised that formulae were not used to calculate staffing. Some LEAs formularised allocations prior to 1988 [Ints 1,2,3,5,7,11] but most did not. This sometimes included a 80%-20% relationship of full-time to part-time staffing [Ints 1,2,3,5]. Attempts were being made by a few to maintain these proportions

but in many cases events had overtaken them [Ints 2,3,5,14]. In some instances, it seemed, they had never achieved such targets in spite of earlier detailed applications to authorities for extra full-time staff [Ints 3,4,6,14]. It was stressed that:

Staffing formula is now a dead letter, but that there ought to be at least an internal idea of what a formula is; for management purposes¹ [Int 7].

The short-term view of most was:

You don't take people on... not just money; but money and planning [Int 7].

The specialist colleges did not seem to fit into any previous formula arrangements for staffing, but now were totally budget controlled, although it was asserted that under previous LEA control:

We had to fight very hard if we did require an extra member of staff². [Int 6]

Referring to 'formulae', one epigrammatically commented:

If I had followed strictly the formula which existed up until eighteen months ago... then I was entitled to probably twenty more staff, and I'm not (now) pursuing that policy [Int 5].

¹ Prior to the 1988 Education Reform Act, LEAs calculated staffing allocations to colleges using formulae which were allied to the Burnham Committee calculations for senior staff gradings and salaries.

² See attached disk for details

4.4.2.2.4 Budgetary considerations - effects on staffing

A clearly articulated relationship emerged between staffing and budget allocations from all colleges questioned, epitomised in the response:

It is what you can afford. But, within (the) financial constraints is the need to get the balance right to meet curriculum needs within an academic plan [Int 1].

This perceived management symmetry was graphically summed up as:

The pressure is on me as chief executive to balance between education and economics, and it's getting worse isn't it? [Int 11]

Another clarified:

Two main parameters are observed:

- (a) the student/staff ratio (SSR)¹ which we try to keep at a high level, and
- (b) the average class size [Int 13].

The budgets allocated by LEAs to colleges, in most situations, controlled whether or not replacements could be made. However, this did not affect some college decisions to make a number of redundancies, which were directly related to reductions in workloads [Ints 1,8,15].

Principals visited indicated that substantial numbers of staff had taken early retirement and, it was stated, some of these had been induced; many to alleviate budgetary pressures [Ints 1,2,9,10,12].

We've encouraged some of our colleagues to take early

¹ Formula devised by the Audit Commission to guide the relationship between staffing and class sizes.

retirement - (by offering) a good package [Int 12].

4.4.2.2.5 Full-time staffing in a period of growth

It was explained that of those who took early retirement, most were not replaced with full-time but part-time appointments; in order that the curriculum offer was not affected [Ints 5,8,9]. There were admissions of sustained overstaffing, as a result of changes in the student requirements during previous years, which had necessitated offering early retirements as well as making compulsory redundancies to overcome the difficulty [Ints 1,2,5,6,7,8, 9,10]. Others had the converse problem which caused them to recruit to the limit of their resources because enrolments were climbing more rapidly than staffing [Ints 3,4,14]. In the context of full-time staff allocations rising SSRs were severally mentioned, as were increasing numbers of non-teaching staff and changes in part-time staffing. As one explained:

The more full-time staff I employ, the more expensive it is and the less money I have for part-time staff or other purposes; so internally I have to put a maximum number on to make sure our budget is balanced [Int 4].

4.4.2.2.6 A cautionary approach to staffing

This caution, actuated prior to the implementation of LMC, was reflected in a number of responses. Some interviewees said that they had been reducing staff through natural wastage over a period of three or four years, to compensate for changes and falling budgets [Ints 1,2,10]. This strategy had not been fully

comprehended by others who appeared to be caught in the trap of overstaffing, in spite of much prior publicity on the subject, and forced to make compulsory redundancies or to overspend college budgets; in some cases with dire consequences [Ints 7,10,13]. The problem was generally stated:

We have had to reduce numbers of full-time staff:

- (a) so that we have a greater percentage of part-time to give us increased flexibility and reduced costs;
- (b) in order to build up staff in areas where there is work, and lose staff where work is decreasing; and
- (c) build up our numbers of students so that the budget will go up and we can staff to follow the student numbers in a good old fashioned way¹...

[Int 8]

Other reasons were given for reducing full-time staff. One specified that:

Although no serious attempt had been made to cut back; three full-time staff had been made redundant and part-time staffing had been reduced for economies as a result of a drop in student numbers last year [Int 15].

In what appeared to be a minority case another explained:

In a period of growth I typically lag behind the appointments I would like to make [Int 14].

¹ Following the principle of budgets allocated on the basis of statistics produced in colleges quantifying the previous years' workload.

4.4.2.2.7 Governors' involvement in staffing

Almost all emphasised that governors did not take any innovative role with regard to staffing. However healthy relationships were being established and governors were very much involved in adding their expertise to college staffing policies and strategies formulated by college senior managements.

The governors have devolved a great deal of autonomy to me and staffing is dealt with through the personnel function and senior management team [Int 3].

The governors determine the establishment within the budget but are not involved any further, except on senior appointments. I think I am supposed to tell them how many full-time staff we have on the establishment, but I don't - it just sits within the total budget [Int 13].

Staffing and management structures are management driven, very largely because we have learned to put up best cases. They (governors) give their support, though they ask very difficult questions. It would be fair to say that there are a number of governors who are getting increasingly involved in what's going on - the more they learn, the more they will understand [Int 1].

4.4.2.3 Staff conditions of service

4.4.2.3.1 Implementation of conditions

Finally, on staffing, the question was asked **(2.3) have you implemented the 1988 staff conditions of service.. eg averaging, front loading timetables..**

4.4.2.3.2 A cautious approach to staff conditions of service

There was a strong element of caution expressed in responses about the methods of implementing these changes to staff conditions of service. Some had overtly adopted a stance of laissez-aller in order, as they saw it, to obtain cooperation during what was unquestionably a difficult transitional period in many other respects.

I want staff to be market orientated, rather than clock watching and counting hours etcetera... This gives me the moral high ground, so that when there is a parents' evening... [Int 14]

From the tone of replies it was inferred that colleges were being somewhat circumspect on these issues, particularly where local authorities were not giving a definite lead

[Ints 1,8].

We average - a local agreement with the union, but it doesn't include front loading... the attitude of the LEA? .. it's your budget, you get on with it [Int 1].
The LEA at the moment is I/C conditions of service;

it's not a governors', nor a college matter... The LEA have produced a personnel handbook, much of which principals don't agree with, because it's bound up with 'old fashioned' attitudes. This has made governors aware that if the White Paper¹ comes in they are likely to have more influence over conditions of service [Int 5].

There has been confusion between the responsibilities of the LEA and those of the governing body, which seems to be very difficult to resolve; and there doesn't seem to be a will to resolve... with protracted discussions between LEA and union. The union was foot-dragging but (referring to local agreements with staff) it is, de facto, working [Int 14].

It was acknowledged that with 'all these people coming in'² they had few difficulties [Ints 11,12]. But, as one put it:

If I was in a position where my livelihood looked threatened, I would object. We have the opposite problem, we wonder how the hell we're going to cope [Int 12].

Summing up comments which appeared to reflect general attitudes to this facet of management:

So the simple answer would be no... but we've operated in the spirit of it [Int 5].

The answer is yes and no [Int 8].

Other colleges have costed averaging and front loading and I think it's a pretty small saving in the global

¹ The 1991 White Paper heralding the 1992 F&HE Act.

² Alluding to the influx of extra students.

context of staff goodwill [Int 14].

4.4.2.3.3 Some aspects of voluntary averaging and front loading

Colleges where averaging and front loading operated seemed aware of the rules which limited the scale of the operation. There was cognisance also of:

the little 'deals that creep in'. It isn't all good news that someone is doing 28 hours (teaching per week), creating a squeezing up of their timetable, so (that) if they fall ill and off work - disaster - also putting considerable pressure on themselves in order to get a long weekend. Sometimes I find myself fighting for the conditions of service, because I feel there is an underpinning rationale in terms of good management and reasonable workloads [Int 13].

Averaging in a number of forms occurred prior to the 1988 Education Reform Act through informal arrangements. However, most colleges responding to the question of formal averaging in the affirmative acknowledged that:

It is a difficult formula to use effectively and not easy to implement [Int 2].

Most did not set out in any significant way to engage in front loading, feeling that it would be counter productive.

The concept of the slack period at the end each year, is not as significant now as it was perhaps four or five years ago [Int 3].

A number of respondents alluded to this 'voluntary give and take', as they saw it, in the spirit of the following illustrative comment:

I've had to rely, I think a great deal, upon people working realistically. In fact, the people I want to average in this college, are averaging. We could not operate in some sections unless they averaged across the year; and took on overtime [Int 5].

It was, however, agreed by most that this varied across sections and departments within the college [Ints 1,2,3,5,7, 8,9,14].

4.4.2.3.4 Specialist colleges' separate conditions¹

Specialist colleges reminded us again of their differences in conditions of service. One example was a 42 week year as distinct from the 38 week year in mainstream further education:

which has always been a bone of contention².

It was emphasised that some colleges operated averaging³, but did not experience the problems of other FE establishments in this context. Colleges also reported recent compulsory redundancies.

But, many staff see that for survival they've got to work at least to the conditions of service, if not over and above⁴

¹ For example Colleges of Agriculture and Horticulture had different conditions of service negotiated on the basis of regard for living plants and animals in their care.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ In the formal sense noted earlier in section 4.4.2.3.1.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Yes we are implementing averaging and front loading - no problem. We operate silver book conditions of service. Historically colleges of agriculture have tended to handle this problem better than general FE¹.

4.4.2.3.5 A change to locally negotiated conditions

It was apparent from replies that in most colleges conditions of service agreements were made on a local basis, a significant change from previous practice; but where profound difficulties were encountered the tendency was to leave issues unresolved. One described this as:

a relatively mild, gentle approach [Int 8];

others as:

operating on a voluntary goodwill basis [Ints 3,5,9].

Some, going further, questioned the value to the college of implementing averaging, suggesting that:

it was costing a lot of money in overtime payments at the end of the year;

(which were apparently not budgeted for) and (on further questioning) it was agreed that:

heads of departments, or their equivalent, are not planning for that, and not spotting it early enough [Ints 4,10].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

4.4.2.3.6 New conditions for management

On the question of management spine conditions¹, most had not faced the added complexity of implementing these in full. There were examples of 'part-implementation' wholly from within LEAs supportive of the policy changes. One college had applied them to newly appointed management staff [Int 8]. Another had gone 50 to 60 percent of the way, commenting on the need for these conditions to also apply to lecturing staff:

It starts too far up², and some staff (already) voluntarily work these conditions [Int 15].

Many spoke of management (and other) staff working willingly during holiday periods:

During the vacations there has been a fair stream of management in and out, working busily, and that's what I want. The less lines are drawn... well, immediately you're in a posturing position [Int 5].

¹ See earlier footnote in section 4.4.2.3.

² Referring to the management strata in the college.

4.4.3 Competition

4.4.3.1 Relationships between college and local schools

4.4.3.1.1 College - school relationships responses

The third section asked questions about relationships with other organisations and competition for colleges, starting with question **3.1 which inquired: what are current relationships like between college and local schools.** Figure 7.1.455¹, shows the distribution of their responses in general terms

4.4.3.1.2 College - school diplomacy

Responses were amplified with comments and explanations indicating much diplomatic activity at management and other levels. Principals perceived themselves as working very hard with local school heads building management bridges and maintaining cooperation at management level [Int 1]. Relationships were generally considered cordial on the surface with 11-18 schools, and "most send us some students" [Int 3]. Personal relationships between principals and heads were portrayed as quite good, but there was some evidence of 'holding' pupils to maintain sixth-form numbers [Int 3]. This was further tempered in some instances by comments such as:

...there are a couple of them that I'm able to get on
with better than the others and I try to nurture this

¹ See chapter 7 of thesis for figure.

relationship [Int 8].

In some interviews the liaison task was illustrated as being allocated at a level different to that of principal and school head [Ints 1,10,11,12]:

We devote one full-time member of staff to visit the schools regularly and ensure that the cooperative arrangements we do have work well [Int 10].

At other (than management) levels they (relationships) remain good [Int 1].

4.4.3.1.3 An uneasy relationship

One respondent, addressing the competing arguments, gave an enlightening exposition on the relationship from an acknowledged 'privileged' position:

I like to get over to schools that this (college) is an extra facility they've got. ... again that is different from general further education because FE has two problems. One is, nobody really wants to go, not unless its a very pleasant campus. Obviously there's nothing more there than you could have in a school, we've got a lot more. And, secondly, colleges of FE are doing A level work and in direct competition. I get into a lot of schools where other colleges just aren't allowed in, because we're not regarded as competition ... [Int 11].

This impression was separately substantiated in another comment:

We have, for instance, five schools on my patch where the head has quite deliberately refused to give me access to the

fifth form. They make no bones about why: we will present a viable alternative to sixteen-year-olds... and (we offer an) alternative environment of FE. They are seriously afraid they will lose customers [Int 14].

Maintaining this theme, it was reported that, following a local education authority transfer of GCE A levels into one college, not previously offering A levels, from another nearby college:

...they (local school heads) really got very frightened about this, and there was a lot of the old neurotic reactions I used to experience before I came to this county. Because before (now) they'd never seen us as a threat, they were obviously reluctant to let them go... nevertheless they didn't see us as the enemy. [Int 13].

4.4.3.1.4 Cooperative ventures

There were, however, serious attempts in nearly all colleges¹ to develop good working relationships with the schools in their area. As one put it:

Some of the barriers are down and we are piloting a BTEC First² in one of the sixth form centres [Int 1].

In another interview it was recalled that they were enjoying:

...more discussions about linking than we've ever had before - A level joint provisions, CPVE, common publicity, BTEC First... [Int 2].

¹ See full transcript of responses on attached disk for further details.

² The one year preliminary level of a BTEC National qualification.

The feelings of most interviewees¹ were perhaps summed up in the cautious response:

...we have cooperation with them as far as some A levels are concerned. But it is a very fragile cooperation in the sense that we used to do Accountancy for (one) school but as soon as their numbers reached fifteen - or something - they got their own Accountancy teacher. This cooperation is encouraged by the LEA but it is only at the margins and the schools only send their weaker students, for such subjects as Sociology and Psychology... an uneasy alliance really [Int 4].

This was vigorously echoed in the following rejoinder which was not untypical of many principals' reactions to the question²:

So, the relationships are very mixed - the independent schools politely don't let me near the fifth form. The local eleven-to-sixteen schools fully welcome us and involve us... But I anticipate in the future they will (see us as competition) because I suspect that many ... will start a sixth-form; initially a one-year sixth but then they will get aspirations beyond that... The relationship (in refusing access) with other schools is, I think, untenably unprofessional... I think it's grossly immoral that they act as gatekeepers in that way [Int 14].

¹ See full disk transcript for details.

² See full transcript on disk for further details.

4.4.3.1.5 Guidance to students

Many [Ints 1,2,3,6,12,13,14] in the pursuance of this dialogue spoke of guidance to students:

...I'm quite heartened by the work the careers service is doing to publish information to all pupils and parents to try to make sure that more informed choices are made [Int 3].

...involvement of staff at say careers conventions [Int 1].

Or, even somewhat disparagingly, from one who had achieved little contact with local schools:

...we get invited to careers conventions...[Int 13],

implying that there were no other forthcoming invitations for college involvement with them. In other cases another facet of this aspect of school/college relationships was detected, eg:

The local eleven-to-sixteen schools ... involve us in their careers guidance, and, therefore, we are the sixth-form and they don't see us as competition [Int 14].

(We have) developed quite good links, both on a sort of friendship basis - should I say a careers advice basis - and on a teaching basis [Int 6].

A principal emphasised the difference from other colleges and the relationship with schools in this context:

We are in our schools all the time, every week. Not (just) careers evenings or parents evenings - they're

in, the people next door, (referring to the students services staff next to the principal's room) are in the schools. They all have partner schools and they're in there every week, so they become a member of (school) staff... [Int 12].

In one instance where relationships with the school were described as 'good', this was qualified with the statement:

We still get stories of students who are not given adequate advice and guidance...

However, it was amplified with the comment:

...the LEA has been very helpful, giving (the) college all (local) fifth-form names and addresses...

followed by the unanticipated remark:

Other colleges have asked and been rebutted [Int 2].

Evidence from the research indicated that no other college in the survey had received this preferential treatment¹.

4.4.3.1.6 College - schools clusters

Another perspective of this question was the reference to 'clusters'² of schools and colleges. These appeared to have received mixed receptions from principals, their points of view varying from: excellent value to students and institutions on the one hand, to downright hostility on the other [Ints 2,5,9,13].

¹ See full transcript on disk for further details.

² 'Clusters' refers to groups of schools and colleges in a locality, meeting and working together, supervised by specialist LEA officers and funded through Government allocated short-term specifically targeted finance.

...we have a very strongly developed and well worked cluster - and a link course programme has been built in; mainly pre-sixteen, but also post-sixteen supporting CPVE¹.

There are thirty-three schools, so the relationships are good, but the strains are beginning to show.

The current one is bound up with the Government's push to introduce vocational qualifications in the schools [Int 5].

...current relationships are extremely good, positive in a local cluster, but (this is) not true in (the) rest of (the) LEA... [Int 2].

However, in response to the question about relationships between the college and local schools, one reply included the vitriolic retort:

We return to the dear old (named) cluster... poisonous I would say. I don't know (that) there has been much of a desire, during my three years, or before my time, to work together [Int 8].

This point of view was reinforced in another case by the revealing statement:

We operate on a cluster basis and the authority decided to make each cluster autonomous. We were part of the TVEI² pilot (in the LEA) and then it went into extension³.

¹ Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education. See figure 7.1.102 for further details of abbreviation.

² Technical and Vocational Education Initiative. See figure 7.1.102 for further details.

³ Additional targeted Government funding provided to extend the original TVEI scheme in the locality.

Our catchment¹ means that we are in four clusters, which is very difficult for us to service.

There's variation in the clusters. In some of the clusters there's downright hostility to the college it is not even veiled. In others, where they see us as not competing directly with them probably, there's a better relationship. (There is) not much understanding of the college's position; never understanding that the college operated on different conditions of service. All of the INSET² was financed by replacement hours, which doesn't work in colleges. So although we've worked within the clusters, I wouldn't say the relationships have been all that good [Int 9].

One interviewee gave a further, somewhat sceptical, insight into the system of working in clusters from a college principal's point of view:

We do have formal relationships, because the authority decided that it would not go in for tertiary reorganisation. They set up these cluster things... which I think involve(s) us in an inordinate amount of time, for what it actually (achieves) ... Mostly it's concerned with organising the music and so on... I don't participate in these meetings as much as I used to because - well I've got other things to do³. But

¹ The geographical area from which the college draws its students (seldom clearly defined).

² Government system of allocating funds to LEAs for In-Service Training of staff, usually in specified areas of perceived need.

in terms of actual cooperation, you know, the sort of joint curriculum development, the big thing was CPVE, but, once the authority (folded) the funding up, then they've (the schools) had to pay for it. We had quite a lot of development of TVEI but as the funding has disappeared so has everything else. Well, we had this curricular project for the less able in the schools ... which got off¹ ... But that had a lot of central EEC money² ... Again once that money had gone away then the kids have gone away too [Int 13].

4.4.3.2 Relationships between college and neighbouring colleges

4.4.3.2.1 Neighbouring college relationships responses

A similarly phrased question was then put to each interviewee: **3.2 What are current relationships like between college and neighbouring colleges.** Figure 7.1.45³ shows how 60% of respondents intimated that inter-college relationships were not good. One struck an exasperated note with the comment:

They are no closer than they ever were [Int 1],

or, as cautiously expressed by another:

I have to say I think that these relationships are variable [Int 2];

³ Alluding to principals' extra workload added by LMC.

¹ A phrase indicating that it made a start.

² Allocated for specific educational projects by the European Economic Community.

³ See chapter 7 for further details of figure.

which described the general reactions of many interviewees. Those expressing satisfaction with inter-college relationships, however, described relations as "very good, as good as you'd find anywhere" [Int 4].

They're excellent. The county has, or when I came to it fifteen years ago had, a very strict control over the colleges. They partly benefited from the fact that there was an under-provision rather than an over-provision. I think you can work more easily from (this) because people haven't got capacity to fill up... [Int 13].

Well, we work very hard together and we've got a good relationship in (our authority). We meet on a regular basis, both informally and formally and we have a pretty effective agenda [Int 5].

A further interviewee prosaically stated:

Good. Because it always has been. We've always had a county coordinating system.

However, this same commentator went on meditatively to say:

At the moment (though) it's in a very peculiar state because we're actually reviewing the county further education system [Int 10].

Hesitative notes appeared in other commentaries, epitomised in the following rejoinder:

I'd like to think that's (inter-college relationships) still as good as ever, in (this authority) anyway. But, you just begin to get a little bit of reticence in giving that last bit of information than we did a

few years ago perhaps. Certain things are said sort of clouded, or lost in a slight haze of er... true fact¹ [Int 6].

Changing times also brought the following nostalgic observation, in the wake of the newly published White Paper²:

We always try to work together, although whether we will be allowed to go on doing this is difficult to say [Int 9]

Some suffering poor relationships with their neighbours vented their feelings circumspectly, remarking that "there was plenty of evidence of colleges developing work at other college's expense" [Int 3]. In the following instance, strongly expressed feelings of frustration and resentment coloured the vernacularised response:

I think that in (this county) there is a mythology that all the principals get on, and are frank and honest with each other, and I think it's all a load of rubbish. I don't appreciate the sort of gentlemanly, 'clubby', two value system that I see as typical. We get on well with colleges that aren't seen as a threat really. I approached other colleges about ... sort of consortium arrangements, prior to ERA³, and what I see going on is the big city colleges trying to wrap it all up⁴ [Int 8].

¹ There was a faint touch of mischief or mockery in this hesitancy to the statement.

² 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - the Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 1991.

³ The 1988 Education Reform Act.

⁴ A colloquial term implying that these colleges took as much of the work for themselves as was possible, denying the smaller colleges.

4.4.3.2 Personalities and changes of people in post

In a number of cases it was made clear that neighbour relations depended on the personalities involved [Ints 1,3,7,8,12]. In one discussion the respondent recollected how cooperation with another college had declined with the change of the other college's principal. Changes in principals in other colleges in one LEA, we were informed, had also affected relationships. Such had been the volume of change at principal level in one year; it had "created a state of flux which had not yet been handled" [Int 1]. In another instance the interviewee commented on the detection that there were:

...new principals proving themselves and their colleges... and whilst current relationships on the surface are cordial I have no doubt that there is (an) underlying competitive element [Int 3].

We have a formal collaborative project with (another) college in a number of things, including MIS¹ but the geography is wrong and, moreover, there is a competitive element there so that's not particularly strong [Int 7].

One interviewee indicated forcibly the part personalities play in relationships:

That's the difficulty, isn't it... personalities. I mean, people say it's the structures that are important but I've never agreed with that. I mean... you might get a principal who says I want every FTE² I can lay my

¹ Computerised Management Information Systems, currently being installed in all colleges in the authority.

hands on. And, in a declining world I reckon you'd do that... [Int 12].

4.4.3.2.3 Actions associated with local education authorities

During a period following the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act, within which a White Paper¹ that appeared threatening to LEAs was published, there were indications that some interviewees associated changes in LEA attitudes, structures and support, with developments affecting relationships between colleges. One town college principal observed that theirs had never been a high profile LEA, always one which set the framework within which colleges operated flexibly, going on to say:

Course approvals go through the LEA - who are trying, at the moment, to establish course approvals for all post-sixteen, - schools as well - a massive re-direction that [Int 2].

In another interview the question evoked an early reaction about the White Paper and its impact on small town colleges in the form of the following comment:

The White Paper... It is said that the Minister is going to halve the number of colleges; and one of our officers has a view that three colleges in the LEA should combine to protect themselves under the new system, and employ

² Full time equivalent student.

¹ 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - the Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 1991.

a full-time accountant [Int 4].

One principal recalled a particularly jarring note struck against colleges in the area under discussion:

The proposal of a tertiary college in the LEA has affected the balance of all nearby colleges. Its creation in a covert, clandestine way, with no sensible debate with other colleges, has been most disappointing [Int 1].

It was acknowledged by one from another authority, however, that:

I think the rationalisation which existed due to LEA direction ... is now showing signs of being blurred... Colleges are now considering offering courses in what have been other college areas of work... The LEA control, through a 'clearing house system', has now gone, because it can't actually direct any more. However, I think these strains are for the future rather than the present [Int 5].

In response to a follow-up question: "Do you see this bigger colleges versus smaller colleges threat as being widespread", one small college respondent emphatically replied:

Yes. The DES have been promising it for a long time, and if you look at authorities like Hertfordshire¹, they've had amalgamations and rationalisation and things like that [Int 8].

¹ There were also other amalgamations of colleges taking place at the time, for example see TES 6 December 1991 No 3936 p7 report about Sheffield.

Whilst discussing the rationale of area planning in this context, another commented:

We're softly walking round the idea of rational planning. But the authority really has to take the lead in this, and, at the moment the authority is very bereft of any senior staff... because it's not got a single officer in post-secondary¹, one officer has gone off on extended sick leave, another one has left... So yes we should be cooperating, but in a market force I'm not sure how people will hold to this [Int 9].

One principal obliquely expressed the opinion that while strategic planning, as it was being carried out at the time, was "an excuse for bureaucrats to stifle initiative":

...it is slowly breaking down because of the advent of ninety-three² and also ... of TECs. But I think if we have a total anarchy situation we will end up with the nation spending more than it needs on its post-sixteen provision. Hitherto we've had the LEA, and that was sound, albeit warts and all. I have to say that, different from (some adjacent LEAs), this county's principals weren't desperately enthusiastic to leave the local authority. We had a degree of delegation that gave us more or less

¹ Referring to the post-sixteen section of administration in the authority's education department.

² Referring to the proposed incorporation of colleges in April 1993.

all we wanted on day-to-day management, and a sensible strategic framework in which to operate. We had our criticisms; we had a few idiot officers and so on, but, more or less, we were fairly happy with the situation. I can understand, though, that reportedly in a nearby authority, where a councillor didn't want to give up anything, it was damned frustrating; so we are a little bit abnormal... [Int 14].

4.4.3.2.4 Collaboration and competition

Collaboration and competition between colleges varied from institution to institution and, indeed, within and between different authorities. Responses ranged from very co-operative to highly competitive. As the principal of a large college succinctly contended:

...there is no duplication, so when you get all (those) things out of the way... there isn't a lot to fight about is there. And I think as we move more into independence, that in fact we will continue working together... [Int 13].

One town principal admitted:

Obviously there is competition at the fringes and occasionally we get across one another on a particular issue [Int 4].

Another assessed:

Competition between colleges is not very intense. We all

have our own patch (and) the colleges in the city are complementary rather than competitive. Competition is limited to some subject areas: automotive, construction and caring; and (in) catering one queries over-provision [Int 2].

A college principal serving a wide rural hinterland with other colleges widely separated, reported:

We are so far apart we don't have any real competition within the LEA. I think we are sharing common destinies in a way [Int 15].

One other city respondent, however, saw the subject from a different viewpoint:

We still have the collaboration versus competition problem which is difficult to manage... There is plenty of evidence of colleges developing work at other colleges' expense [Int 3].

This awareness was supported in another instance by the comment:

...colleges are now considering offering courses in what have been other college areas of work. I think people are realising that they need to maximise the number of students¹ [Int 5].

As one principal of a large city college put it:

Our specialities are not in conflict with other city colleges. There is actually an awful lot of collaborative talking going on within the city, collaborative in the

¹ An indirect reference to the budget implications of enhanced student numbers.

sense of the LEA. If the White Paper¹ comes, they want to see us arrive into incorporation in the best interests of (the city)... We also feel that if we are collaborative ourselves, others are less likely to steal our courses [Int 7].

Emulating this down-to-earth vein, a smaller college principal responded:

There will be some opportunists here, I'm afraid, who will think they can beat the market, steal a march, etcetera.

But I think we've got to have a rational approach, because the messages we hear from the (punitive) Further Education Funding Council² staff, would suggest that the FE Funding Council is going to drive up class size (and) drive down unit cost [Int 14].

Looking forward, in the wake of the recently received White Paper³, another nostalgically observed:

(Competition) is not so great (in this authority), because I think there'll always be a very good understanding between colleges. There's been this sort of family network. I think the big push will come post-1993⁴, when we will all be standing up on our

¹ 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - the Challenge to Colleges' Vols 1 & 2 1991.

² Set up by the Government to allocate funding to colleges under wider powers granted to it for that purpose by the proposed 1992 F&HE Act.

³ 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - the Challenge to Colleges' Vols 1 & 2 1991.

⁴ Proposed date of incorporation under a planned new Further and Higher Education Act (1992).

own; we won't have the umbrella and the support of the LEA [int 6].

However, another respondent in the suburbs of a large city pleaded:

...there are some of us who would like to start working together and we will have to take it from there [Int 8];

a theme vigorously debated in the following:

...we're not deliberately going to 'bash each other' (competitively)... But when we go fully corporate I think that's going to be a whole new ball game myself.

continuing:

It won't matter what people as individuals want to do, one will have to be extremely pragmatic about it. And the strategic planning of the authority, as far as I can see, is being emasculated [Int 9].

4.4.3.2.5 Specialist college relationships

Specialist college principals interviewed acknowledged that there was fierce competition between them. In discussions with further education college principals there appeared to be only marginal competition between themselves and the specialist colleges:

There is only one college that actually runs some (named) provision which we disagree with, but they disagree a little bit that we run some business studies provision, and we just have this slight little argument, but other

than that we're fine [Int 11].

Between each other, however, undisguised stark attitudes manifested themselves:

Oh yes, there is an element of competition between ...colleges, a tremendous amount of competition, yes... I think the competition between ... colleges started a lot earlier than it did between the (specialist) and other colleges in any one county [Int 6].

We are totally competitive with all other (specialist) colleges, there is no doubt about that. I have no qualms in terms of saying that, because I think it's inevitable [Int 11].

One of the problems outlined was that of student grants:

...we're all being forced to, or having to, re-invent the wheel in our own colleges... for survival purposes. It's because the grants system doesn't allow people to travel from county to county if courses are offered in their (own) county [Int 6]

The ferocity of this competition was reinforced in the remark:

Certainly on the more ... modern and specialist courses, but on all courses; ... if someone has got a specialism then your next door neighbour wants to try to set it up [Int 6].

4.4.3.2.6 Other factors affecting college relationships

An additional dimension was brought to the author's attention in the response:

We have had a CTC¹ built in this area which has made things most peculiar. So that's another competitor, which is most strange, irritating, they've got all glamorous new facilities on the science and technology side which doesn't help [Int 10].

In some instances principals seemed ready to distance themselves from 'awkward' decisions about new course developments:

Often this is not the principal's fault, because a lot of work that sometimes takes place (is) from staff at a lower level... (who) should know better... If there are pioneers at senior lecturer level or below, they are understandably quite singularly only seeing their own particular college and don't see why they have to see the 'swings and roundabouts' as we call them [Int 5].

or in another instance:

...a head of department went ahead unknown to me and recruited fifteen students... and that caused a bit of friction [Int 4].

The development of TECs and their influence on colleges has also had an effect on inter-college relationships:

¹ City Technology Colleges were introduced by the Government in the late 1980's - early 1990's, funded under a partnership agreement between Government and local industrialists.

There is collaboration in respect of conurbation colleges in respect of the TEC, because we feel that if they treat us as a group, collectively we'll get more out of it [Int 7]. and in a completely different geographic area:

Now we are at the early stages of identifying a consensus strategy that avoids the silly competition... (or) the three colleges in the (named) TEC area will end up cutting each other's throats [Int 14].

4.4.3.3 Relationships between college and local industry

4.4.3.3.1 College/local industry responses

Each principal was then asked the related question: **3.3 What are current relationships like between college and local industry.** Figure 7.1.457¹ illustrates how interviewees responded generally to the question.

4.4.3.3.2 The heterogeneity of industry's response to the local college

Although most principals promulgated the relationship with local industry as 'good' or 'reasonable', many also qualified this as 'patchy' in the sense that the majority [Ints 2,3,4,8,9,10,13,15] identified closely with a small number of larger employers but did not easily relate with the numerous smaller firms in the area to any great extent:

I find this question difficult to answer in general terms.

¹ See chapter 7 for further details of figure.

Overall I think it's very good and evidence through enrolments is good. But it's patchy, and this relationship is variable and depends on the buoyancy of the labour markets, the type of industry, and, although business is going through difficult times relationships are good [Int 3].

Well there are thousands of little organisations round and about, very few big employers, so it's the customer problem¹. The big employers use us... but again they're having difficulty with their recruitment [Int 8].

This is a county of small firms and many don't use the college [Int 2].

I don't think that we as a college, though, got involved with the changes², we were involved with the big organisations, not understanding what was happening in this area - that's a lot of small companies [Int 9].

One principal described how the college had conducted "survey after survey" of local firms, trying to persuade smaller firms to take advantage of college training for their employees. It was explained that, with the help of one large locally based national organisation, the college offered training courses in new technology³ to any company in the town, with 50% reduction of fees. The interviewee continued rather poignantly, that in spite of making some three-to-

¹ During this period colleges were being encouraged to consider students and employers as customers, who knew what they wanted and who may not fit easily into the established traditional further education courses.

² A large engineering works had been closed and small businesses developed, changing the economic and social infrastructure of the area.

³ A term describing short training courses in the use of computer packages such as word-processing, spreadsheets and databases; as well as other specialist software, for example desk-top publishing and tailor-made software for budgeting, accountancy and stock-control.

four-hundred personal telephone calls the response had been "very, very small", maintaining:

...our biggest problem has been to get our name known in the smaller firms [Int 10].

Having said that... it's very difficult to get through to the many small employers. And they don't have a specialist training person, and that's a difficulty. The big companies, of course, are well organised, but then, we've only got a few of these [Int 15].

4.4.3.3 Events affecting college/industry relationships

Recent changes in the industrial scene included developments in technology, changes in world markets and a deepening world and national recession. All have had their impact on the further education environment, and local colleges, being affected by these developments in varying degrees, have responded in different ways. As one interviewee succinctly put it:

There has been enormous, significant change [Int 1].

Nowhere has pressure been greater for change, however, than in the land-based industries. Some colleges were subjected to stress by an industry in flux, comprising large numbers of "very small family businesses, with perhaps one or two people... so there isn't a big local voice of industry" [Int 6]. However, it has to be said that colleges reported convincing endorsements of their work:

So I have no problems about that. We get a lot of support from the local industry [Int 6].

The challenge created by land based industry change was referred to by another interviewee:

The whole of the rural community at the moment is under great pressure and threat... And I suspect actually, if you're worried about things, you'd be very worried...

[Int 11].

It was widely accepted that further education colleges had close affiliations with local industry and business. Moreover some colleges, it was pointed out, had closer ties than others:

This is a highly vocational college, it isn't an academic college. I think probably of all the colleges in (the LEA), with the exception of the agricultural one, this is the one that is most visibly a vocationally orientated institution [Int 7].

This close association with local industry had its advantages, but colleges in recent years had sought, through their local education authorities, to diversify and strengthen their subject base¹. This had not always been achieved however and as one pensively reminisced:

Well, again, it's what is our catchment area? We haven't really got a defined one. You've got to have your ear to the ground... The problem (with) this college is that it's always looked inward. It didn't try to expand, it didn't try to develop, to do things in a different way... [Int 8].

¹ See full transcription on disk for further details.

In many areas great industries such as coal, steel, engineering and construction had diminished; some had actually disappeared. These massive changes severely affected a number of local colleges, which were forced to close whole areas of work, sometimes whole departments, or impelled towards diversification in order to survive¹:

And of course this college, purpose-built in the sixties², was totally dependent on (a one firm town), which used to employ the whole of (the town) practically. Now it's reduced to about two-thousand employees, if that... [Int 9].

...as we've already said, there's been a reduction in support for day-release work. There've been some harsh facts presented to people... and there's a lot of examples in my college, as I am sure (there are) in many others, of many staff putting themselves about to explain to employers what they're doing; putting together custom-buil(t) courses, knowing that if it's not good enough people won't come again [Int 13].

4.4.3.3.4 The effects of industrialists on college governing bodies and other college committees

A number of interviewees [Ints 2,4,9,10,12,13,14,15] remarked on the beneficial effects recent additions of local business representatives had had on the newly

¹ See full transcript on disk for further details.

² The 1960s.

formed governing bodies, other college committees and working groups . It was reported that industrialists making these invaluable contributions to colleges did not do so lightly and had found it "difficult to make these full commitments" [Int 2]. Acknowledging that there were now more industrialists on college governors, F&GP¹ and consultative committees, one interviewee conceded that "they work reasonably well" [Int 4]. A number of principals disclosed examples of improvements² made in liaison with industry during recent years:

I don't think we had too much of a liaison network with local industry four years ago³, but we've built up [Int 9].

Another remarked that in this context the college was:

...little developed when I arrived but getting better all the time [Int 14].

Referring directly to governor influence on the college/industry relationship one interviewee commented:

I would say that the chairman⁴, particularly, has been very keen [Int 10].

Most principals interviewed⁵, revealed that governors' advisory committees were rapidly being replaced by other types of college working groups. Strong feelings were expressed on this subject:

...rather than advisory committees, which I always

¹ Finance and General Purposes Committee of the college governors; a small very powerful decision-making committee, mainly comprised of governors with business interests.

² See full transcript on disk for further details.

³ An allusion to the period preceding the 1988 Education Reform Act and its earlier documentation (see chapter 2 of thesis).

⁴ Chairman of the college governing body.

⁵ See full transcript on disk for further details.

consider as an excuse for them to drink tea and nothing else...
continuing in an equally strongly expressed supportive vein:

We have a new governing body, an incredible (group);
in fact they're driving me round the bend, and (one)
guy who runs a local 'freebie'¹ newspaper... is always
writing superb articles about us [Int 12].

Principals of most colleges² played a significant part in the selection of new
governors³ and some took advantage of this opportunity to 'inject new blood'
into the, now more powerful, governing bodies:

I deliberately took a decision... armed with a blank sheet...
in January 1989... to constitute our new governing body
with local industrial representatives... I went deliberately
for the major employers... So, you name it on the local
employment scene and I've got them; knowing full well
that if I made a mistake everybody's going to know
about it. But, if I'm successful... I'm going to win a lot
of friends in the right places... So far it seems to be
working [Int 14].

Not everyone took such a bold stance on governor selection. The general
feeling of most, indicating confidence but not complacency⁴, was summed up in
the response:

We've got strong consultative committees... There's

¹ A freely distributed local newspaper containing mainly advertising features and a small amount of editorial matter.

² See full transcript on disk for further details.

³ Following the implementation of the Education Reform Act in 1988/89.

⁴ See full transcript for details supporting this statement.

never any problem getting governors and so on... Out of ten employer governors I would say we regularly get eight... (and) our F&GP committee - we always get (good) attendance on that; and we've got one other working party which is looking at 1993¹, very good attendance on that [Int 15].

Some caution was expressed, however, in the reply:

Industrial governors are finding it difficult to make these full commitments; not a question of goodwill but of time [Int 2].

It was widely thought² that such busy people might be less readily available for frequent meetings, and efforts were made where possible to accommodate this in the planning stages, or, as indicated below, an acceptance of the difficulty realised:

I lose a few each time, because at least two of them'll be out of the country or else they'll be elsewhere in the country [Int 14].

¹ Referring to the proposals for the incorporation of colleges in 1993.

² See full transcript on disk for further details.

4.4.3.3.5 The effects on the college/industry relationship of changed college and staff attitudes

The general consensus of opinion¹ appeared to be that much effort had been expended by college managements and staffs to improve the interface between college and local industry. Most interviewees [Ints 1,2,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15] mentioned this aspect of the relationship; often in the context of types of course and training offered, but also in personal approaches to industry about its requirements and how colleges could best provide for them. One comment which epitomised the reactions of many. came from one of several colleges² which had set up special units to respond to industry's needs:

A viable short courses unit has established a whole new framework on the rest of the college provision. We have a reputation now (with industry) of doing what's needed... and more important, of doing it well... [Int 1].

The increasing magnitude of self-financing work³ was evident in some responses:

Self-financing work, of non-LEA kind, in various skills brought in an income of £550,000 last year (about £100,000 up on previous year), ranging from overseas to local [Int 2].

¹ The full transcript on disk clearly shows the emphasis most principals placed on these changed attitudes within their colleges.

² See full transcript on disk for further details.

³ Following the 1985 Audit Commission's Report (see chapter 2 of thesis for further details), colleges were encouraged to offer custom-built training courses for industry and to cover the college's full course costs by charging economic fees.

Another aspect of this 'entrepreneurial strategy' was realised in the rejoinder:

Firms have recognised the geography of certain colleges in the past but... we have got to capitalise on the disaffection of some customers with (other) college provision. We have started doing things... [Int 8].

There appeared to be more than one school of thought on whether contacts with industry should be through a specialist, or specialist unit, or by encouraging a wide diversity of college staff to generate and maintain these associations:

We've had a marketing unit and got a Director of Marketing (senior lecturer). (And) we've built up a college/industry team, cross-college, drawn from all programme areas [Int 9].

In another large city college a personal contact policy was pursued, using assessment as a principal discussion vehicle:

We actually have a person here, who does nothing all day but rushes round industry saying NVQ (and APL)¹ ... and explaining it [Int 12].

The unique problems of rural crafts colleges and the land-based industries also called for ingenuity. One such institution, with the help of the local TEC², set up a Rural Action Team (RAT) based in the college:

...and we've got a RAT officer (terrible term!) based here, so people do regard the college as being the focus [Int 11].

Not all successes culminated in the design that was originally planned. One principal wryly explained how the college had instituted a Business and Training

¹ National Vocational Qualifications and Accreditation of Prior Learning.

² Training and Enterprise Council.

Partnership scheme to develop a drop-in skills centre for local office workers. The college's attempt to sell shares in the venture met with scant support from local business and the local authority. The scheme, therefore, paradoxically proceeded through financial support from the college, with some government assistance:

...and is a very effective drop-in skills centre...But the number actually being sent by firms, which was the whole idea - very few, But we have a lot of (students), the place is full (of) people coming in under their own steam... So it's super... without the college it wouldn't exist [Int 13].

4.4.3.3.6 Material benefits derived through developed industrial relationships

For many years colleges had benefited in kind from their close links with local industry¹. The interviews revealed cases where colleges had further materially prospered from recently developed closer links with local industry²:

Where we have a particular benefit, is that we have used our friends in industry to help the college and we've had some major sponsorships [Int 10].

The informant went on to explain that during the previous four years the college had a management centre built at no expense to the college. Other projects included a training and development centre for college staff, plus large cash

¹ See chapter 2 for further details of past ties between colleges and local industry.

² See also Times Educational Supplement 11 March 1994 Review p7 for further information.

donations by industry. Not all colleges had been fortunate in obtaining practical assistance of such magnitude, but many¹ indicated that recent substantial support had been forthcoming from local industry.

4.4.3.3.7 An industrial image of further education

Colleges were asked [Ints 9,12,13,15]² about a well publicised³ common theme, that industry did not agree that the content of public education was in its best interests; and that further education was over-expensive and not delivering the sorts of courses that industry required⁴.

Principals were reluctant to agree with this perception and did not associate it with their particular environment:

I didn't notice that. I just think it had got all moribund.

Our industrial governors we've had here have always been supportive and I see no change in that [Int 9].

Or, as another tersely retorted:

That's not true... [Int 12].

A thoughtfully pragmatic reply included the remarks:

Well, they are much more questioning than they were; and the rules are quite simple: if it's not good enough they don't come back... I mean, yes, you get people who rubbish us because we're easy targets. And I think

¹ See full transcript on disk for further details.

² Other colleges also responded to this question in parts of the text. For further details see full transcript on attached disk.

³ See chapter 2 of thesis and attached disk for further details.

⁴ See also chapter 4.4.3.4.6 for further comments.

some of the complaints are justified - that we are still very traditional... but I think there has been a considerable change in attitudes amongst the staff, except for a cynical few... [Int 13].

The reactions of most were perhaps summed up in the response:

I don't really sense that. There are some employers who are critical but... when you go into their criticisms most of them date to something that happened several years ago, and they'd not been prepared to change and look, and I think they've been pleasantly surprised [Int 15].

4.4.3.4 Competitors to colleges

4.4.3.4.1 Colleges responses about competitors

As a check on previous responses and to carry these discussions further, each principal was then asked the question **3.4 Which do you perceive as competitors to your college.. local schools, other neighbouring colleges, private providers, other... none.** Figure 7.1.458¹ shows the general response given by interviewees to this question.

¹ See chapter 7 for further details of figure.

4.4.3.4.2 Awareness of universal¹ competition

Sixty per-cent of the interviewed principals [Ints 1,2,4,5,8,10, 11,13,14] suggested that schools, colleges and private providers all posed competitive threats to the college, and of these, one-third [Ints 10,11,13] added further competitors to the list. These included principals from all types of college; implying that they were inherently competitive organisations, or that the setting did not in itself *shelter colleges from such competition*.

A number were succinctly descriptive about the situation:

Everyone in some way [Int 1],

All, one way or another [Int 2],

I think everybody really [Int 5],

All of them... [Int 14].

Many embellished such comments, however, when discussing the more specific challenges. Competition was proclaimed as welcome by some who saw the challenge giving an edge to the college, which, acting as a stimulant, could be turned to the institution's advantage:

But the competition was healthy, yes, and the damage not really lasting [Int1]

...we are in a competitive world and I will deliberately exaggerate the competition to keep people² on their toes. And I genuinely believe that we cannot stop, if we get complacent in any area we'll have had

¹ An inclusive term utilised by the author to denote aggregated competition from schools, other colleges and private providers.

² Referring to senior college staff.

it... so it's the spirit of competition [Int 10].

4.4.3.4.3 Schools as competition¹

The analysis also indicated that the 73% of interviewees who identified schools as competition, ranged across all aspects of further education in city, town and rural community; and those who emphasised schools as major competition² included city, large town and small town colleges. This wide distribution of responses brought forth strong comments. One principal of a large college, with 'good' school relations, commented:

Schools, particularly (those with) one year sixth³,
(cause us) considerable concern. CPVE⁴ is not
very effective and BTEC First⁵ is not the answer [Int 2].

A commentator in a small town setting replied firmly and concisely to the question about schools competition:

Local schools, and grammar schools very much so [Int 4],
whereas a large city college principal anticipated newly emerging competition from local schools:

...the schools are coming through more clearly [Int 5].

¹ See chapter 4.4.3.1. of thesis for further comparative comments about schools.

² See figure 7.1.458 for details.

³ Many schools were at the time operating sixth-forms on a one year attendance basis, to offer opportunities to pupils who were not deemed capable of achieving conventional university entrance requirements via the traditional two year course.

⁴ Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education.

⁵ Business and Technician Education Council First Certificate. A one year course qualifying for entry to the BTEC National Certificate.

The principal of a specialist college, who previously described relationships with local schools as "not too bad", went on to attest their competitive element:

Well I think at the moment, as we have said, obviously it's local schools; particularly in getting the youngsters in. We're fortunate probably, that most of the BTEC Firsts and other courses that could come off under the new arrangements, only we can offer; and we'll get permission to do so, so we're perhaps more secure (on) that front... [Int 6].

A reminiscent thought was postulated by one who saw improvement in the relationship with schools as important:

Three years ago there were all sorts of working parties, eg schools and colleges working together, but it was all too late; he¹ wasn't in post early enough [Int 8].

In another situation the interviewee built up the following picture which, in many ways, depicted the feelings of a number of other colleagues²:

Schools (are) competition on A levels only...
(particularly those with) very small sixth-forms...
(and those offering) odd bits of secretarial... Schools are, therefore, competition... I think everybody would say that schools' (competition) is unhealthy because of the stories they tell about us. That's always unhealthy. It always leaves a taste; but we're fairly relaxed about it. It crops up more at heads of

¹ An education officer recently appointed to the Authority.

² See full transcript on disk for further details.

department level than it does at mine. They get niggly about it... But as long as we keep going, we've done so well¹ it'll be difficult for them to touch us [Int 10].

4.4.3.4.4 Neighbouring colleges as competition²

Seventy-three per-cent of principals interviewed also mentioned neighbouring colleges as competitors. Once more these spanned the full spectrum of college categories surveyed, and of these a third [Ints 3,7,11] emphasised other colleges as being substantial sources of competition. These included two city colleges from different LEAs, and a rural crafts college from a third authority. Principals again³ voiced strong opinions about competition between themselves and other colleges, anticipating a deterioration in this situation as 1993⁴ approached:

LEA boundaries may disappear under the White Paper⁵,
and then it will get worse. There are a few strains with
other colleges in relation to the LEA, because of
LMC⁶ [Int 1].

¹ A comment indicating success in attracting students to the college.

² See chapter 4.4.3.2 of thesis for further comparative comments about neighbouring colleges.

³ See chapter 4.4.3.2 for further detailed comparative comments about other colleges.

⁴ April 1993 was the date set for incorporation of colleges under the 1992 F&HE Act but at this stage was outlined in the current 1991 White Paper.

⁵ 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - the Challenge to Colleges' Vols 1 & 2 1991.

⁶ Local Management of Colleges. A system of college control of their own allocated budgets, following the 1988 Education Reform Act (see figure 7.1.504 for further details).

Once more there were cases when a terse general response was forthcoming, for instance in response to question 3.4 one interviewee replied:

Colleges, yes [Int 14].

Some colleges, however, identified competition between colleges for certain courses only [Int 2]. One college articulated a perceived pioneering development strategy which many were beginning to comprehend¹:

We see that some of the other FE colleges are certainly competitors with us in some of our curriculum areas...

We're finding it increasingly difficult to hold our work in those areas and we're having to work harder in a toughening competitive situation. Because significant parts... can actually be done elsewhere without massive capital investment... we can, in a sense, be picked off in those areas, so we've got to work very hard [Int 3].

Another, more specialist college principal identified a disparate scenario where distinctive areas were not thought to be threatened:

...in reality they aren't in competition for the areas we specialise in [Int 7].

For the most part competitive colleges were identified as those within their own local education authority. There were cases, however, where the competitive cutting edge lay in adjacent LEAs' colleges, soon to be released from the constraints of local authority control and county boundaries. As one observed:

But under the new rules, if the "1993 White Paper"²

¹ See full transcript on disk for further details.

² This comment refers to the possible implementation in 1993 of the 1991 White Paper (see above).

comes about, the nearest colleges to us are not in our present LEA but in neighbouring LEAs. And I have no contact with these colleges at a professional level because they're in separate counties. All the rules are different¹. It used to be very different in the way we operated with out-county rules etcetera; very, very different... [Int 4].

Not all inter-college competition was considered to be totally detrimental, as one principal emphasised:

Other colleges are competitors. In that sense... I would say (that) there is a spirit of healthy competition [Int 10].

Specialist colleges had a different problem in this context². One such principal was adamant about certain aspects of this:

I think other (specialist) colleges, definitely. I think it is logical to say that we basically want to survive [Int 11].

4.4.3.4.5 Private providers as competition

This aspect of the question gave rise to a number of quite scintillating responses. All interviewees referred to private providers as competition, and 47% emphasised this in very strong language. However, this was tempered in some instances by the imminent prospect of government spending restraints in this area:

Private providers did damage us [Int 1].

¹ An allusion to the changes in extra-district (out-county) financial arrangements prior to 1988.

² See previous chapters for differential remarks about these colleges. Fuller information is also available in the full transcript on the attached disk.

This erosion had already commenced to some extent, particularly in the more difficult education and training areas, for example special needs¹:

The last three months has seen the demise of many private providers. We are now picking up things which private providers offered. We are the only providers for special needs² [Int 2].

Competition between colleges and private providers was calmly portrayed in the deposition:

I think we're gradually winning against private providers, which I always believed we would. But it's a long haul. If we could hang in there and keep our quality up, then eventually we will win through...

and, going on to differentiate between the providers under discussion, added:

I don't mean the specialist private providers with specialist courses, but general YT³ agencies. They've not got our professionalism or our infrastructure [Int 4].

One commentator from a large city college outlined more clearly the economic problems currently facing this form of competition:

Private providers, well... they tend to operate in the cheaper areas and in specialist areas... They don't have the staffing costs, employing non-teachers to do

¹ Such programmes often demanded low student/staff ratios, longer training periods and good contacts with industry for placement purposes, making them costly courses to operate.

² The statement applied to this particular college and was not intended to be a general assertion.

³ Youth Training, previously entitled Youth Training Scheme (YTS).

the job. It's a problem and we've been living with that for some years now. They're not getting the contracts from TEED¹ or the TEC now, so they're no longer as thriving as they were. And also they're not getting the money up-front. And also the element of payment by results and money later, gives them a cash flow problem [Int 5].

Some interviewees could hardly contain their agitation when discussing private providers:

I'd better not voice my prejudices too much but - well... they're in it to make money for themselves as well as provide the education and training and YT² [Int 6].

They were doing quite well under MSC³, then a few of them found out that you can't make enough money out of it. The TEC⁴ is into quality, and I understand they have terminated the contracts of a lot of managing agents where they are not satisfied with the quality [Int 9].

What astounded me when I came to this county was all the private providers in the game... and that got me a bit... I think what's happened, with all the funding mechanisms... now gone, these private providers have found life incredibly difficult and are actually

¹ TEED (Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate) superseded the Training Agency in this context which was in turn partially replaced by the TECs.

² Youth Training as defined by the Government's Training Agency.

³ The Manpower Services Commission.

⁴ Training and Enterprise Council.

disappearing [Int 11].

A number found some difficulty in avoiding being rude when describing retaliative measures they had taken against private providers:

...the hairdressing crooks in the sheds up the road...
they actually have gone, because the quick money
they thought was there has not become quick money
... I just said to them¹, OK, you offer it for 4p per
hour² and put them all out of business... and we did
it... I mean, if I've got to play that game I'll play it... [Int 12].
...and I've taken some specific steps to make it
difficult for some of them... probably losing money...
but the strategic cost is worth it... because I'm
keeping it out of a private provider. So private
providers are decreasingly relevant [Int 14].

Another slant on the economics of the situation was summed up by a city college principal:

I'd really like to do some research, to work out how
much YT³ money actually ends up in further education...
because I would suspect it's quite a lot. And you really
think to yourself, is it worth having all of this infrastructure
if the money's only going to come to the colleges at the end
of the day... [Int 15].

¹ Speaking about the college's training unit.

² Perhaps not to be taken literally, but meaning a very low charge.

³ Youth Training.

Perhaps the most telling and representative remark pertaining to this topic, came simply as a passing comment from the principal of one of the smaller colleges:

...private providers are a pain in the so and so, but gradually (we are) winning the long haul [Int 4].

4.4.3.4.6 Other sources of competition to colleges

Forty per-cent of interviewees mentioned at least five other sources of competition, which, in their opinion affected colleges. City Technology Colleges (CTCs) were mentioned by many principals¹. These newly developing institutions raised questions in principals' minds about the impending effects on colleges of further education:

At the moment the City Technology College, very near to us, isn't seen as a serious threat. But we can't be complacent about it. And as it develops its full cohort of students it may have an impact on us, because unquestionably their resources are quite impressive.

I am not dismissing their potential (for) competition in the future [Int 3].

In some cases the threat occasioned by this unknown force was submerged in linguistic bravado:

...and this CTC they're going to build doesn't bother me in the slightest either. I mean, I object to it very

¹ See full transcript on disk for further details of these remarks about this relatively unknown quantity at the time of the research in so far as competition to further education was concerned.

strongly, but... they will take their pupils, I think,
from the... opted out school... because it'll be a
similar population... [Int 12].

The local Training and Enterprise Council and the TEC philosophy was exercising the minds of many of the interviewees at the time of the research. This anxiety was, perhaps, summed up in the comment:

The biggest problem we have at the moment is the TEC.
Although we've got very good relations, even with the
TEC. But obviously there's this TEC philosophy in a lot
of people's minds (that) private providers are still...¹
although I think it's changed a lot, hasn't it, from the
bad days when they thought that anything done by FE
was terrible...² It has changed but (it) does create us
some problems... [Int 11]

Other providers mentioned included industrial training schools³, firms offering jobs to young school leavers⁴, and 'crammer' schools. "There are always people who are prepared to pay for something rather than have it free"⁵ [Int 13].

Perhaps the most revealing and provocative suggestion, however, came from a large city college principal:

¹ Implying that private providers were the TEC's first choice for providing the required training programmes.

² See also chapters 4.4.3.3.7 and 4.4.3.6.5 for further comments on this attitude.

³ Many large firms had their own training schools for training apprentices and other skills such as secretarial, and technical drawing.

⁴ At the time of the research there was a growing consensus of opinion in the education world that firms should encourage sixteen-year-olds to stay in education rather than offer them jobs at that age.

⁵ Referring to the fees paid to 'crammer' schools, compared with college courses.

For me... the threats... are not about somebody starting a course down the road, but whether we can deploy a substantial college enterprise in a way that will help us to take advantage of the environments that are being set up by national policy... Inevitably it's a threat on the financial management side... going for conservative planning targets with the implication that could be there for a spiral of decline - and that's a real threat.

I find the whole concept of NVQ¹ and the expectation of payment by results...² the whole business about regional control rather than LEA control...³ and our ability to set ourselves up so that we can cope with those threats is the true competition [Int 7].

It has to be recognised, however, that although these concerns were shared by other principals interviewed⁴, most concentrated on the more prosaic aspects of competition that currently affected their colleges.

4.4.3.5 Progress of relationships with schools following ERA

4.4.3.5.1 Responses about changing schools/college relationships

Question **3.5 asked: Have the relationships between your college and local schools following ERA.. (improved) (worsened) (remained the same).** Figure

¹ National Vocational Qualifications.

² Alluding to the proposal to appraise staff.

³ A reference to the anticipated 1991 White Paper proposals.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

7.1.459¹ showed that nearly half the respondents replied that there appeared to be no change in the relationship

4.4.3.5.2 Unchanged relationships with local schools

Forty-six per-cent of those questioned intimated that they saw no change in the college/schools relationship since the implementation of ERA. However, this should not necessarily be taken to denote a complimentary response:

...I think rather than ERA, it's the demographic trend which has had more significance than LMC² on us [Int 3].

Another, who had previously identified schools as showing "downright hostility to the college" now simply stated:

It's been the same. Quite frankly I can't see any big change [Int 9].

In a different situation, a respondent who had earlier described the relationship as reasonable, went on to say:

I think on balance it's sort of the same... the alternatives are that they³ are becoming more conscious of the resource implications if their students come here⁴....[Int 15]

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² Local Management of Colleges. However, probably meant LMS: Local Management of Schools, a system of budget control by governors rather than by the LEA.

³ The local heads of schools.

⁴ Referring to link courses, where schools were now compelled to pay the college for their pupils to attend college courses.

4.4.3.5.3 Improved relations with local schools

Although in some cases it was declared that relationships had improved, one qualified the changing scene, explaining:

...in many ways schools are becoming more realistic;
sixth-form work being less subsidised by the rest of
the school¹ ...[Int 2]

Others differentiated between deteriorating relationships and declining business dealings:

The relationships haven't. In fact the relationships
are as good, perhaps even better in many aspects,
but the level of business has declined [Int 7].

The tendency in some approaches² was to disassociate change in this relationship from the Education Reform Act:

I would argue they've tended to improve. I don't know
how much it's to do with ERA... If anything, there's
been a little bit of help for schools in ERA from the
colleges - a little bit.

However, going on to speak as a specialist college principal, it was conceded that:

Again, I think if I was a general FE college principal
I'd tell you something different... I think they've³ got

¹ This somewhat enigmatic statement implied that schools were now finding it more cost effective to send sixth-formers to the college for certain aspects of their course; whereas previous funding, produced from within the 'whole school budget' largely generated by the lower school, supported their in-school options.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

the problem because they're competing more in the market place [Int 11].

A principal of a newly transfigured college, enthusiastically propounding a supportive view of improved school relations, retorted:

I would have said tremendously.

Furthermore, responding to the supplementary question: "Do you think LMS has altered their attitudes at all?" tersely replied:

No. Not as I see it [Int 12].

4.4.3.5.4 Worsened relations with local schools

Considering principals' previous adverse reactions to the school/college relationship¹, it may not be so surprising that a little over one quarter of the interviewees intimated worsening relationships with local schools. One respondent forwarded the following explanation:

Link courses are disappearing and TVEI's² future is not healthy. Schools can't afford much (link course provision)³ (and this has) caused a few strains with (the) LEA because of funding; caus(ing) new tensions [Int 1].

³ Further education college principals.

¹ See figures 7.1.455 and 7.1.458 for further details. Additional information can also be found in chapters 4.4.3.1 and 4.4.3.4 and the full transcript on attached disk.

² Technical and Vocational Education Initiative - Government funded joint college and local schools scheme.

³ Schools, for the first time, were expected to pay colleges for this provision under LMS/LMC.

Other explanations of the funding mechanism included the following comment:

...we're just beginning to see the start, perhaps, of it¹.

We've had two years of LMC and they're² just into their first year of LMS. It's the competitive element; that's the thing being raised at the moment. When having to pay for link courses directly, like any manager they're having to look at their budget to see whether they should be spending less on link courses, or something else. And some schools have made the conscious decision to spend that money on something else that helps their long term protection [Int 6].

This argument was augmented in the following comments by one who propounded the theory that some cooperative school/college ventures had suffered a demise, and who foresaw further portents of decline:

I would say worsened to the extent that link courses have died, because they're not prepared to pay for them.. I think again worsened, because it has emboldened schools with confidence they got through LMS plus policy leads from Government... So, basically they are thinking they can go it alone, go grant maintained, etcetera. So I would say that the era of collective cooperation under the benign umbrella of local authorities...³ largely as a result of LMS/LMC.

And then, the final nail in the coffin was '93⁴ [Int 14].

¹ Referring to declining schools/college relations.

² The local schools.

³ Indicating by added gesture: the end of the era.

4.4.3.6 Principals' views on the local TEC

4.4.3.6.1 Responses about TECs and relationships with colleges

The final item in this group was the question **3.6 What are your views about your college and the local TEC...** Response distributions may be seen in tabular form in figure 7.1.460¹.

4.4.3.6.2 The developmental stage of TECs

During this period of the research, TECs, very much in the initial stages of their development, were less advanced in some cases than others, with membership of Boards and Committees in a volatile state. The transitory nature of this phase encouraged a little over one-quarter of the principals interviewed to respond cautiously:

Difficult to say. I am working with their officers on the present provision. I think if you were to ask me in about twelve months time I would have stronger views [Int 1].

In some instances the pace of progress was observed to be less than desired:

...and after what seemed a long period of inaction, things are suddenly starting to happen [Int 2].

Previous experiences, and a touch of cynicism also filtered through the discussions:

⁴ 1993. Referring to the impending legislation, later to become the 1992 F&HE Act, and the incorporation of colleges in 1993.

¹ See chapter 7 of thesis for details of figure.

The (named) TEC is still very embryonic, I can't see what they're doing at the moment. To be quite honest it still seems to be bids from all comers, go anywhere, anyhow, and the private providers are all chipping away... [Int 6].

...it would be nice to know what it was, I think I'm talking about TECs in general (when I say) I see it as gentlemen's clubs that have been set up... [Int 8]

A bitter taste was detected in the reproach¹:

I'm afraid the TECs have started life with the arrogance of MSC, with the ignorance of MSC, with the almost blinding lack of knowledge...² [Int 14].

The conjectured policy of TECs distancing themselves from public sector involvement was alluded to:

...my own view on it is that it's still early days. The (named) TEC, I believe has still got a very industrial base. I mean, for example, there is nobody on the (named) TEC staff really has had any experience of FE.

I think that is something that ought to be put right... [Int 11].

Looking to identify the new-born organism, one crisply remarked:

I think the difficulty the TEC has, is - what is it? [Int 10]

¹ See chapter 3.7.10 of thesis for further information about quality of oral dialogue.

² The sentence exasperatedly tailed off at this point, implying that the interviewee was far from pleased with the situation.

4.4.3.6.3 TEC Boards and Committees

In a number of explanations¹ the conclusive version of the local TEC did not completely match interviewees' initial expectations:

We tried to set up a local TEC with some local companies, which eventually became a county-wide TEC [Int 2].

One explained the enthusiasm, and drawbacks, which came from some industrial quarters in efforts to make the TEC a successful organ of change:

In this authority one man and a couple of others are really driving the TEC² with their own personal ethos.

And I don't think the views of all the regional councils³ that we've got are having much effect...

Adding resignedly:

I don't think they can do; that's life [Int 4].

It was apparent from a number of remarks⁴, that the membership of TEC Boards was extremely unsettled throughout this period of the research:

One of the major problems is, it's based on the idea that there are a mass of industrialists who have the time and the abilities, and the commitment, to actually put in long hours, long days, free⁵, to engender training

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Two or three managers of large local industrial concerns were mentioned in this context, see text on attached disk for further information.

³ Advisory bodies set up by the local TEC to advise the TEC Board about local details.

⁴ See full transcript on disk for further information.

⁵ The interviewee gave a very 'knowing' smile at this point in the discussion.

across the board¹.

The interviewee continued to outline a vein pursued by many others² during the survey:

The turnover³ on the local TEC has been very large. At least half of the original TEC Board have now gone and a new half come in; and that would appear to be mirrored in other parts of the country⁴. It throws more emphasis on the civil servants, who will be running the TECs more and more [Int 5].

Another principal, referring to this amorphous state, murmured:

The shape, the formlessness... The TEC is still forming itself,

then speculatively and forcibly proceeded to amplify this statement of disillusionment:

...lack of vision, lack of leadership. I don't think the directors⁵ really appreciated what was involved. I don't think any of them had any interest or active involvement in FE [Int 6].

The following treatment of this question reflected further resentful replies, illustrating less than fortunate experiences:

I find the way in which people go on the Board and

¹ An expression intended to mean : 'to a wider audience', rather than solely that of the industrialist's own firm.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Referring to the industrial members on the Board.

⁴ This interviewee was in a position to be aware of details of the wider perspective through personal membership of a number of national committees.

⁵ Meaning members of the local TEC Board.

govern things, unsatisfactory. For example one member of the Board is against FE colleges; thinks they're a load of tripe, a load of trouble, and there's nothing we can do to convince to the contrary... Then of course they keep changing¹; for example, the chairman disappeared, to attend to financial problems in the company...² So it is very difficult to reach out and touch the TEC. [Int 8].

Not all interviewees expressed quite such strong contrary views about the TEC, however:

I'm beginning to be more optimistic. The (named TEC) Chief Executive wants to build a partnership with colleges, (saying) 'colleges know about education, we don't' [Int 9].

Another replied:

Yes, we're not unhappy about it³. The Chief Executive has made a pro-college stance, so has the Chairman; but they're going to use a lot of the providers that were there, which is most of the colleges, so we're not unhappy [Int 10].

Others told of contacts with TECs which were proving beneficial to their colleges:

My chairman of governors is on the TEC Board... [Int 11].

I'm on every committee that's running into education.

I'm involved in a way that is not fully public, but

¹ Referring to members on the Board leaving and new replacements arriving.

² An enigmatic grimace accompanied this remark, possibly implying that some had sufficient problems without taking on more, or perhaps: what are people like this doing on the management of the TEC.

³ The local TEC.

which is very effective in influencing decisions [Int 14].

Even closer contact was reported in the rejoinder:

When they were putting the TEC together I was a member of the Board...

However, deliberating on the Board and its other members and using stronger language, continued:

I think the Board is...¹ The idea is crazy, because people who are running (named local companies)...² I'm not suggesting they don't know anything about education; although I think they might say that to me. I'm not saying they don't know anything about training; but they might say that to me. Because being a chief executive³ you're running a huge operation; and somebody comes to you to go to board meetings where you talk about...⁴ oh, such minutiae, you can't believe it⁵. They must sit there thinking what am I doing here, you know!⁶ ... And they leave [Int 12].

This line of thought was also expounded by one who adopted a determined, positive attitude about the TEC, and whose remarks were representative of many views⁷: Well, given that they're here, albeit that I think that

¹ A controlled hesitation whilst the interviewee deliberated on the use of further explanatory language.

² A further pseudo-provocatively emphasised pause for effect.

³ In this case meaning a senior executive in industry.

⁴ A brief but equally significant pause.

⁵ Said in a quiet, disgusted tone of voice.

⁶ Put to the interviewer as a rhetorical question, followed by a further short meaningful pause.

there are fundamental flaws in them...¹ One of which is to assume that industry captains are going to devote time over a long period to it. I think we're already seeing the seeds of disenchantment, that the initial flurry of enthusiasm is through: to get it up and running; and one or two resignations are starting to show. Secondly, those industry captains are realising that changing the attitudes of industry towards training is a five-hundred year job², not a five year job; and it's part of the cultural attitude of the nation anyway [Int 14].

On this issue another supporter envisaged:

TECs are being asked to achieve things that other previous systems didn't achieve, eg making training a cultural ethos. Despite ITBs³, levy systems⁴, etcetera, it hasn't happened in this country. It's a very tall order, for busy people to devote significant amounts of time to it... so, at the end of the day it still has to be carried out at operational level by senior managers of colleges and by TEC officers [Int 3].

Viewed from another angle, a further supportive interviewee emphasised:

⁷ See full transcript on disk for further information.

¹ An unspoken, resigned gesture was made at this point, ending the unfinished sentence; taken by the author to mean 'we will work with them'.

² The interviewee gave the impression of deliberately exaggerating this figure to emphasise the apparently misconstrued objective.

³ Industrial Training Boards.

⁴ ITBs had the power to levy charges on sections of industry to help to cover the cost of training.

They've got a lot to learn. And they're treading a difficult tightrope, in that, on the one hand they've got local employers saying do this and do the other; and (on the other) they haven't got their freedom yet from the Department of Employment... and yet they're meant to have this freedom. So I think it's a difficult political problem to resolve... There are questions there, in that a lot of the industrial members¹ are saying what am here for? [Int 15]

Summed up by yet another supporter who took a view which looked beyond the immediate transitional stage:

I think that many of the Board members came in thinking they were on a white charger, not realising what was on the ground. I am decidedly sceptical about what they are going to achieve. Personally, I think they will finish up as an efficient kind of post-box-administrative centre²; but, I think it will be better than what we had before [Int 10].

4.4.3.6.4 Colleges and the local TEC

One comment which seemed to sum up a large number³ of principals' views, thoughts, or hopes, about TECs was:

¹ Members of the TEC Board.

² This view was later supported by a leading TEC director from the London area (see TES 4 December 1992 p12).

TEED¹ did a bad job before the TEC took over, on first April (1991) [Int 2].

Or, looked at from another perspective:

The local TEC has only recently begun a dialogue with FE colleges in the (area) but the signs are extremely promising [Int 3].

A sceptical, but patient, determined attitude was displayed by many principals²; illustrated in the response:

At the moment you've just got to try and live with them³ really... but very few of them have actually produced anything really concrete at the present time [Int 5].

A number of principals⁴ took the initiative and 'presented' their colleges to the newly formed local TEC:

The FE colleges have had to go and sell themselves pretty hard to the local TEC [Int 6].

So, we⁵ decided we ought to do something about this.

There was no point in sitting around whingeing that it was very difficult to get in contact. So we invited the Board to hold a meeting at one of our colleges and then, afterwards, we would host them to a presentation

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further evidence.

¹ Meaning the MSC as well as the 'Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate' (TEED), the successor organisation to the Training Agency.

² See full transcript on disk for further details.

³ The TECs.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁵ The college principals in the LEA.

and a buffet; which we did in October/November 1990.

And so, we made a video and some presentation booklets...

and apparently they thought we were wonderful...

adding wryly:

Since then the membership has changed and they've appointed their equivalent of civil servants... So we keep on having all these fresh starts [Int 8].

This entrepreneurial profile was evident in colleges from different TEC areas and different LEAs¹:

The group of colleges took the initiative and made the approach to the TEC, but² the LEA is very keen to be involved [Int 3].

I think it comes back to my fairly pragmatic view of things, which says: well OK, they're here let's work with them.

I think, to be honest, we've worked quite hard on them in the last eight months, of their start. We've talked to them about issues, and tried to get them into their focus. And I think they're now beginning to regard the college as something that in fact helps and forms [Int 11]

. Such determination, tinged with scepticism, seemed to appear in many principals'³ current thinking about the TECs:

The TEC Board knows little about FE. They are not aware

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² The word 'but' was used advisedly, as the involvement of the authority in this instance was regarded by principals to be intrusive.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

of the changes effected in FE over the last two years [Int 1].

So we keep trying to be nice to them. We want to stay friends. But it's very difficult to believe in something that is inadequate... [Int 13]

The forbearing approach continued as the research progressed and many examples of successful co-operation were communicated to the author¹. A firmly formulated attitude which probably summarised the opinions of most was articulated in the response:

I took a view about the TECs. You can either sit back on your hands and hope they will go away, or you can work with them from day-one and get a 'pole-position on the starting grid'. That's what I did [Int 14]

4.4.3.6.5 Perceived TEC attitudes about colleges

Whereas in previous discussions principals showed a marked reluctance to accept suggestions alleging criticisms from local industry²; this question elicited a vociferous response from interviewees with regard to the dispositions of the TECs³. On a somewhat conciliatory note one reminisced:

Their attitudes towards FE are better than they were.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details. One later example was the Newark Childcare Trust, involving local industry, the local Chamber of Commerce, the local TEC, a local secondary school and the local college of further education (see Newark Advertiser December 4 1992 p7 for a full report).

² See chapters 4.4.3.3.7 and 4.4.3.4.6, where principals were somewhat reticent about accepting that local industry made disparaging comments about FE, but that TECs had formed an antipathetic policy towards colleges.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

They were very anti-FE when MSC¹ started off...

But a lot of them have now realised that this was a bit distorted and are now quite supportive; actually, realising that if you took away FE a hell of a lot of training just wouldn't be done [Int 5].

Fiercely attacking the point, another asserted:

They seem to have this dreadful image of college principals being a load of twisting no-gooders who are a load of rubbish [Int 8].

However, although remaining colourful and forcefully held, not all views on the subject were quite so strongly portrayed:

...obviously the government still insists that industry knows best; therefore training should be in the hands of the Training and Enterprise Councils... So, I think they have, you know, a fairly strong bias (about) what is FE: and FE is playing around producing all these people that nobody wants! And it can be very difficult for them to come to terms with the fact that you're doing calligraphy, or whatever it is; because, you know, what's that got to do with training². And it's this whole process, isn't it, of education as opposed to what they want. So we've still got that problem [Int 11].

Some respondents³ attempted to reveal both sides of this argument:

¹ See figure 7.1.102 for further details on acronyms.

² Put to the interviewer as a rhetorical question.

There is no antagonism towards the LEA. The Chief Executive nodded through¹ the NAFE plan²...and I think

TECs are often told: you only go to the college as a last resort. On the other hand, they have been very supportive of a number of things... [Int 13].

Perhaps on seeing more evidence of the TEC's caution, one principal disclosed the information:

They're so afraid in the (named) TEC, I think, and in other TECs, of being taken in by us³ that they turn their face against us... I'm sure we're more objective than they are prepared to believe [Int 14].

On the other hand, another recognised a very fruitful relationship in prospect; encouraged by a supportive local TEC:

So we're in bed with them, and we've really got to do something about it...⁴

continuing with a reply to the interviewer's interrogative interjection: "And do you get the feeling that they're willing to come to you on this one?"

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

¹ Meaning that consent was smoothly attained and the plan agreed for putting into practice.

² Non-advanced Further Education (later known by the title WRFE, Work-Related Further Education). Plans were prepared for the MSC officers annually in order to recoup the 25% FE funding withheld by the Government and passed to the Commission via Training Agency Regional Officers for release when provisions in the plan were acceptable. Some were submitted by individual colleges, others by LEAs. It is not fully appreciated why the TEC Chief Executive was involved in this case except perhaps in an advisory capacity.

³ A phrase taken to have the meaning: duped, or perhaps misled.

⁴ This ambiguous, unfinished sentence had wide implications and was, therefore, followed up by a supplementary question from the author.

Oh yes, a very positive attitude from the TEC. They recognise us as the biggest providers of education and training and they want to see it work well. They see us as being important and we obviously see them as being important; and that mutual respect is crucial I think [Int 5].

4.4.3.6.6 Perspectives on private providers

Behind principals' thinking about the developing TECs was what was invariably seen as the spectre of financial encouragement previously given by MSC, through the TA, to private providers¹. The prospect was raised again by some², in the context of this question:

To the private providers the local TEC is another source of funding. You bet they're in there to get any money they can, and if they can get some sort of ... project off the ground, that's more competition for us [Int 6]. They do seem, as a group³, to be influenced by these private providers. They think colleges are dear⁴ (and) are not good quality. But they seem to be in the classic British (mould) of wanting A1 quality at cheapjack prices... Who doesn't! [Int 8]

¹ See chapter 4.4.3.4 for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ The TECs.

⁴ Meaning college services were considered expensive.

4.4.3.6.7 TECs' flexibilities and constraints

Flexibility, or lack of, was one of the subjects touched on during these discussions:

The main constraint is that the flexibility they have is quite limited... and the group of ten chairmen¹ have been telling the Minister about this [Int 10].

Looked at another way, in another context:

What I am saying is that time will tell, but the local industrialists on the committee² are not going to put up with having meetings and never seeing anything happen as a result of them. You can do that for a year or two, can't you, but unless you are deciding things, they don't work. So I think people will get fed up, and see they're having no damned influence on what's going on [Int 4].

A further aspect of flexibility was referred to in an encompassing response:

I've got colleagues who are having to bid to about three different TECs in their county, which is absolutely ridiculous. We also draw students from all over the country; and if we've got to go bidding and working under different financial agencies, with 'x' number of TECs, it's going to make life impossible.

¹ An appointed group of 10 chairmen of local TEC Boards, which briefed Government Ministers on the development of the TECs during their formative period.

² The local TEC Board.

This is the problem of setting up so-called autonomous bodies. They all set about doing their thing in different ways; and rather than rationalising a programme across the country, or wherever, they're just making it more difficult [Int 6].

Supporting this thinking, but in different circumstances:

The college deals with two TECs (with) different funding for ... courses. There's no standardisation [Int 9].

Constraint, was also suggested in the following argument:

...all that we're getting is the old YTS stuff. I don't object to that because of the way we do it, but the TEC doesn't seem to have delivered anything different to me [Int 12].

On the other hand, said a respondent:

I took the view from day-one that these other things were going to stick, at least in the short term, just as it did with YTS in 1983... [Int 14]

In a less optimistic situation it was claimed that the grass was greener in adjacent pastures:

Whereas I hear that other TECs are very enterprising and opportunist, this local one seems to trail along... can't do it because the government says... [Int 13]

Over the longer term, one hopeful respondent visualised:

For example, with regard to 1993, they are talking to us about what they can do to help us. Now, there may be the possibility of some local funding to help us to get the

infrastructure right [Int 15].

4.4.3.6.8 TECs and finance for enterprise development

Part of the TECs' brief was to initiate new training schemes in their localities and to prime the pump of local enterprise developments¹. This new policy presented many challenges, since it was also expected that TECs should raise funds from the private sector to support some aspects of this activity. As was observed, this was not achieving success with alacrity:

If you're knocking on people's doors...² I find it hard enough, but at least you can say there's a college, there's an entity. But the TEC is just an office and a group of people, and I think that is a difficult thing to sell, personally [Int 10].

We put lots of proposals to them... They say wonderful; can you get enough finance from industry to help you? And I keep saying to them I'm not a double-glazing salesperson, I'm a principal. I actually put the proposals to you, I think the funding ought to be coming from you.

Then, adding the summative rider:

I think it's a shambles [Int 12].

On the subject of funding, another queried:

You've got the problem that they're going to take money

¹ For further information see the Government's Employment Department White Paper 'Employment for the 1990's' Cm 540 December 1988, sections 5.8 and 5.9.

² An unfinished sentence implying recognition of an accepted difficulty.

out of the LEA budget into the training credit budget¹.

What happens if the places aren't taken up... There is all that, and I know one or two of my colleagues feel very, very strongly [Int 11].

A number of factors needed taking into account when considering training credits. It was pointed out:

When we get into training credits (it's) another thing, you know, that would complicate (*matters*) *even more*.

There are five (similar) colleges in pilot areas with training credits. And I suppose it's a thing of the future unless there is a drastic change in policy².

And that brings up the whole thing about selling yourself; quality, and all sorts of things. When someone's got a plastic card and can go and buy what they think they want, where they want it, that's a whole new ball-game to think about, isn't it [Int 6].

4.4.3.6.9 TEC administration and management

One of the most striking elements of the responses about TECs was on the subject of the administration of the new units. Very animated reactions were witnessed in the pursuance of this issue; some in support, but many going beyond disappointment, towards declarations of despair:

¹ A newly proposed system of credit vouchers to be allocated to young people, under a Government scheme, to purchase training and/or further education.

² An allusion to the impending general election.

And some of the personalities who are working there I have a tremendous amount of time for... One of them (an assistant chief officer) I would have given a job to, but other than that they're going round in circles [Int 12]. The (TEC) showed no resolve in the appointment of the second tier staff and took on all the people that we used to know under all the other initials that we've been through...¹ and they're very poor quality, they lack imagination... [Int 13]

Further investigation of the results of the survey showed that both supporters and opponents of the scheme had mixed feelings about the staffing of the TECs:

We were very lucky with our Chief Executive, who is pro-education, and is pro-FE to the extent that my advice is sought and genuinely wanted [Int 14].

Another respondent was even more direct about the situation:

The Chief Executive is very good, but below that I think they're very second rate. A recent example was: the (college) vice-principal spent two hours with one the other day; this (person) knows absolutely nothing about FE... very bureaucratic minded, very paper-orientated. So, I get quite depressed about the people at the lower levels [Int 10].

This question of bureaucracy was pursued by another commentator who probably voiced the opinions of many:

¹ A reference to the acronyms: MSC, TA, YOPS, YTS, TOPS, ET, etc. used in the context of training schemes (see figure 7.1.102 for further details).

...and the bureaucracy is enormous...It's that, plus the 'TEC speak' isn't it, you know. You can't write a simple paper... it has to be weighed; it has to be full of mumbo-jumbo. I mean the most convoluted English imaginable, it's all got to be there. I've got a member of staff who hasn't got a soul and he writes the stuff. I can't even bear to read it, it's horrible... I wrote a college development plan and was told it was too small...¹ [Int 13]

¹ This response was made with the best of good humour. It was obviously exaggerated, but not without a modicum of truth and a touch of pathos behind the facade.

4.4.4 Management

4.4.4.1.(a) Responses about managing college budgets

The first question in this section was **4.1 Do you feel your college was prepared for managing college budgets...**. Figure 7.1.461 shows a distribution of principals' replies¹.

4.4.4.1.(b) Preparedness and preparation for budget control

The heterogeneous response noted above suggested that no firm pattern of preparation had been made for the hand over of budget control², but individual responses indicated that this had been achieved, or partially achieved, in a number of ways:

...I mean, it was very difficult, because we didn't know where the LEA were coming from³. They were never very good at giving us very detailed information, so it was very difficult for us. But I've been on courses, my Director of Resources and the CAO⁴ have been on courses. Well, we've tried, and we've had to learn (a lot of it) on the job really, I have to say. We've learned a lot and...

¹ See chapter 7 of thesis for details of figure.

² See 1988 Education Reform Act section 140 (4); also DES Circular 9/88 13 September 1988 section 1.12, and appendix B item 8, concerning consultation in this context.

³ A phrase referring to the standpoint of the LEA - supportive or otherwise.

⁴ Chief Administrative Officer of the college. See figure 7.1.102 for further details on acronyms.

challenged the Authority on our budget. I think we've found that their ways of allocating money wouldn't pass the scrutiny of the tightest accounting mechanism [Int 9].

In response to a supplementary comment and question: "So the preparedness really was as a result of previous experience rather than any training programmes. Did you find that the Authority was helpful?", an interviewee replied:

That's where I think I think the strains show. We're finding the gap between us now is widening, because we are far more critical about what they deliver [Int 10].

Agreement in another instance contained an additional ingredient:

The best thing we ever did was to appoint a college accountant ... with (several) years working experience at (an industrial) management college. He's proving his weight in gold ... (making) a massive difference to the whole area of budgetary control, creative accountancy, letting staff see there are other ways of achieving outcomes... (bringing) a level of knowledge and expertise to the institution that we're now hugely benefiting from. And we feel that he's a major reason why we've come through the last financial year within 1% of budget target... in something over £5M [Int 3].

An interrogatory question in a further case: "Did the LEA help in any way, shape, or form, on the preparation of the college; yourselves as principal, the heads of departments, vice-principal, senior management?" elicited the answer:

No. We had to take ourselves off to Coombe Lodge¹ or the Industrial Society² or whatever, that was our method of preparation.

And, as though reminded of other less than pleasant preparation processes, the interviewee continued:

...the Authority had some strategic advisory groups³
Then, as a result of that, when the scheme of delegation⁴ was drawn up, it was sent to us as principals⁵. Sometimes it arrived on a Saturday morning, and we had to respond on the Monday afternoon, collectively. There you are.
I would suggest that many of the strategic advisory groups did not meet very much. They certainly didn't really decide anything. Perhaps the key one was the financial one, and it seems to me I'm not going to be involved at all. There is only one person who knew the game they were playing there, and that was the representative of the (county) treasurer's department.

I would just like to add that I don't think the LEA knew

¹ The Further Education Staff College at Blagdon, near Bristol.

² An organisation offering specialist management training and seminars for management.

³ Groups formed from principals and LEA officers, to advise the LEA on the development of schemes of delegation and other matters relating to the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act.

⁴ As determined by the 1988 Education Reform Act, each local authority was obliged to draw up schemes showing details of how the authority would delegate responsibility to colleges.

⁵ See 1988 Education Reform Act Part II Chapter III Section 140 (4), also DES Circular 9/88 section 1.12 and appendix B item 8, for details on consultation.

themselves, because they didn't have the staff¹ [Int 8].

Another principal, tersely replying "No." to the question, was asked if the changes made to managing college budgets was a radical upheaval; inducing the more rounded response:

Yes, and we just had to battle it out... We destroyed all the old bureaucracy (and) just let it happen. But nobody was prepared, nobody had done any work on it [Int 12].

Comparing college preparedness with the state of readiness of local schools, a large city college principal replied:

The answer to that is: much more prepared than schools. We've always tended to look after our own budget, in conjunction with the LEA, and most of us have found that the major problem very often (is) virement between rigid heads... But I think within colleges we're much more prepared than schools [Int 5].

One, perhaps, summed up most reactions in the expression "there's been a learning by experience..." going on to add:

There's been a lot of working together by college registrars², but in terms of the budget side of it we were prepared; but I don't think that's because the Authority took the initiative in preparing us.

¹ This was patently a reference to the LEA further education officers, and to their lack of knowledge and expertise in matters of finance.

² An alternative (and possibly earlier) title to that of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

And, epitomising the general scene, comparing preparation of colleges with schools similarly affected, continued:

There's not been the input, has there, of finances into the colleges, as there has been in the schools. Last year in the County, I think they had four or five people seconded full-time, and there's a lot of money... We don't have any of that do we? But the assumption is that the colleges are very clever.

Pursuing this a little further, the question: "Do you think that's what it really is, that the colleges are capable?", provoked the confident reaction:

Oh yes, they can look after themselves. They've got the staffing, they've got the background; to be fair, finance officers¹ don't; (maybe they) should have [Int 13].

Or, as another said:

...I think we've learned on the hoof, so in that sense were we prepared? We were prepared, but I think probably ill prepared [Int 1].

This was reinforced in the succinct response to a subsidiary prompt: "If we emphasise the word prepared...":

I have interpreted the word in the two senses² and the answer is no on both counts. I certainly don't think anybody outside prepared us for it, the LEA didn't, central government didn't; and inside, we ourselves didn't.

¹ LEA officers responsible for administering the further education budget for the Authority.

² Prepared (1) by external help and guidance, and (2) internal efforts on the college's own initiative.

Our senior management team, as it now stands, I think, is certainly aware of the implications, but it's a little of a hypnotised rabbit syndrome [Int 7].

4.4.4.1.(c) An historical perspective on budget management

Although it was the 1988 Education Reform Act which generated significant modifications to various systems of management within the further education service, principals felt¹ that in many cases financial changes were smoothly accomplished due to a number of historical and other factors. As several admitted², in many ways very little had changed in the management of budgets, many practical matters were still processed through the local authority: payment of invoices, staff remuneration, and other day to day financial details. This was confirmed by one, who, taking the argument one stage further, declared:

...and we had a lot of flexibility before, in terms of actually allocating the money between different headings, so that hasn't been a major change. We're not into cash flow problems, so that aspect of it hasn't really come about yet [Int 2].

In another instance the reason given for feeling reasonably satisfied with the college's preparedness for managing the budget was:

Because we had been in an (ambiance) of getting delegation gradually given to us for several years; we'd got a lot of delegation before ERA; we wouldn't have

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

been much different now, even if we hadn't had ERA [Int 4].

Some specialist colleges also felt they had an advantage in converting to the new system of budgetary control:

I think we were very fortunate, in that most of us at senior level ... have perhaps run college (businesses) in the past and, therefore, have had to run organisations on commercial lines.

Then, proceeding to commend the local authority on its attitude to the colleges, went on to explain:

I also think this county had a very good programme of, sort of setting up its delegation in discussion with its principals; and obviously, year one was a bit of a dummy run. But, apart from one or two, sort of back-up services, I think it's fairly good [Int 6].

4.4.4.1.(d) Resource requirements in preparation for new budget management

As the interviews progressed it became clear that most colleges did not get a great deal of help from other agencies during this transitional period¹. It was also apparent that not many expected it, and some did not require assistance². However, some were surprised, many disappointed, and a number indicated

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

disquiet at this perceived cavalier disregard for their well-being at a particularly difficult time¹. On behalf of colleagues, one principal noted:

And the problem with all of us has been that we've had to do all our basic work, and we've had to do the preparation for ERA on top, without any extra staff. So there is, therefore, an assumption that our basic jobs don't fill up our time. I would suggest that our basic jobs more than fill up our time, and preparing for the Education Reform Act had to be done in people's weekends; and that was literally true [Int 8].

This suggestion was supported by another, who claimed:

We've had to put in a lot of extra work, without the staffing, to make sure the budget is right. We've made ourselves far more self-sufficient in budget management [Int 3].

Support systems² at the time were criticised by many interviewed³:

I don't think sufficient acknowledgement was put out by the Authority to realise that college managers would need appropriate backing of the systems [Int 11].

And another, identifying systems as a problem, voiced the opinion:

So in that sense we were not properly prepared because of our management information systems.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See also chapter 4.4.4.1.(f) for further comments on management information systems.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

However, reflecting on the situation prior to the 1988 Act, added:

But at the level of control that we had, and that which was expected of us, I suppose, perhaps with the exception of the MIS¹ we were probably OK [Int 15].

4.4.4.1.(e) Preparation by and support from treasurers' departments

Local authorities' treasury departments had a crucial role to play in the smooth transition of financial control from LEAs to colleges; and the author received a mixed response to questions about their helpfulness during this period. In reply to the sub-question: "Do you find that you get sufficient feedback from Treasurers?" one respondent adversely commented:

Yes, this is one of the things - it's far too late.

When you've got to make decisions knowing the financial situation as it is at the moment, it's pretty difficult. I mean, we're now what, end of July, and we've just got our final, final²; and we're three months into the next financial year [Int 6].

Taking up this theme of records, their strengths and weaknesses, another commentator noted:

The thing I've found is the problem (of) the definitive record side of it. Because we don't keep definitive

¹ Management Information Systems - see acronyms figure 7.1.102.

² Shorthand nomenclature meaning part of a series of financial statements issued by the treasurer's department, usually as computer printouts, updating financial information to the authority (and the college). See also chapter 4.4.4.1.(f) of thesis for further comments of this nature.

records in the college (we) are at risk if in fact there is incorrect input in at treasurer level.

At this point the interviewee reminisced informatively about a previous difficulty:

(Some) years ago I got into an overspend and learned a very quick lesson (then) that it wasn't my records that counted it was theirs [Int 13].

Looking forward to 1993, one principal acknowledged that the college was contemplating using the treasurers' department for some services, in what was already being seen as a new business orientated environment:

But I think we're going to buy services back from the County in some cases. Payroll, for instance, they do fairly well; and why take on things if we don't need to.

And, demonstrating a degree of acumen which was becoming part of the armoury of college principals' thinking, went on to explain:

If we're not tied in to the next five years; if we can get away with a two year contract on payroll with the County, for instance, I'd rather lever that potential problem away so that I can concentrate on market penetration [Int 14].

A reminder about the relative size and complexity of the payroll proportion of the college budget came from one who observed:

Obviously the biggest single factor is payroll; it's about 80% of our budget. And the payroll has been the biggest problem because the LEA wasn't able to give us detail... [Int 3].

Another principal showed particular concern about treasury department staff attitudes:

There is a gap in attitude as well. People who tend to be recruited at County Treasury - not at senior level but at lower levels - tend to be very conservative people and they're not used to the freedom... therefore there's an attitude problem... They found it difficult to understand the freedoms that we've been given, because they've never had them. I mean, we got a phone call in March: "Why are you carrying over so much money?" Nothing to do with them you see, but they can't grasp that yet. So, it's an irritant. Does it affect what we do in the end - no; but the main weakness is that the financial assistants are not as efficient as we want them to be [Int 10].

4.4.4.1.(f) Budgets and management information systems

In another situation, the interviewee harked back to what seemed to be a more generalised problem in colleges:

The difficulty is the way you get information - our management systems are not good enough to manage them properly; I think that's what I'm really saying. You may be able to balance at the end of the year but you can't use it creatively throughout the year because the flow of information is too slow. The

printouts you get from the County Treasurers' are
six weeks old¹; well, that's no good to you [Int 15].

It was apparent from most interviews² that the subject of finance and managing college budgets intertwined with the topic of computer driven management information systems; their strengths, weaknesses and state of development, for the particular problems being addressed by colleges at that time. One principal held particularly strong but representative³ views on the subject:

So we're still trying to run ERA⁴ with County Treasurers' with six or seven weeks backlog in accounts, and systems which were geared up for accountability, not necessarily management; and I have actually put my toes in on MIS.

Continuing, the interviewee expressed severe misgivings about the current state of the art software⁵ and outlined the actions taken in the light of these qualms:

But management information systems to the college were based on FEMIS⁶, and we got into the last tranche of ESG⁷ last year, and they put in the whole system... And I saw the Director⁸ myself and said, look, I'm just not doing this; and

¹ See also chapter 4.4.4.1.(e), and full transcript on attached disk, for further evidence of alleged tardiness in this respect.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

⁴ Education Reform Act - but, in this instance particularly referring to Local Management of Colleges (LMC) and the specific problem of delegated budgets.

⁵ Computer programs created by teams of software specialists at Coombe Lodge, tailored to the perceived developing needs of further education.

⁶ 'Further Education Management Information Systems', devised by a team at Coombe Lodge. See acronyms in figure 7.1.102 for details.

⁷ Education Support Grant - see acronyms 7 figure 7.1.102 for further details.

⁸ Director of Education.

he said you've got to do. So, in fact we've got tacit agreement; we're involved, but in fact we're not doing anything because I was deeply, deeply concerned that the sort of system they were putting in was going to involve a lot of staff time doing stuff which wasn't geared to what I wanted... We've set up our computer systems to do that. We produce our own stuff, which is audited by County [Int 11].

4.4.4.1.(g) Governors preparation, and involvement in college finance

New responsibilities undertaken by governors as a result of the Education Reform Act¹ gave rise to smaller sub- committees of governors, entitled finance and general purposes (F&GP) committees², which became engines for change within the institutions. However, their functions were very often guided by the hands of senior managements in colleges³, thus creating teams of governors and college management which were assuming the mantle of machinery hitherto provided by LEAs for managing finance - and other aspects of management and direction - within colleges. In many institutions the F&GP committee had functioned prior to the 1988 Act, albeit in a different capacity⁴, and afterwards - and with changes to its membership - took on wider responsibilities, thus tremendously increasing its workload, and the workload of college staff:

¹ See Education Reform Act 1988 Part II Chapter III Section 142 p146 for further information on delegated power to college governors.

² These governors were predominantly industry based members - see DES Circular 9/88 13 September 1988 para 4.1 and 4.2 p58 for further details about membership and powers.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

⁴ See comments in full transcript on attached disk.

We'd already had an F&GP committee for years. We'd always raised a lot of our own money¹. The governors were used to dealing with it... so it didn't present any problems whatsoever. I can say that categorically. The real problem is devolving that now... We have a financial system... and the hiccups on that are enormous, and it doesn't deliver what we want. The mess-ups are on the payroll, so we are spending a lot of financial clerking time checking that financial information system, line by line [Int 10].

4.4.4.1.1 Responsibilities for Budget management

Question 4.1.1 asked **Do you manage the college budget.. yourself, with SMT or delegated... (eg to the CAO).** Figure 7.1.461(4,5,6)² contains the distribution of responses.

4.4.4.1.1.(a) Effects of senior staff changes on budget management

The transitional nature of the further education system at the time of the research was reflected in the responses, where, in many cases, replies given described temporary arrangements³, often caused by newly appointed staff or

¹ Monies raised from industry for college purposes (eg buildings and equipment), as well as money earned by offering specialist full-cost courses to businesses and individuals.

² See chapter 7 for details of figure.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

staff leaving key positions in colleges¹. In one case where the principal undertook most of the budget control personally, the author's prompt: "When you appoint this new director, and so on, an awful lot of the work, as it were, will go off your shoulders with regards to...", elicited the anticipatory, jocular retort:

That's my overtime!²

vigorously adding, more soberly and with obvious relief:

...Yes [Int 11]

Further indications of critical staff fluctuations were included in statements such

as: Our Vice-Principal is going to another college, as principal, so we are replacing him with an accountant... [Int 2]

and from another angle:

We've got a newish Vice-Principal... not really come in to the fold proper... [Int 5]

Or, as one explained: the college CAO was:

supported by a newly appointed Finance Officer [Int 7].

In a further situation the principal, describing a particular personnel management problem, went on enigmatically to disclose:

A new Director of Resources worked under the

¹ See also chapter 4.4.4.1.1.(e) of thesis for further information about senior staff role changes.

² There was little doubt in the author's mind that this principal, and many others, were working long hours during this very busy period following the 1988 Education Reform Act and LMC, and in anticipation of the 1992 Act with its independence for FE colleges; with all the extra responsibilities that these pieces of legislation engendered. (See full transcript on attached disk for further evidence)

auspices of someone who was delegated to him [Int 8].

And one interviewee, lamenting the imminent loss of a valued senior college officer, exclaimed:

...he's excellent, but unfortunately he's retiring
this year, but he's very good... [Int 10]

4.4.4.1.1.(b) Personal supervision of college budgets by principals

Principals interviewed agreed¹ that close personal supervision of college budgets, in one form or another, was essential in the emerging 'accountable period' further education was entering². Although some described themselves as managing the budget personally, the fullness of the discussion unveiled a wider interpretation of this perception, disclosing a more extensive involvement in many cases³:

So the college budget is managed by myself and him⁴ by
and large, with the help of the Vice-Principal⁵ [Int 5]

and;

...but basically I have a Head of Finance and Student
Services who runs the finance services... and who in
fact, if you like, produces a monthly management
printout and all that kind of stuff [Int 11]

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See chapters 2.4; 3.2 and 3.11 of thesis for factors affecting the changing accountability of colleges.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ The newly upgraded college Registrar (CAO).

⁵ A newly appointed vice-principal.

also;

I, at the moment, literally manage the budget with our Finance Officer¹ [Int 2].

In another instance, where budget management had recently been delegated, the situation was clarified with the revelation:

Well, I used to manage it myself pretty directly, now it's more complicated because we've got total delegation².

My CAO does a lot more on the budget now [Int 4].

However, on being questioned further about the principal's involvement in budget management, one, perhaps epitomising a broader objective³, conceded:

No, I'm not necessarily into detail and the more I can pull out of detail the better [Int 7].

4.4.4.1.1.(c) Budgetary management through teamwork

In some cases use was made of the senior management team⁴ or a smaller team perhaps comprising the principal, CAO and a director⁵, to monitor and control the college budget. A number of interviewees described the process:

Yes, there is a finance group which comprises me, the

¹ This college was on the point of losing its vice- principal to another college.

² Some LEAs delegated more responsibility than others to their colleges, before and immediately following the 1988 Education Reform Act.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

⁴ Prior to 1988 this usually consisted of the principal, vice-principal, CAO and heads of academic departments. Later in the research this changed dramatically as most senior managements diminished in size, and more day to day management was exercised by senior lecturers in charge of academic sections.

⁵ Director of Resources or Director of Finance for example.

Vice-Principal, the CAO, the Director of Finance and Resources¹. The CAO and his team are the administrators of the budget, and the Director is the planner and the manager of the resources as a budget business [Int 1].

Differently elucidated, similar processes prevailed in other colleges:

I have quite a bit of involvement. Obviously I have to have the final say when we're allocating to departments and things like that. But it's run very much with the CAO and the Senior Management Team [Int 6].

A further descriptive variation on this type of budget management was given in the explanation

I would say it's a team, in the sense that I obviously involve the Director of Resources and the CAO, we do really have a joint management then [Int 9].

4.4.4.1.1.(d) Delegation of budget management

By far the most common response to the question² was that management of the college budget was firmly delegated to a senior member of college staff. This apparently simple act was accomplished in a complex variety of ways, as outlined in the following responses:

I still have quite a hand in it... I did set up the spreadsheets for the office and this kind of business personally but I don't actually have anything at all to

¹ One person in this instance.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

do with that... now. So yes, I've delegated a lot to the CAO.

Proceeding, the interviewee expressed sentiments representative of much current thinking by principals¹ about college budgets:

But I don't think, and several other colleges have shown², that principals can't afford to actually delegate the budget and then take no further interest. I think you've got to actually keep your finger pretty well on the pulse [Int 4].

Answering the author's supplementary question: "The accountant³ is an accountant, does he manage the office as the old CAO⁴ used to do, or is that a separate function now?"; another principal confirmed that it was, and continued:

...he manages only that part of the office which is to do with the financial systems, and insurance and licences; things of that nature he does...

adding:

But lots of other tasks which were done by the Chief Admin. Officer... (come) now under the new Head of Student Services we've appointed... (or) our Head of Personnel, (or), by our Unit Manager responsible for plant and accommodation. So we've dispersed most of the

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

² Current articles in the educational press reported that several colleges were in financial difficulties. (See, for example, Times Educational Supplement. May 3rd 1991 No 3905 p2)

³ Referring to a previously described new appointment to the college.

⁴ It was explained (see full text on attached disk) that the CAO had retired and was not replaced by a traditional, straightforward replacement.

Chief Admin. Officer's tasks around the new Senior Management Team [Int 3].

In another situation, where re-organisation of financial and other college functions had taken place¹, the following note of caution was appended:

Now having said that, that is the form of words... but without wanting to be over the top about it, I would not claim our college budget is presently managed². This is an area which is, if you like, a high priority for me... I'm not happy that the budget is truly under control [Int 7].

Other cautious approaches were characterised in the response:

But you've also got to keep a strategic overview. I mean, I tried to tackle the budget this time by saying to colleagues in the management team, look, this is what we aim to deliver... we now know we've got a budget less than we expected.

Continuing, the principal proceeded to identify budgets in terms of academic aims³ in the comment:

Whatever we do now we should always keep this⁴

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details of senior management role changes.

² It was clear to the author from the discussion (see full transcript on attached disk for further details) that this particular college was endeavouring to make its computerised management information system more effective. (See other's comments in chapter 4.4.4.1.1).

³ At this point in the interview the principal demonstrated to the author actual computer printouts with charts and tables which had been used to inform management and governors in the college about various movements in student categories. See also chapter 4.4.4.1.1.(g) for further details.

paramount, because you can become so resource orientated. You knock off a bit here, knock off a bit there, and then you don't know what you're doing to your overall curriculum offer [Int 9].

Asked by the author: "How much is your senior management team¹ involved in the finances?" one, who "totally delegated" budget management to a Senior Head Officer in the college, replied:

Not at all. It's my province and I'll keep them informed... They have their own delegated amounts of money. We produce a leaflet for all members of staff about finance to try and widen the...² and I've had meetings with staff based on that leaflet. But the actual decision making is me and him³ [Int 10].

To a greater or lesser extent principals and CAOs appeared to be the leading characters in this area of management in nearly all the cases covered by the project⁴, as emphasised in the comment:

Myself and the CAO. I make the big decisions. I decide the carve up of books, stationery, materials, the part-time (and) full-time staff distribution, can we afford to gamble on these extra students, etcetera, and so on. The CAO is my aide-de-camp on that, in

⁴ Referring to prior references to college policy decisions and strategic planning, priority steers and the academic profile of the college, points also made by other principals (see full transcript on attached disk further details).

¹ See chapters 4.3.2 & 4.4.4.1.1.(h) for further information on SMTs.

² An unfinished phrase with obvious connotations.

³ The Senior Head Officer, previously mentioned.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

monitoring tabs¹ on the county computer and so on.

So it's a joint exercise between the CAO and myself [Int 14].

4.4.4.1.1.(e) Changing senior staff roles in the context of budgets

This was a period of considerable diminution of staff² in further education, particularly in the management echelons where college structures, under review for some years, were rapidly evolving into smaller, leaner senior management units. The magnitude of this movement had an impact on the management of college budgets, and college budget management, in some cases, was partially or wholly the cause of such changes:

The College Registrar has been upgraded. It was a very important appointment we actually made in advance, because we could see this coming³. A couple of years ago, when the previous Registrar retired, I don't think we could have handled the budget as adequately as I would have liked. But he's now on a full head of department scale, as a faculty of administration [Int 5].

Such a change, albeit for different reasons, was reported about a similar post:

We now have a new Company Secretary and it will be different⁴, because I think the person looking after

¹ The computer printouts from the County Treasurer about the college's budget.

² See full transcript on attached disk, together with chapters 4.3.2 and 4.4.4.1.1.(a) of thesis, for further information about senior staff changes in further education.

³ Referring to the extra responsibilities of managing college budgets during the discussion stages before the 1988 Education Reform Act.

the budget provides a service to the college and other people take the decisions... I think it should be that decisions are taken by the senior staff... The equivalent of the company secretary then provides the service, so that everybody knows how they're spending and when they're getting near their deadlines and things like that [Int 8].

In other instances the present post-holder was considered adequate, but gradings and salaries were seen to need adjustment¹:

The Chief Admin. Officer, who ran the organisation was upgraded and became Manager of Admin. and Finance; and the reality is that he manages the college budget [Int 7].

4.4.4.1.1(f) Towards 1993² - budgets approaching and following ERA³

As reported earlier⁴, this aspect of the research spanned the period when the 1991 White Paper⁵ was published presaging the 1992 F&HE Act⁶. A number of

⁴ Describing an attitudinal change in the college from one of autocratic uncooperativeness in a previous regime. (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

² 1 April 1993 was declared 'Vesting Day' for incorporated colleges in the new further education sector, under the 1992 Further & Higher Education Act. Before this pronouncement it was the date on which the full conditions of ERA were to be fulfilled.

³ The 1988 Education Reform Act.

⁴ See chapters 2.4; 3.2 and 3.11 of thesis for further information on the factors affecting change.

principals commented on this during the discussions and it was apparent from their remarks and attitudes¹ that some were more advanced than others in forward planning in this respect:

But I think really the new Director² will have two main roles. One is, he or she will spend fifty per-cent of their time looking towards 1993; tendering for systems, getting specs³ up, implementing... But I think, you know, I need somebody who... In fact, what I need is: every month on my desk the management summary or whatever, so that you can highlight it⁴, or say: what's going on? [Int 11].

During another discussion the supplementary prompt: "...that approaching ERA and following ERA, with LMC⁵ on board, the need for a principal to involve him/herself much more directly in the budget was paramount", attracted the not altogether convinced reaction:

Yes it was... I think so [Int 9].

Discussing one principal's "very heavy role in the management of the college, and many, many principals would, or should, say the same"; the author asked:

⁵ 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - Challenge to Colleges' Vols 1 & 2 1991.

⁶ Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A newly created college post of Director of Resources.

³ Specifications for services needed by the college as a result of impending legislation.

⁴ Mark important parts of the copy for further action or discussion.

⁵ Local Management of Colleges (see acronym in figure 7.1.102 for further details).

"Is this as a result of ERA, LMC, or did you have an interest in this before?", eliciting the retort:

I think it's both. Those of us who've come up through the system know how much money gets spent, knowing what was wrong with the old system. It was the windfall and crisis... when you've got some money you did something with it; when you were in crisis you had to cut something out... Well you know the nonsense that used to go on... the people who supplied education (had) a wonderful time in March¹. They used to wait for it didn't they? And they could sell anything, because people had to spend it. I mean, colleges got stuffed, didn't they, with stuff that people bought quickly, and they didn't really consider whether they needed it or not. It was again the windfall effect wasn't it... and that's one of the advantages of the carry-over², so I've been teaching the heads³ about that too.

And, responding to the supplementary question: "And what's their learning curve been like?" replied:

Good. It's good housekeeping isn't it? Some of them have learned a lot [Int 13].

¹ The end of the financial year when, before ERA, all monies allocated to colleges had to be spent or surrendered to the LEA.

² A system under ERA, of colleges being allowed to carry forward monies unspent during one financial year into the following financial year.

³ Heads of the college's departments.

4.4.4.1.1.(g) Forward planning - expenditure and income

The release from LEA control¹ had freed governors and principals from spending allocated budgets within a financial year and engendered an attitude of forward financial planning which hitherto had been difficult to achieve². In this new climate of perceived freedom, principals gave thought to detail which previously had been outside their control, and in some cases a source of annoyance and frustration³:

Now we've drawn up our pie-charts saying we've made our priority steers, we've made policy decisions with strategic planning, you know, very crude, but we've started to think of this... We said, there you are, that's what we were aiming to do in 1991, that's what we've now got to do because they told us we were getting less budget and they reduced our FTE target⁴ as well [Int 9].

The policy of forward planning was exercised differently in different situations. For example, in one large college the principal, when asked: "Do you keep a finger on the pulse, or do you rely upon..."⁵ answered eagerly:

Oh yes totally. I mean people know exactly what the policy is, the social policy is, and everything

¹ Brought about through the 1988 Education Reform Act.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

⁴ Full-Time Equivalent students target, the basis on which the budget totals were set by the LEA.

⁵ The author was peremptorily interrupted by the interviewee who demonstrated a keenness to respond.

that comes forward is questioned on the sort of criteria. I mean, I see the people, I see the Director of Resources practically every day, and Personnel¹ discuss whatever it is that's going and what needs to be pushed. For example, if somebody wants to start a new programme in something that I think will deliver I just say, yes, I think that ought to be done. I control not a penny [Int 12].

In another instance the principal, being prompted: "But you've very much got a finger on the pulse?", replied:

I don't think I can afford to neglect finance. I'm constantly looking at the profile and saying: are we going to make it balance, aren't we? Dare I risk twenty-thousand pounds on new computers, and so on.

Then, raising another point, also referred to in other interviews²:

But of course it's very, very uncertain because we've got an income target, are we going to overshoot adequately or by a long way, etcetera, etcetera... the big uncertainty is income³ [Int 14].

The point was also emphasised in the following interview:

We have within the college fairly tight systems but again I don't think the problem is really expenditure... that's easy, it's the income. So, OK,

¹ The college Director of Personnel.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See figure 7.1.502 for details on variations on income to colleges.

you've got the block grant from your local authority, but I have a nine-million budget of which four millions isn't there... So I monitor very, very carefully, and preparing the budget I put all the bad news in, not all the good news... and we put in a contingency of two-hundred thousand pounds, which in a budget of nine-million is not a lot. But nevertheless if the bad news is already in there then that should see you through, and so far we're OK. You know, we're six months down the year now, and if anything goes wrong now there's nothing you can do about it... but we've evened out. The first thing we taught the heads of departments was they no longer have to spend by the thirty-first of March... The first time round they didn't believe me when I said I would honour their carry-forward... they were a bit jittery. You see them now spending money on improving their departments with a lump sum... changing over to a longer term view, three and four year planning [Int 13].

4.4.4.1.1.(h) Senior Management Team¹ & F&GP² involvement

Clear responsibilities for governors were established in the 1988 and 1992 Acts with regard to the management of college budgets³ and these were changing

¹ College Senior Management Teams (SMTs) usually included principal, vice-principal, CAO and heads of departments, were advisory to the principal and were extremely powerful groups. See chapter 4.3.2 for further details.

² Governors' Finance and General Purposes Committee.

substantially as the research progressed¹. One principal, having responded "I do it with the Head of Resources", was then asked: "But the question really is, I suppose, in my mind, how much involvement do you feel you need...?", and continued:

It's very much a superficial one, a monitoring role. I don't sit down and say: right we'll do this today. Monitoring really is part of the function of reporting to the monthly Finance and General Purposes Committee² and clearly in terms of strategically apportioned resources which we decided at Senior Management Team.

Going on to add the following disarming comment, which would be considered to be a truism by all interviewed³:

Modestly, I'm bound to have more influence than other people... if you say, well I think this is a good idea, you tend to get your own way more often than not [Int 15].

Other interviewees also mentioned the governors' role in this, for example:

...and so he had to report to governors and the F&GP [Int 8]

and:

After enrolments this time the Governors will get these pie-charts updated, to show we did meet our aims, despite the problems [Int 9].

³ Education Reform Act 1988 Chapter III para 142 and Further and Higher Education Act 1992 Chapter II paras 18,19 & schedule 4.

¹ See chapter 2.4; 3.2 and 3.11 of thesis for factors affecting change in colleges.

² The F&GP committee of the college governors.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

4.4.4.1.1(i) Monitoring the college budget, particularly staffing

All questioned agreed¹ that staffing, both full and part-time, teaching and non-teaching, was the most important aspect of budget monitoring. As one put it: "...we've done a projection on full-time and part-time staffing, which is eighty per-cent of the issue..." [Int 14]. This emphasis was re-stated by another:

Since I came here I've always had direct control of the part-time teacher budget. I always saw that as the major overspend area, and I've always had a very tight control over that [Int 5];

a precaution heavily reinforced in the following:

We know how much the full-time staff cost, and personally go through the tab², and I've checked every salary, and I've checked it's correctly coded and so on. I watch, I monitor the admin staff. The detail is done by the Registrar. We monitor the part-time³ ...you know, all the things that can run away with hundreds of thousands of pounds [Int 13].

4.4.4.1.2 Units of resource - principals' responses

Question **4.1.2** asked **What is your 1991 Unit of Resource/weighted student...** Figure 7.1.461(7,8,9)⁴ indicates their replies.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² The county treasurer's computer printout sent to the college

³ Part-time staffing budget.

⁴ See chapter 7 for further details of figure,

4.4.4.1.2.(b) Units of resource determined by LEAs

The distribution of responses is shown in quantitative order in figure 4.4.4.1.2.001 below as a comparison with West Midlands information collected by Dr Avery¹:

Figure 4.4.4.1.2.001

Published Units of Resource 1990/91

<u>Current Research</u> <u>East Midlands</u> £		<u>Dr Avery's Survey</u> <u>West Midlands (**)</u> £
	(*)	
1774	H	1454
1964.25	A	1620.93
2005.11	I	1838.81
2014	F	1878.87
2105.34	G	1922.45
	J	2086.52
	D	2132
	B	2447
Averages		
1972.54		1922.57
Overall Average		1941.80

Notes: (*) Upper case designations correspond with those in Figure 7.1.502.

(**) Source: APC 'Survey of Units of Resource' Unpublished Paper by member Dr H E Avery OBE, dated 3 May 1991.

¹ See figure 7.1.502 for further information about Dr. Avery's survey of West Midlands LEAs' units and weightings.

One fundamental difference between the above sets of figures needed to be addressed when considering them for comparative purposes. Whereas the current research included all five East Midlands LEAs, Dr Avery's survey contained an unexplained sample of eight LEAs in the West Midlands¹ (the region surveyed contained 11 LEAs²). This difference, however, was considered not to invalidate the comparisons, as the intention was to comment only on the disparateness of the allocations and the average figures obtained.

4.4.4.1.2.(c) Weightings used by LEAs

Several principals commented on the weightings used by LEAs to calculate college budgets, and awareness of these values was commonplace among the sample³:

Formula funding for the Authority is generous in the sense that they decided to weight all ordinary students as 1... and then every student following special courses like Access, Return to Study... special ones, Outreach - if they're of a special nature - they give you a target, and they gave me 110 and... a weighting of 2.5 for that. Special needs, again they... have a target... They did make a generous weighting there because that's part of their priorities [Int 9]

¹ Sometimes referred to as the Midlands, to distinguish the area from the included metropolitan district described as the 'West Midlands'.

² Including the counties of Hereford & Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire, as well as the 'West Midlands' metropolitan district.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Another, having the information at the fingertips, volunteered:

...and I'll tell you what the weightings are: Engineering, Science, etcetera is 1.4; Art and Design is 1.55; Special Needs is 2. That's for NAFE¹. For Advanced FE: Classroom is 1.4...

then proceeded in cynical vein to reveal:

...and they're not based on any logical analysis of cost. Historical budgets were taken, FTEs were added up, and the weightings were fiddled to make sure we came out with more or less what we would have got through historical funding². And it's produced some desperate distortions between colleges [Int 14].

An evasive response came in the form of the following self- assured comment:

I can tell you what the weightings are off the top of my head, I mean, we have a weighting of 1 for based activity... these are for FEs, not advanced FE; 1.4 for workshop based. And then for advanced FE: classroom based is 1.4, and it's 2.1 for workshop based. And, it's 2 for Special Needs... So it's 1950³ times whatever it is [Int 15].

¹ Non-advanced further education.

² This statement refers to the whole LEA budget for further education, sometimes referred to as the quantum.

³ An inaccurate figure quoted for the unit of resource.

4.4.4.1.2.(d) The quantum and phasing of allocations to colleges

A special factor to be accommodated when introducing the new system of funding colleges was one which was referred to as amelioration or mitigation¹. The DES described this problem and recommended a solution² of phasing budget reductions to 5% of budgets per annum over a period of up to four years from the introduction of formula-funding. The complication was identified in those colleges where theoretical budgets derived through the formula were substantially lower than those received in previous years. The effects of phasing these reductions from within a finite LEA budget, however, meant that other colleges in the authority were less generously funded than their formula funding expectations allowed³. One principal, commenting on this aspect, was relieved to inform the author:

In the first year of LMC⁴ we were ameliorated and in fact had that 5%⁵ taken out, which was then near enough a quarter of a million pounds. And then there was the amelioration beyond that 5%, and it was likely that it would take us the full three years to work through that amelioration. In fact we've almost cleared it off this

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

² See DES Circular 9/88 chapter 3.62 for further details.

³ The LEA fixed the FE budget (the quantum), which meant that if some colleges gained, others provided the money to finance such gains; or conversely if some expected to gain, their expectations could only be realised by losses in others. The proposals were designed to smooth these losses by phasing them over a period of up to four years.

⁴ Local management of colleges (see acronym figure 7.1.102).

⁵ The amelioration factor of 5% per annum, determined by the LEA to smooth the transitional funding reductions to the college.

year... Now (it) is a matter of three-thousand pounds... so it means that in twelve months time, other things being equal, then we might not even have 5% taken out of the budget. So it's good. adding, circumspectly: But, it's taken away elsewhere... We've had another 5% taken out for sure¹, but the level of amelioration... you can almost say is nothing [Int 1].

Displaying a pragmatic mood, another principal stated:

In a sense, whatever the number happens to be, when County Hall have split the quantum up, and when I find out what I'm getting for FTE², is only interesting if I should ever need to actually try and use that politically to make comparisons elsewhere. It doesn't have a lot of operational significance inside the college [Int 7].

Some colleges were very aware of comparisons with others, and perceived injustices were cited:

We've got a published figure, I can give it to you because we had a consultant in, and it's 5% below the national average... (and) it's decreased, it actually went down this year because the Local Authority part of the poll tax...³ They actually reduced the amount of money going to colleges, so it actually decreased.

¹ Speaking of a proposed LEA cut to the further education budget during the current financial year.

² The number of full-time-equivalent students to be allocated to the college by the IEA for budget planning purposes.

³ The sentence tailed off in exasperation.

But with 5% below the national average¹ so if you bear that in mind on the amount of money we... [Int 10]

One principal commented on a problem faced by all colleges², that of planning next year's programme on the basis of last year's statistics³:

This college was fairly happy about it, we were going to be fairly neutral whatever the weightings, and in fact because we have an intrinsic efficiency of an SSR⁴ of about 14 as opposed to 12. That is a massive efficiency... Now I've needed that, because with the budget lag, I've only managed to cope with the growth⁵ by having this intrinsic budget capacity. And I was hoping we weren't going to grow so much this year to give me breathing space to consolidate our quality and so on... and when I come to that point, budget lag will give me real... advantages [Int 14].

¹ The research revealed this college as being some 8.64% below the overall average for the Midlands region.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

³ For example the FTEs of 1990/91 are used as a basis to allocate funds for 1991/92, described here as budget lag.

⁴ Staff/Student ratio, but more accurately a Student/Staff ratio (see acronyms, figure 7.1.102 for further information).

⁵ A stated growth of 30% in one year (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

4.4.4.1.3 Development of units of resource, principals' responses

This section concluded with the question **4.1.3 Has your college's Unit of Resource in real terms this year, increased, decreased or remained the same.** The responses are outlined in figure 7.1.461(13-16)¹.

4.4.4.1.3.(a) Perceptions of budget increase

Most interviewees amplified their responses² with explanations of factors used by their LEAs in formulating total budget proposals, as distinct from simply commenting on the unit of resource:

If you take the fact that between those two unit of resource figures³, it's something like a 13% nominal increase on the unit of resource. But allowing for inflation going up to 7 to 8% over the year, then in real terms the unit of resource has probably increased by about 5 to 6% [Int 3].

Another view of the operation included the comments:

Well the unit of resource has gone up about 13% so, therefore, I suppose you could say it has gone up in real terms. But then some of the old bits that were allocated to the colleges as bids or extras⁴ have been

¹ See chapter 7 of thesis for details of figure.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ The 1990/91 and the 1991/92 financial year budget allocations.

⁴ Alluding to allocations from the sums held by the LEA in their 'excepted item DES Circular 9/88 Part 3 sections 3.11 to 3.50 for further details).

lumped into the unit of resource [Int 6].

However, as one, without embellishment, insisted:

It's going up [Int 12].

4.4.4.1.3.(b) Perceptions of budget decrease

Whilst not all answers to the question were succinct or direct, one exception might have been:

Well it's not increased in real terms, not per student.

It's gone down fractionally [Int 5].

Others were more explicit and informative in their responses:

Now the unit of resource in real terms has decreased this year. Two problems: (One) The FE budget has remained the same. (Two) The authority has decided to fund more full-time-equivalents¹. There are those two basic factors [Int 8].

Struggling to recall the process and how allocations compared, one reported:

I think I have to say decreased. Because in a sense

I know I had to raise my FTE target. I know I

couldn't go down to nineteen², it would have

screwed³ me too much; and I thought, looking to

the future, it would have been a bad thing to have

¹ The number of full-time-equivalent students allocated by the authority within the agreed strategic plan under LMC.

² This was taken to mean 1900 FTEs for the college.

³ Placed a heavy constraint on planning for the oncoming year.

done. So yes, I have to say we've had to make the
jam spread more thinly [Int 9]

4.4.4.1.3.(c) Funding for growth

A later source¹, outlining the national picture of college units of resource, (termed unit costs) showed a three year scenario from 1990 where the variations indicated a growth followed by a cut back in 1992-93.

Budget planning was sometimes bedevilled by factors which seemed to be outside the control of the planners², as outlined in the following comment:

And of course they³ had this theory that numbers were going down with demography⁴, everybody persuaded them, and of course they've gone up.

And also generally I think FE has gone up.

continuing, and adding another factor to the subject:

So in real terms, if you looked, laid into inflation I would think we've probably actually stayed about static.

Clarifying this in reply to the supplementary question: "On the unit of resource?":

Yes.

¹ Betts D 1993 'NATFHE Journal' Published by NATFHE, the University and College Lecturers' Union. 27 Britannia Street London WC1X 9JP p15. See also figure 4.4.4.2.001 in chapter 4.4.4.2.5.

² At national, local or college levels.

³ Referring to both national and local government.

⁴ See also chapter 4.4.4.1.3(e) of thesis for further comments about demographic changes.

Finally, completely hedging bets by including growth factors in the sector:

...Let me just think back to last year, let's just get this right. That's right, seventy-five per-cent of the growth was funded and twenty-five per-cent had to come out of the...¹ so, in fact it did go down. In other words what I'm saying is... the actual unit of resource did go down [Int 11].

Another principal, describing this process of planning for growth, stated:

No. What happened was the authority agreed to growth, putting in 1.2 million, and then took out 900 thousand. So in effect they increased the number of units and decreased the unit of resource.

Then, responding to the supplementary question: "So in real terms it's stayed the same?", proceeded to explain:

Well, to a certain extent we got a little bit of benefit from the fact that I anticipated a higher salary increase, so we got a bit back from that, but in real terms I would say no, it didn't increase. We are still benefiting from this catching up process², and also because we effect economies of scale [Int 13].

The subject of growth was also touched on in another interview, linking it firmly with the unit of resource in the statement:

¹ An indistinct comment which almost certainly meant the College budget, with 75% coming from the LEA Development Fund (see DES Circular 9/88 Part 3, Excepted Item 4, chapters 3.31 and 3.32)

² The amelioration or mitigation procedure described earlier (see also chapter 4.4.4.1.2.(d) and 4.4.4.2 for further details)

It's decreased, because the growth was not fully funded

[Int 14].

4.4.4.1.3.(d) Perceptions of equivalence

Such was the mensurative sophistication of LEA budgets that many principals were not a little bemused¹ by the detailed calculation of units of resource and their actual budget allocations:

I would think remained the same because we had more FE students last year. They actually agreed to increase the resourcing, but only at three-quarters level. But then the officers got them to put money in for increments on our salary... which actually, when you added the two together, more or less meant that the students worked out the same as if we hadn't had the incremental monies... They didn't take anything out for people retiring at the top of the salary scale, this is just straight increases, and so I think if we just added the two together the answer is the same [Int 4].

Having paused thoughtfully before answering the question, one interviewee responded tritely

About the same [Int 15].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

4.4.4.1.3.(e) The slice of the budget cake

Interviewees were extremely conscious of the importance of the total allocation to further education by their respective Authorities¹. This 'quantum', or 'cake' as it was termed, thus became the focus of attention as the budgets for individual colleges, the 'slices of the cake', were determined by the LEA, based on the LMC formulae². In response to a supplementary question: "So you have increased in real terms?", one replied:

Yes, it has. We've increased. What shall we say?
the size of our slice of the cake has increased from
7.1% to 7.4%, and that's significant [Int 1].

In another instance the interviewee exclaimed:

I'd love to know the answer to that... What I can
say is that the total general colleges' budget remains
static in real terms, less 0.8%. The number of
weighted student FTEs went up, so relatively per
FTE we got less. It's not (unfair) incidentally to say
that there is little point in increasing our LEA
provision³, either as a college or collectively as
colleges. All that happens is we get a smaller slice... [Int 2]

One principal, acknowledging the obvious, stated:

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See Education Reform Act Part II Chapter III, 139 to 147 and DES Circular 9/88 Part 3, paras 3.51 to 3.61 for further details of LMC formulae.

³ Here the interviewee was referring to traditional further education courses, the distinction being drawn between monies for these courses which attracted LEA funding, and other specialist courses which attracted funding from the local TEC, business or industry etc.

Well obviously, at the end of the day it all depends what the County puts into the quantum, before they divide it out.

Later, responding to the prompt: "So the cake's increased?", agreed: "Yes the cake has increased", then continued, qualifying the response by adding:

...they have put more money in. But I would think the unit of resource has not increased, it's tending to stay the same [Int 11].

Another, wending through a labyrinthian thought process¹, disclosed:

So there's no more money on the table but the unit of resource looks bigger. So that's how it's worked out.²

At the end of the day, with all the other chops and changes in potential income, I guess that we're working on about +1.5% compared with last year.

So there's no more real money in the budget this year [Int 6].

Thought provocation was the order of the day during discussion of this question³, and one such line of thinking led to more detail about income in this context:

...But the live issue for me is that we've got a gross budget which is reduced, and within that gross budget there is an increased income target... Here we are with the economy in recession... and yet our income targets are up. It's fixed by the Authority in a manner which is

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A phrase contextually meaning: it has transpired, or emerged.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

quite clearly historical, right, and about which we have some concerns... If you look at the concept of the income target as it applies to this county, there's a mismatch between it and every other aspect of delegated funding. I mean, suppose we don't make our income target, somebody else has set it for us, we didn't set it.

You know, planning is pretty semantic [Int 7].

Returning to the discussion about growth and the quantum, one interviewee noted that growth had not been fully funded, attempting to explain the decision by adding:

Treasurer said he would... fully fund growth, that was when he'd seen the demographic curve¹ and thought this was a promise he'd never have to honour. And we grew by a million pounds worth totally in the county, and he was shocked by this, and he said: 'well I'll only fund you at marginal cost because your overheads are paid for, aren't they'.. So, he gave us 75%, but we didn't want to let him get away with it [Int 14]

4.4.4.2 Principals' responses about budget increases/decreases

Interviewees were next asked **4.2 Was your budget last year (1st of ERA) increased/decreased compared with the year before ERA.** The shape of the replies were outlined in figure 4.1.426².

¹ The demographic forecasts for this period showed a downturn in population growth (see chapters 3.11.2 and 4.4.1.3 for further information).

² See attached disk for details of figure.

4.4.4.2.1 Budgets and units of resource comparisons

One mentioned a sum of £270,000 being held back by the amelioration factor; and responding to a supplementary prompt: "It doesn't actually necessarily decrease your budget from the year before, it means that you wouldn't get as large a growth as you would otherwise be entitled to...", replied:

That's it. Our budget actually does increase but it doesn't increase as much as it should do, and we see it getting better in future years. I'm very hopeful that our budget will get better [Int 3].

Making a similar contribution to the discussion, another interviewee mused on being 'held up' by the amelioration, or mitigation¹, adjustments in the formula funding process:

Mine increased because I was underfunded before, but not as much as it should have, because of a...² and they took £450,000 off me last year, and this year's 330³.

But gradually my budget has gone up because I was underfunded before [Int 5].

Such confusion and exasperation seemed fairly widespread⁴, as epitomised in the following response:

What I want to know is what the real figure is, how much have I got there. Not what, you know, based

¹ Two terms used by different LEAs to describe the same process.

² An unrepeatable phrase describing a convoluted budgetary misjudgment within the local authority.

³ A shorthand expression meaning this year's shortfall is £330,000.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

on the 1990 base or whatever, you know, you add this and take that off, and you'll end up about the same; that's what they told you. But what I need to know is the actual figure in black and white and then I can manage it [Int 6].

This feeling was communicated in a further situation where the first budget of ERA had increased but was reduced in the second year:

...there's a rider to that as well of course, and I say that with a degree of caution because so many things about the budget before ERA were inextricably entwined in the way County Hall handled our budgets...¹ And a thing I'd go so far as to say is, that if you were to ever to write a thesis on that item alone, I'd want to make sure I actually did know what the budget in the year before ERA truly was² [Int 7].

4.4.4.2.2 Cognisance of budget increases - and amelioration

Many of those who discerned increases in their first ERA budget thought that they had been marginal³:

I'd say our budget has increased marginally, but we're

¹ This statement again embraced the possibility of questionable budget handling within a local authority (see full transcript on attached disk for further information).

² A wry, semi-humorous comment alluding to the desire for more clinically sure facts to be considered if the matter were to be taken further.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

now in that situation where we are being pegged back by amelioration... that we are strictly are entitled to have. But we're still in the process of helping out those colleges which are severely penalised in the adjustment to formula funding [Int 3].

Another, also not totally comfortable with the described situation, replied:

Well the Authority said it was, yes, that we came out better. But I still have to be convinced that we did come out better, because you never really knew what your budget was prior to ERA, that was the problem, yes. So we got this situation called mitigation¹, where those that lost are supposed to get money from those who are supposed to have gained. And I know that I am losing money out of mitigation [Int 6].

The comparison was succinctly made by one interviewee who stated:

Budget last year was more. It has decreased this year.

Going on to explain the other side of the amelioration/ mitigation process:

This year our budget was less, as it should be, and we were in danger of not being protected by mitigation.

But I managed to persuade them (of) that, and so we were baled out this year to the extent of £28,000. So our budget's going down and we are being protected.

Then, responding to the supplementary prompt: "Wholly protected or partially?" replied:

¹ Also described as amelioration by some.

No, partially. It's 2%, 4% and 4% over the four years

[Int 8].

Changing both the magnitude of scale and the direction, another principal was clearly impressed with the benefits accruing to the college from this catching up process associated with amelioration:

It has definitely increased as a result of ERA, because as we move nearer to formula funding, yes, it has been a tremendous benefit to us. Almost like two or three hundred-thousand pounds a year.

Asked: "And that was a political decision to increase budgets to colleges?",
replied:

No. This was because of the effect of catching up¹ [Int 13].

A further case, reversing an authority decision, was reported by an interviewee in response to a supplementary prompt about the year in question: "When you went LMC?":

It was slightly increased. It was to be a decrease but we fought long and hard and we turned an 18,000 decline into a 30,000² increase. It was a straight political case of we were deemed a small college and we could be leant on by aggressive County Officers. Well we kicked up a fuss and said no you can't, our unit of efficiency is great, our under-funding of infrastructure is as great. We only had four SLs³ for instance, whereas other colleges

¹ Referring to the beneficial effects on the college of amelioration (or mitigation).

² Meaning £18,000 and £30,000 respectively.

were stacked out with them. Anyway, we shouted long enough and loud enough and we turned from an 18,000 deficit to a 30,000 gain [Int 14].

4.4.4.2.3 Cognisance of budget decreases

Only one, a large and rapidly expanding college, reported a decrease in the budget at the outset of ERA but again this allocation seemed to be enmeshed in diverse factors such as growth and a recent change of principal¹.

This is the trouble I've got because probably you're looking back to 1988 and of course it did go down quite drastically. I mean, the answer is yes, the implementation of formula funding into this college actually had a fundamental effect and it did decrease it quite significantly. That is a problem, and again, as I say, because we had this historic basis it's a continual problem if you're growing.

The principal then proceeded to explain this perceived paradox with a hypothetical example:

If for example, we went down to 400 next year, just let's say - if you forgot all the other problems - we'd be funded on 600 so that would be...

³ A short form expression meaning senior lecturers.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

During this natural pause (for humorous effect), the author, rising to the bait with a slightly mischievous retort: "A golden year?", received the equally jocular response: "Yes" [Int 11].

4.4.4.2.4 Cognisance of budget equivalence

The 'remained the same' response brought with it some curious explanations:

It remained the same. We're never quite sure because it's so complicated. But they said it remained the same, and we always get the feeling we've been cheated [Int 4].

A background explanation was thought to be necessary in another response:

Perhaps I should put it in some sort of context. What this county committed itself to do was not to cause a problem. So it worked out a set of weightings which more or less fitted the historical, more or less, and then where it didn't, put in a transition period of three or four years. So the answer must be that it was more or less the same [Int 15].

4.4.4.2.5 Cognisance of a downward spiral

One principal, when asked: "Do you feel that the newer systems are gradually all but giving you (the actual figures), or do you still feel there's a similar fog over the whole thing?", answered:

No. I mean I honestly know much sooner the true sort of black and white situation. But there are all these

other things around it... that's based on us enrolling so many students. If we don't, you can imagine my situation, every time I lose a full-time-equivalent I'm losing £5,000. I've only got to lose four before I've lost the equivalent of paying a member of staff. So having a very high weighting is nice for getting the income, but it hits you if you're in a downward situation [Int 6].

A later picture of projected student numbers, college spending and unit costs per full time equivalent student (FTE) was published¹ which added a new perspective to the trends predicted by the above data:

Figure 4.4.4.2.001

**Developments in FTE Student Numbers,
Recurrent Spending, and Unit Costs per FTE
for the United Kingdom (Forecasts)**

Financial Year	FTE Student Numbers	Recurrent Spending (£)	Unit Costs (£perFTE)*
1992/93	899 000		
1993/94	970 000	2.549m	2,627
1994/95	1 038 000	2.734m	2,634
1995/96	1 121 000	2.943m	2,625

Source: Adapted from an OECD² survey conducted in 1992 and published in an article by D Betts in NATFHE Journal Spring 1993 p14.

¹ Published in March 1993.

² See details of acronyms in figure 7.1.102.

Note: * These figures, as the article says, are national figures which incorporate the totality of LEA spending on Further Education.

4.4.4.3 Major savings areas identified by principals

Question **4.3** asked where **did any major savings come from..**

Figure 7.1.463¹ shows the distribution of responses resulting from this question.

4.4.4.3.1 The question of to save or not save

The question prompted one principal's view about the historic perspective:

Well, the savings were only that the formula was there.

I inherited an historic amount of money, God knows how they'd have got to that to start with; and the same thing happened all over the country didn't it.²

I've no idea why our budget was as it was really.

Going on to explain a problem faced by many colleges³ in differing degrees, by way of information about a large inherited college overspend of about £90,000 some six years previously, the importance of staffing in budgetary terms:

...and it was a lot of money to put right, and most of it was part-time teaching. I think the first thing I did when I came here was to get the time-table

¹ See chapter 7 of thesis for details of figure.

² The interviewee was speaking from a position of some authority, having held national offices in further education organisations. (see also others' comments on attached disk for further information about historic funding mechanisms.)

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

sorted... People who should be teaching twenty-one hours are teaching twenty-one hours. You know, that's where the big waste is. I mean, you get people from staff who do nineteen hours on the timetable and you're paying two hours for somebody doing part-time work.

Finally, pin-pointing the perceived cause of the problem, which has been echoed by many interviewees at various points throughout the discussions¹:

Ever so difficult, because I think the practice used to be, and in other colleges I'm sure, a lot of the part-time teacher budgets were controlled by heads of departments; and sometimes they weren't as good as they should have been [Int 5].

As one principal put it: "...the question begs a question²", then went on to say:

...but in actual fact it is fair to say that we have needed to make savings because even though the unit of resource is going up... we are still under-resourced and that we therefore do have to make savings [Int 3].

On the other hand, when asked the supplementary question "Did you make any savings?", another frankly answered:

No, not really [Int 4].

¹ See, for example, chapters 4.4.4.1.1; 4.4.2.2 and 4.4.2.3 for further information about staffing and senior staff roles in this context.

² Implying: 'did you need to make any savings'.

This stance was repeated in only one other situation where the interviewee briefly replied:

We didn't have to make any major¹ savings [Int 13].

In other cases the main difficulties faced by colleges in making the required savings were explained:

You know, we plan and now we resource a plan within our means. But it's difficult to achieve major savings where such a huge chunk of your budget is staffing costs² [Int 1].

Another example described the phasing of cutting savings:

Yes. I mean, in the first year I didn't really have to make any major savings in that sense. But this year, one is having to make savings in staffing and all the other services [Int 6].

A cautious beginning was exercised in the following explanation³:

I think I have to pass on 4.3 and 4.4⁴ in the sense that I don't think it would be helpful to comment on at the moment, because we've got such a fluid situation.

Continuing:

We go up, we go down, we get the patterns between

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² See chapters 4.4.4.1.1.(e and i) of thesis for further examples of information on staffing costs.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ Numbers 4.3 & 4.4 of the follow-up questionnaire given to interviewees in advance of the discussion.

the regions, and so on; but suffice to say this: that I've had to do something this summer which I certainly didn't have to do before... I have actually imposed cash limits, to be managed within the divisions, on the programme, for all expenditure; in everything other than their full-time salaries... [Int 7]

4.4.4.3.2 Savings achieved on staffing

One of the main methods described of achieving financial savings was in the major spending area of staffing which, as was pointed out earlier¹, constituted approximately 80% of the total college budget. Several gave fairly straightforward answers to this question, amplified in greater detail in some cases² as the discussion progressed. As one decisively replied:

Full-time salaries³

Another, adding a further dimension to the discussion, stated:

...and we have made savings clearly in curriculum and staffing areas [Int 3].

By way of explaining limitations, it was said:

The only two that you've got some flexibility with are staffing and the figure that usually turns out to be

¹ For example, see chapters 4.4.2.2 and 4.4.4.1.1 for further information about staffing costs.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Meaning savings made on the salaries of full-time teaching staff, through vacancies created in a variety of ways (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

the balancing one at the end of the day, which is materials and equipment [Int 6].

An emphatic response included the comment:

Yes. I mean, we're reducing the size of the staff aren't we?¹ [Int 8]

One almost guiltily announcing:

I've got to be honest about it, mainly I would say in two main areas. One is staff..

went on to add another strand to the information:

The other one is supplies and services [Int 11].

A further interviewee firmly stated the perceived underlying philosophy perceived to be behind making the financial savings²:

It was on staffing efficiency. It was increasing class size, staff-student ratio [Int 14].

Figure 4.4.4.3.001

Job Losses in Further Education

Financial Year	Loss of Jobs as % of Total Staff
1900-91	3.60
1991-92	3.91
1992-93	5.04

¹ A reminder to the author that this subject had already been touched on earlier in the discussion. (See full transcript on attached disk for further details)

² Referring to the efficiency targets identified by Government in 1987 (see DES 'Managing Colleges Efficiently' Chapter 5 paras 5.7 to 5.20, HMSO August 1987).

Source: Adapted from Surveys conducted by NATFHE and published by D Betts in an article in 'NATFHE Journal' Spring 1993 p15.

A major national survey¹ illustrated in figure 4.4.4.3.001 above tended to confirm the above findings, what is more it showed a growing trend in staff reductions possibly unforeseen at the time of the 1991 interviews.

4.4.4.3.3 The main areas of staffing savings

Figure 7.1.463(4-6)² shows that three main methods of achieving savings in the staffing areas of college budgets were expounded during the discussions: by 'freezing' vacant staff posts, through staff taking early retirement, and by creating redundancies; with early retirements appearing the method utilised by most (40%):

Some went on early retirements [Int 2].

Another, defensively emphasising:

Yes, I've had early retirements but they've been justified, they've not been pushed³ [Int 5].

The reminder by the interviewer of previous comments⁴: "Now you didn't have to make any major savings of course, but you made some savings through your early retirements and so on, didn't you?" brought the succinct reply:

¹ See also chapter 4.4.4.1.3.(c) and figure 4.4.4.2.001 in chapter 4.4.4.2.5 for further details.

² See chapter 7 for details of figure.

³ There were instances quoted when some forms of encouragement had been identified which promoted the taking of early retirement in colleges (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Yes, we did [Int 9].

Linking this method of achieving savings with another factor, one responded:

Early retirements and the reduction in teaching hours,
which freed a tremendous amount of resources¹ [Int 12].

Although a number of principals avoided the use of redundancy as a tool for making financial savings at this stage², it was utilised in some cases. As one replied:

...with redundancies, although we've had to stand the
redundancy payments, which is a burden [Int 1].

Also, being reminded of an previous comment: "You talked about four redundancies, earlier", one replied: "Yes, yes". A further unfinished question: "Are these savings, or...?" attracted the reply:

Well they're partially savings; also as a result of
shift of work, you know, change of work [Int 6].

Being asked: "On the staffing, you mentioned redundancies earlier. Did you go for compulsory redundancies, or early retirement?" a principal explained:

Virtually every one, except two, was voluntary. Well eventually was. They went for interviews and discussed it. One was a compulsory one, but it was done in a very equitable manner. And one was compulsory which was actually quite difficult [Int 11].

¹ This technique of achieving savings by reducing taught hours, mainly on full-time courses, was mentioned by a number of interviewees (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

A supplementary question to another interviewee about savings achieved through "reorganisation of management": "Were these people leaving? Retirement?" elicited the compound reply:

Retirement. Redundancy. Voluntary redundancy [Int 15].

A common technique which had been practised by college principals for some years¹ was that of 'freezing' vacant staff posts:

...we were involved in deferring appointments to the full-time staff when vacancies came up. So we were, like I think all colleges, quite heavily involved in making savings [Int 3].

Another interviewee emphatically denied using the mechanism of redundancies:

I've not been involved in redundancies because really I haven't...² I'd taken that on board a long time before I think³ [Int 5],

not denying the reminder: "unfilled vacancies you mentioned...?"

In another instance, stimulated by the observation: "But you mentioned earlier, unfilled vacancies", the interviewee responded: "We've got a freeze on teaching posts" [Int 7].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A tailed-off sentence implying: I haven't needed to.

³ Reminding the author of previous comments about the methods of making savings in the college concerned, including leaving vacant post unfilled. (See full transcript on attached disk for further details)

4.4.4.3.4 Other areas of financial savings

A number of other areas of achieving savings were mentioned¹ and figure 7.1.463² indicates two of these. Curriculum change was mentioned by 47% of interviewees, and supplies and services by 27%. Mention has already been made about some changes to the curriculum as a means of monetary saving³.

This theme was taken up by others:

...we are significantly now trying to academically plan for a much smaller amount of taught hours, and by measures of efficiency, class sizes, target numbers, by a conscious decision to reduce fairly significantly the non-vocational programme (length of) session.

Then, explaining the problems created by a local newspaper campaign:

I had to take the very dramatic step... of delaying the start of the whole of our adult non-voc' session for six weeks and, in effect, it saved about £20,000 by doing it, net [Int 1].

In another instance, a principal reported:

We did things like - we suspended the electives programme that was available to all first-year full-time students on a Wednesday afternoon. They had a choice of thirty or forty activities. We scrapped that, which saved about £20,000. We certainly reduced the

¹ See, for example, chapter 4.4.4.3.2.

² See chapter 7 for further details of figure.

³ For example see chapter 4.4.4.3.3.

course hours on full-time courses [Int 3].

On the other side of the coin, some colleges were actively promoting new courses:

And we're moving into new curriculum areas.

Then, responding to the follow-up question: "Right. So it's new curriculum areas that you're putting money into. (Is) it development?" said: "Yes" [Int 8], agreeing with the interviewer's final comment in this context: "As you said earlier, to be able to move forward and grow in a new way."

Returning to the theme of course-hour reductions, the author was tentatively informed:

I think we also made savings because we looked at our course hours as well. And we tried to make all full-time course hours do it because the Authority told us that they'd only fund on the assumption of twenty-one hours¹, we'd had courses up to thirty... Mind you, I think that was grossly over-taught. I have to say, some of the budgetary cuts, although it's difficult to say this, I think you could justify them on educational reasons. One should have been looking at them anyway; I'm not saying all, but certainly (a sizeable) percentage. So, we did look at course hours [Int 9].

Another slant on savings was cited in the response:

And some minor savings came from energy management, things of that nature. Sound activated water control

¹ A shorthand term meaning 21 hours per week. See also chapter 4.4.4.4.2 for further evidence of reductions in taught hours.

valves, for instance. I went through the whole place and got rid of every tungsten light I could and replaced it with fluorescent. Haven't even paid for it. County Energy Budget pays for the capital investment and I get the revenue benefit from it. Minor, though it's all good (for encouraging) staff [Int 14].

The wider idea of saving on goods and services had also occurred to others. An intricate reminder of the potential importance of this area came from one who said:

I mean, there are very few services at the end of the day that you don't have to pay for, and when you look around, down all the expenditure, most of it has to be met anyway [Int 6].

Or, as another stated:

Yes, there's a certain defensiveness about everything in the college in terms of cash shortages and so on.

However, going on to analyse further:

...there's a danger that we can over-concentrate on surviving the present, to the ultimate disadvantage of our future [Int 7].

Continuing this theme of 'other' savings, another comparatively reflected:

The other one is supplies and services¹. I mean, what we have done without any doubt whatsoever is we've totally tightened up completely on equipment

¹ Having previously mentioned staffing as an area of achieving savings in the college.

and materials and everything else. And that in itself is now...¹ I was saying to the governors the other day, you can squeeze an orange for three years but now we've actually got...² But that's where our savings came from, without doubt [Int 11].

4.4.4.4 Extra expenditure identified by principals

Last in this section was the question **4.4 Where were any extra monies expended...** and Figure 7.1.464³ shows generally how extra finance was acquired and interviewees' priorities for any additional expenditure. As one recalled, the sources of income used for extra expenditure were various:

Well extra monies have only come from funding... there's been a better formula, coupled with probably raising more income through a variety of activities. Cost recovery courses last year, in themselves, earned about £180,000... I've also probably made about £50,000 out of overseas students... So, as I said, last year my income was 1.9 million but it included all sorts of things [Int 5].

On being questioned if monies conserved had been spent on college amenities, another stressed the need for surrogate preparation:

Well no, what we have done if there is any extra,

¹ A 'knowing' pause implying that this tactic had now run its course.

² Another pregnant pause implying that the governors appreciated that this policy had now served its useful purpose.

³ See chapter 7 of thesis for details of figure.

we're trying to build up a bit of a contingency fund.

So we've got a decent sum, because if you want to change provision in our sort of business there's a fair old capital investment [Int 6].

The supplementary question: "If you had any extra monies as a result of whatever... did you manage to build up equipment or replace equipment, or building maintenance?", attracted the symmetrical rejoinder:

No, no. There's nothing that we've spent loads of money on, other than we have an annexe which the governors have a commitment to extend... [Int 7].

Clearing up another potential misunderstanding about related difficulties of "... getting them to do anything, and even when you've persuaded them, it takes an eternity to actually get it done; it takes even longer to get it done to a satisfactory standard", the author's supplementary question: "So is there no delegation at all? I mean, if you suddenly feel you want to decorate a corridor, a room... ", triggered the edifying distinction:

Oh yes, because that's a tenant's work, not landlord's work [Int 8].

4.4.4.1 Improvements to college accommodation

The above comments indicated that in four of the five 'reluctant' cases identified, extra monies had at least been expended on accommodation self-help [Int 5.6.7.8]. If one interprets remarks about financing additional teaching facilities

to include improvements to buildings¹, all but two of the principals interviewed had mentioned upgrading the quality of their college accommodation. Reminded about previous building projects², one interviewee explained that no enhancements or maintenance had recently been carried out in the college:

We are conscious that we haven't made enough investment in maintenance of the building...

Then, reflecting on the matter of an incomplete LEA survey³: "...and we still haven't had a condition survey from the LEA to do with LMC.", required further prompting to make the remarks which echoed many interviewees' thoughts and actions⁴:

We have made minor improvements. We've put in some extra toilets for disabled, we've improved the technicians' workshop, we've knocked a few walls down here and there. We've been able to do relatively small things which have been necessary and are good for morale, at times when morale is low in all colleges of FE⁵ [Int 3].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Referring to an LEA survey of accommodation arranged to assess the state of college accommodation prior to relinquishing responsibilities to governing bodies under LMC. See DES Circular 9/88 paras 4.11; 3.17 and 3.18 for further details on construction and maintenance of buildings. See also Part I of the Local Government Act 1988 and Part III of the Local Government Planning & Land Act 1980 with regard to competitive tendering.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁵ See further comments on staff morale in the following paragraphs, also in chapter 4.4.4.4.2 of thesis. There were a number of references to this throughout the interviews, for further details see full transcript on attached disk.

One disgruntled principal recollected operating a mobile laboratory in a deprived city area. On being informed that the college was not going to receive any further financial support for it replied "OK, fair enough, I'm not going to do the service." Later, "because it was politically the wrong thing to do, the money reappeared" [Int 5].

The examples of information about authorities appearing reluctant to offer more than meagre financial support, epitomised the disaffection principals seemed to feel¹, which possibly spurred their activities towards improving college accommodation in a number of different ways. One talked of "not really having any extra at all" but engaging in the "deliberate act" of immediately, not only increasing FTE numbers² but also going for income generation, continuing:

So we have spent a bit of money in the last year (and) a little bit of money this year. But funnily enough, because of increased numbers we needed more classrooms and everything. So we've actually put portacabins in, which we paid for, not the County, right³. But, in fact, I've paid for them out of other income⁴, which you could argue that's right or wrong. I'm not talking about the morality of that either... we've used money for the benefit of the student population; I'm not going to say that's right but it's much more of a

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Full-time equivalent student numbers.

³ This point was quite forcefully made by the interviewee.

⁴ Implying that the money had been raised from special programmes, for example short industrial courses or perhaps YT. The matter was not specifically clarified any further.

reality isn't it? [Int 11]

Clear emphasis was placed on a generally accepted case¹ for improving college accommodation in the declaration:

Well we made sure that we spent some money on the building... We paint corridors. We've turned classrooms, this summer, into workshops... We're constantly asking the staff to give us more and we give them a painted corridor. I know it sounds funny but, you know, they actually see something. Their environment's being changed, their classrooms are being changed, and carpet's on the floor... [Int 12]

The point about spending surplus monies on the college was made by one, who, without embroidery, said:

Any extra monies have been spent on staff and equipment and improving accommodation.

And, on being reminded: "And you've been talking about being able to do some extra building work?"², replied simply:

That's right [Int 13].

4.4.4.2 Monies spent on other college 'necessities'

Although the main thrust of principals' spending appeared to be in the direction of accommodation improvement and expansion, several mentioned money spent

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Referring to an earlier part of the discussion. (See full transcript on attached disk for further information).

on improving other areas of college provision and services. Bridging a well articulated divide¹, one report described how pleasing it was that "it² did not stop development of the College learning centre." This, the report suggested, "coloured peoples' attitudes in a time of belt tightening, making a major development of this sort (it looks a bit plush and prestigious)".

...and that's where we don't want to hear people say,
hmm, poured all that money into that and look at me,
still scrambling along [Int 1].

One description covering many areas explained how some was invested, "for example in interactive video through a DTI³ project, along with a local firm." Further expenditure included some on support staff and facilities "in the international office", and increased spending in flexible learning. "Quite a lot of money is being invested in that area." And, although other colleges were closing down automobile sections⁴, in this instance it was stated:

We bought six new motor vehicles because none had
been bought for a number of years, so we got £20,000
sort of straight away, to do something about that. "So",
it was explained, "any money we did save was put into specific projects", and,
by way of further explanation:

We've reduced the full-time student hours down to

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Meaning the whole area of financial stringency, savings and expenditure.

³ Government Department of Trade and Industry. (See figure 7.1.102 for further information on acronyms)

⁴ See chapter 4.4.1.5 for examples. This fact was also confirmed in one case by the college principal at a Midlands APC meeting the author attended on 10 March 1993.

twenty-four¹ and I suspect by the end of next year we might be able to reduce them again, in terms of formal teaching, because we'll have a range of facilities available which will allow people to (learn) in other ways [Int 2].

Some of the remarks collected in this section of the interviews were cautious and convoluted, reflecting attitudes inculcated by past experiences and apprehensive about untried future systems and events:

Well, there was extra money in a sense, because we are now able to carry forward², whereas we always lost on the underspendings... you can't actually hit it (smack) on... and I think I put the extra money into increased support staff... [Int 4]

On being asked the question: "...were you able to spend these monies anywhere... like more staff, equipment, building maintenance, extra courses?" another retorted:

Oh, nothing on maintenance. This is what worries about the budget, we're totally not looking at maintenance. We're putting very little into our equipment fund... it's frightening... And that's what we are saying to the governors - we're storing up trouble.

¹ Meaning twenty-four taught hours each week. See also chapter 4 4.4.3 4 for further information about reductions in taught hours.

² Meaning: enabled to spend unspent monies from one financial year during the following year.

Further questioning: "So you would feel that not enough's being spent on equipment, on building maintenance...? "enticed the baffled and baffling response¹:

Yes, we're still mainly putting it on staffing... [Int 9]

Other responses indicated increased monies being expended on, staff development, marketing, consultancy²:

...because we use consultants a fair amount for odd

jobs, nothing major, but we do use them quite a bit [Int10].

In a rapidly developing college it was explained that:

I spent it mainly on growth, to fund the lag of courses

I had to run when I hadn't got the revenue allocation for it.

Adding:

...secondly I had quite a backlog to catch up on, on core teaching/learning facilities. For instance we had fifty-seven computers when I came, all confined to the technology department, we've got a hundred and sixty now, because I've tried to make IT³ available to everybody... I found that photocopying was a crime... well, I said, we'll stop this nonsense... I found the furnishings were pretty poor... so I carpeted every

¹ The 1988 Education Reform Act transferred power to governors and principals in order that they could spend money on any items for the benefit of the college. This did not appear to be clear to the interviewee at this point in the discussion. (See full transcript on attached disk for further information)

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Information Technology.

room and painted every room, bought new chairs and so on. And I've been constantly knocking holes in walls, shifting this, doing that... I've run out of spaces to develop now.

Responding to the supplementary question: "What's been the reaction of staff to this...?" the interviewee revealed:

Generally very positive... They had a low morale, because county officers had told them you're on a downward slippery slope, with a demographic curve¹ and you're going to die... Now we have grown relative to the cohort decline by 87% in three years, so we've virtually doubled the size that we were [Int 14].

The picture of generally spending extra monies on staff, equipment and improving accomodation was expanded in many cases². In the following two instances, however, [Int 13 & 15], on being prompted: "And you've been talking about being able to do some extra building work?" one replied:

That's right [Int 13], and asked, "Is that on maintenance or extending buildings?" the other responded:

It's refurbishment really, not maintenance, it's converting rooms to be honest [Int 15].

¹ A reference to the falling birthrate pattern which had reached the further education stage, decreasing the numbers of young people eligible to enter sixteen-plus education.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

4.4.4.5 Meetings of college principals and LEA Officers

Question 4.5 asked **Did /do principals and LEA regularly meet together...**

Figure 7.1.465¹ shows that all responding colleges and LEAs were involved in such meetings.

4.4.4.5.1 Frequency and regularity of meetings

The discussions revealed that the picture of regular meetings was not a static one. Changes to this structure inevitably arose as a result of the 1988 Education Reform Act and proposals contained in the White Paper², published during the course of the interviews.

However, during this period many answered unequivocally, one laconically stating:

Yes we do meet regularly, monthly.

And on being asked, "And with the officers?", even more tersely replied:

Yes [Int 1].

A slight note of caution entered into one brief rejoinder:

Yes we did meet regularly³. we've covered that [Int 14].

The frequency of these meetings varied somewhat from authority to authority:

Yes, once a term at least [Int 6].

We have monthly meetings of the full group of

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - the Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 1991.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for references to significant changes in the LEA directorate previously mentioned by this interviewee

principals and officers... [Int 3]

... it's normally twice a term, but then¹ various ad hoc type meetings where you'd have a representative.

For example I had a meeting last week, representing the other principals, with the advisory service, because we weren't happy about one or two things ...And that will get fed back into our (full) meeting [Int 5].

4.4.4.5.2 Continuity of meeting patterns

The search for clarification about continuity of the pattern of meetings with one interviewee developed into the following piecemeal discussion:

Yes, we do meet regularly. Roughly once every five or six weeks.

"Before and after ERA?"

Yes, we've continued the same pattern...

"With or without officers?"

With the officers [Int 10].

Following another succinct reply, "Yes." the author questioned, "With or without officers?", which revealed a radically changing pattern of meetings:

When I first came here we used to have a meeting at least once every two months, where we met with the LEA. The LEA chaired it. The principals were there². Now we meet less frequently because the LEA

¹ Meaning 'additionally' in this context.

have less role, and they can't understand ¹ I mean,
they're pulling out totally really from what they were,
because now they're going out² [Int 11].

However, in another more settled situation it was declared:

Yes. I think about three times a term. We meet with
the officers chairing... we don't meet on our own,
well we do sometimes.

And, confirming the situation up to and beyond the 1988 Education Reform Act,

"Was that before or after?":

No, it's exactly the same, no change [Int 13].

Acknowledging that times were changing, one replied:

Yes we did and we still do, but there are differences.
We have less business meetings of an ongoing business
nature, more strategic meetings particularly focussed
on '93. And the LEA is increasingly pulling out of
meetings, because they're saying, well, we're
delegated³ and as '93⁴ gets closer it's irrelevant what
we think.

² Implying by tone of voice that the principals were expected to be present, under instruction to attend.

¹ The implication of this unfinished sentence was that the LEA had not accepted the full significance of the new powers of the principal and college governors.

² A vernacular phrase meaning losing their right to be involved in college administration.

³ Meaning the college now had delegated powers under LMC, following the 1988 Education Reform Act.

⁴ Referring to the additional legislation proposing incorporation for colleges outlined in the newly published 1991 White Paper.

This was followed up in the query, "Interesting. What's the reaction of the principals been to that?", which brought the reply.

Regret. We would have wished that they would have held our hand, albeit with an increasing withdrawal, but held our hand up to the line and helped us all the way [Int 14].

Supporting this attitude another interview responded with the rejoinder:

Yes we meet regularly.

"With the officers?"

Yes.

"Is that the same as it always was, or...?"

Yes, although I should say... the involvement of the officers is rapidly diminishing because of 1993.

Cutting back. We still do meet and we will continue to meet, and I would think that post '93 we will meet, but, the role of the officers is diminishing. It's now much more principals talking to themselves, rather than the LEA carrying..¹

"Is this LEA driven now...?"

Yes, I think it's very much the LEA view. And in fact they have disestablished further education as a section within..² nothing to do with 1993. They said they were going to get rid of (the) Further Education Section and

¹ An unfinished sentence signifying that principals in the LEA concerned were being encouraged to arrange and manage their own meetings without the support and leadership of the authority's officers.

² Meaning within the Local Education Authority.

just call it Education [Int 15].

4.4.4.5.3 Changing relationships between colleges and LEAs

Previous paragraphs show that recent and proposed changes in legislation had had a profound effect on the frequency, regularity and style of meetings between college principals and LEA officers. It was also clear from many comments that relationships between colleges were also changing¹ and this was reinforced during the discussions.

One interviewee outlined specific subjects discussed by principals and officers "on things like LMC, finance, on performance indicators, strategic planning, teacher training and so on..." [Int 3]. In another instance, when talking about the desirability of future meetings the interviewee also mentioned specific agenda items such as fees for the YT² providers and staff conditions of service [Int 2].

"There is a commonality of feeling I think in many areas."

Asked about regular monthly meetings of principals without officers, "Did you meet before ERA or is this a new venture?", this interviewee replied:

We did meet before. Only one principal remains from the previous group, everyone else has changed in the last three years.

"Do you think this has affected the way that things have changed, in addition to any effects of ERA and so on?"

I think so, I mean, the fact that we are all new...

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details. See also chapters 4.4.3.2 and 4.4.3.4.4 for details about such relationships.

² Youth Training, replacing the Youth Training Scheme- YTS

We've gained a lot of support from each other

because we've been facing the same problems [Int 2].

A strong bond with one LEA manifested itself in a conversation about specialist groups set up to discuss specific aspects of the service:

So it's a good relationship with the LEA really...

"Do you find that, following ERA, and probably with the White Paper on the horizon as it were, these¹ are more needed, less needed...?"

Well, there's a different slant to them because they're not just prescriptive. The LEA can't be prescriptive any more. But they're still needed I think, and I would say they're sharper. Certainly our informal meetings² are considerably sharper than they had been before I came, but there was still an element of the old 'gentlemen's get together' about it all³ to be honest We now have a very full agenda and it all seems to be business [Int 5].

One interviewee's response started enigmatically:

They do, but you might be surprised to find that there's all kinds of things going on now. To start with, as the principals' group has changed... there's been a considerable degree of concern about the principals' meeting and the way it operates and the

¹ Referring to the principals/LEA officers' meetings.

² Referring to meetings of principals held without LEA officers present

³ Meaning, meetings between principals in the LEA and meetings of principals with LEA officers.

way it leads into a meeting with officers... and I share some of the concerns, frankly.

The discussion proceeded to cover technical aspects of sub-groups of principals allied to TEC boundaries¹ and the author asked, "LEA driven, or...?":

Both really. The LEA are keen to have a hand in that² they might be right, with news about the election and so on.³ There's a perception that if the White Paper⁴ isn't enacted then it will mean incorporation might not happen... so there's that contingency to be kept open⁵. But there's also I think, a genuine desire to ensure that the LEA does have a positive relationship with colleges irrespective of what comes⁶...But the style of the meetings is changing quite significantly... I think there's a difference in perception now as a result of LMC⁷. You know, the LEA is no longer the thing it was, it's there still, but it's different [Int 7].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Referring to the keenness the LEA had for involvement in the management of the local TEC.

³ The date of the forthcoming general election was eagerly anticipated (there having been several red herrings and 'false starts' at this time.

⁴ Education and Training for the 21st Century -Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 1991.

⁵ This remark epitomised much of the general feeling of college principals during this uncertain period. (See full transcript on attached disk and also chapter 4.4.4.1 of thesis for further details).

⁶ This sentiment was echoed in a number of conversations during the 1991 interviews - see full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁷ Local Management of Colleges under the 1988 Education Reform Act.

4.4.4.5.4 Changes in style and content of meetings

It was apparent from the interviews that the style and content of both types of meetings¹ was not only changing but showing signs of acrimonious differences between principals and their parent LEAs:

We'd got to a point where the principals' meeting seemed to set up just the LEA meeting in the afternoon. A bit counter-productive. So there are changes to that [Int 7].

The LEA officers attending such meetings were identified by one interviewee:

So once a term we meet with the Senior Assistant Director of Education (FE)² and his education officers, and sometimes one of the other deputy directors, and sometimes there's an adviser there.

"So, quite a team from the LEA. Is that the same as before ERA or has it changed?":

Just the same [Int 8].

A marked shift of emphasis was reported by one interviewee:

...we've started this joint meeting of the governing bodies, where the Chairs³ and the principals meet now, without officers... we rotate it round each others' college.

¹ Formal meetings of principals with and without LEA officers

² A third tier post in many LEAs, responsible for the further education colleges and in some cases for other services such as student grants or the Careers Service, through a Deputy Director to the Director of Education.

³ A shorthand term meaning Chairmen of Governors.

"That sounds a very interesting, and could be (a) useful, exercise, do you feel that it is?":

Well I think it is, but it will be who feels threatened by it. Because, you see, we stand to be threatened, because we are the small fish in this. But I felt, on balance, that I had to advise the Governors we ought to cooperate. I think sometimes you have to be in there to see what's going on [Int 9].

An adamant LEA line was communicated in one discussion:

...it used to be principals' meetings, and the principals still want principals' meetings... but the Chairman of Education said I want this renaming College Management throughout the Authority. So the authority officers attend and the CAO¹ attends sometimes [Int 12].

On the other hand, during one interview the speed at which change had been implemented by the LEA was commented on in very vigorous terms:

We believe they've been so damn keen to hand over the baton it is unseemly the way they've done it, and focussed their attention so away from FE towards schools... we believe we've been left in the lurch [Int 14].

This movement away from previously traditional relationships was explained in another discussion:

So they've broken their own county council up and they're looking at that throughout every aspect of

¹ College Chief Administrative Officer.

the service, and Education Department - no different. And (they) look at it and think, well, what can we hive off to make a commercial unit... Obviously their prime concern is that which they are legally required to provide, and that's pre-sixteen. But they've taken the view that there shouldn't be a separate FE bit, it should all be part of Education¹ and they've disestablished the FE part just as the Government were deciding to go down the corporate status route. So perhaps they've judged it very well.

Adding cautiously:

I don't know [Int 15].

4.4.4.6 Changes in size and composition of Senior Management Teams (SMTs)

Next, the question **4.6 Has your senior management team altered in size since ERA.** was put to each principal and figure 7.1.446² shows the distribution of their responses.

4.4.4.6.1 Reasons given for SMT changes in size

There were many reasons given for alterations in size but most were generated from the perceived need to reduce the top tiers of management in colleges³:

¹ The County Council's Education Department

² See attached disk of thesis for details of figure.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Yes, and is continuing to alter... The senior management team was eight ... you'd never need eight people to do it...

Then, drawing a distinction between size and responsibilities, continued:
yes it has altered and reduced [Int 1].

This process of alteration and restructuring was emphasised by another interviewee from a college where growth had taken place:

Yes it has, we've gone from eight to ten in the restructuring process [Int 3].

Another described how initial changes had been overtaken by political events, creating the need for further reviews of the college management:

frankly, a huge amount of the college's energy and the governors' energy, and my energy last year¹ was just mopped up with that horrendous process: reorganisation; bloody hard work... So the reorganisation came just at the time ERA² was really (beginning) to get a grip; and whereas some of the systems development, which should have been on last year³ just got sucked up in events. We've now got superimposed on top of that the White Paper⁴ and whatever that may come to mean [Int 7].

One brief but informative reply was:

¹ Referring to the academic year 1989/90.

² The 1988 Education Reform Act, which was rapidly being implemented in its detail during this period.

³ Referring to the new computer systems (eg FEMIS) in the college - coming 'on stream'.

⁴ 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - the Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 1991.

Yes, it's dropped. It's gone from six to four as from the first September this year¹ and that is to do with cost and to do with effectiveness too...

enigmatically adding:

....and also personalities involved² [Int 8].

Starting succinctly: "Yes, absolutely.", another was questioned: "Up? Down?"

Down, yes.

Proceeding in somewhat scathing terms to explain:

When I first came here the senior management team meeting, you know, we needed a bigger office...

What we have now is an executive team which is just four; and there's a senior management team which includes (many others). So we've shrunk it, but we meet every week, we, meet at eight o'clock... in the morning³ [Int 11].

One principal put the point in a very straightforward manner:

Yes, it's got smaller. That's because it was too large before, nothing to do with ERA... It was too big because of the merger of the two colleges. We had a senior management team of thirteen and now it's down to eleven; and in the coming year⁴ it will

¹ Referring to 1st September 1991.

² No further explanation was forthcoming on this issue, but see full transcript on attached disk for possible clues.

³ The author detected and noted a somewhat 'pointed' and 'mischievous' twinkle in the respondent's eye when this explanation was advanced.

⁴ Referring to the academic year 1992/93.

probably drop to nine [Int 15].

On the other hand some college managements, though unvaried since ERA, either had previously altered or were in the process of planning future alterations:

No, but there's a possibility it's going down from four to three from next September¹ That's because the vice-principal (has changed his duties) and the academic director is retiring, so those two posts are going in together² [Int 6].

No, because I'd reorganised prior to ERA. I knew what was coming so I reorganised the college structure, operational from September '89 [Int 9].

No, not as a result of ERA... What ERA did for us was enable us to do it quickly, in good time³. I think one thing that's worrying me is whether or not we should look at our systems to see us through, to prepare (properly) for '93⁴ [Int 13].

¹ Referring to September 1992.

² A colloquial term meaning - being combined into a single post.

³ A general reference with the possible meaning: enabling the college to take decisions and action more speedily than hitherto; but might also have referred to an earlier part of the discussion about changes and developments in curriculum and the presentation of information (see full transcript on attached disk for further information).

⁴ A reference to the newly published White Paper 'Education and Training for the 21st Century - the Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 1991.

4.4.4.6.2 Changes from departments to college functional responsibilities

The general direction of management expertise within a departmental system was being seriously questioned at this time¹ and redirection was mentioned by some principals in response to this question². One, on being asked about this redirection: "Towards what: functional, matrix?", replied:

A kind of matrix, yes. I've got three heads of departments now... I'm going to make a head of student services, a head of marketing and business - business development that is, and a head of resources. The Vice-principal: personnel [Int 4].

By way of further explanation³, another pronounced:

Yes, we've reduced it... As a deliberate policy... Because my philosophy is fewer senior managers, but with good support⁴[Int 10].

4.4.4.6.3 Vice-principals' posts

Strong views were being expressed at the time of the survey about the need for vice-principals in colleges.

¹ See 'Managing Flexible College Structures 1: The Current Scene' Coombe Lodge Report Vol 21 No 2; part II 'Pressures for Change' FESC 1989. See also chapter 4.3.3.1 of thesis for information about the 1989 cohort college management structure status

² See also chapters 4.3.3.1 and 4.3.3.2 for further information about the progress of change from departments to other management systems recorded in 1989.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ Meaning the provision of administrative support staff.

Not all principals felt the same on the issue but the weight of opinion¹ against these appointments was such that record of these feelings was felt be essential. As one, hesitatingly, by way of general explanation, said:

... and then the questions which now we're addressing, with vice-principals' posts and what not, so I mean, I don't know the answers to those... [Int 1].

Another, when asked the follow-up question² : "Does this mean that you are doing away with the post of vice-principal as such?", replied:

Yes [Int2].

In another instance where a follow-up question was felt to be necessary³ : "And you implied you were going for a new VP?", attracted a very revealing reply:

That's right. I didn't want to, I didn't want a vice-principal; but the governors have decided they want a vice-principal⁴

The interviewee then went on to emphasise:

The vice-principal, though, that we are currently about to advertise will have specific responsibilities⁵ [Int 7].

One example of delegation of responsibility to a vice-principal, in addition to achieving other objectives, was given in the following comment:

The VP chairs that, deliberately⁶ ... There were lots

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ There were special circumstances surrounding this decision - for further information see full transcript on attached disk.

⁵ This comment pointedly reflected the deep resentment expressed by many principals about vice-principals' posts which did not have specific responsibilities attached to them (see full transcript on attached disk for further information).

of arguments about whether I should be there and chair it... I don't... because I want to see that there's a bit of democracy [Int 11].

Summing up a more general feeling, intimated in many other cases, one responded¹

In effect I've relatively demoted the VP in functional terms to being one of three specialist assistant managers. OK, he's deputy to me, when I need a deputy but that's relatively seldom.

Pursuing this theme, the author asked: "How do you feel about the position of VP now, in the new management set-up?", which prompted the stark reply:

If I hadn't got one I wouldn't appoint one, I'd have a third assistant principal [Int 14].

4.4.4.6.4 Responsibilities of teams

Senior management teams were at the peak of transition at the time of the research² and each team was the particular invention of the host college and its principal. This perspective was put strongly by the following interviewee

Well I've always operated with a senior management³ and that functions again I think⁴ ...because there are

⁶ Meaning the VP had deliberately been allocated the task - of chairing a college management committee of senior staff.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See also chapter 4.3.4.2 which showed that over 35% of colleges in 1989 included staff other than traditional senior staff in their senior management teams

³ Meaning a senior management team

⁴ This team was explained as undergoing change but not growth and occasionally included deputy heads of departments

heads of faculties and they make the decisions. And the idea that everybody had to agree, you know, I inherited that... when I came. When I came they didn't even keep notes or minutes of senior management... There was some idea that NATFHE¹ would get hold of the notes and make hay out of them or something, but I think those days are gone²[Int 5].

Describing the perceived philosophy of the senior management team, one recently appointed principal described an inherited situation:

What was in my predecessor's mind was to try and give a message that the management team are managers rather than academics [Int 7].

4.4.4.6.5 The principals' positions in the teams

Principals saw their roles within teams differently and from different points of view³ and, given the transitory nature of the service at the time, many inevitably saw this as an ephemeral role. As one frustratingly described, in response to the follow-up question: "You're saying really then, here, that you see the job that you are doing now, changing?":

I see my job as needing⁴ to change, and needing to

¹ The FE teachers' union (see figure 7.1.102 for further information on acronyms).

² This comment left intact the implication that there had been a problem of this nature in the past.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ The interviewee's emphasis.

change from the de facto position, where, when you leave now ¹ I will not do strategic things ... I do mopping up exercises on operational things... [Int 7].

Another slant on the way East Midlands principals directed management activity through teams was outlined in the following comment:

For instance some things I think should go in at a cross college basis before you put them into a programme area. Pilot things sometimes *Transient* teams. You need to form teams that come and go and so I left space in my structure for that [Int 9].

During another interview a slight digression afforded an outline of the freedoms felt by many² following the 1988 Act:

The first thing that I did when we got our freedom under ERA was to get rid of all the nonsense we had (with appointing) teaching support staff, whereby I couldn't upgrade somebody from scale one to scale two unless I went literally all the way to the chief executive...

Continuing with further comments about additional freedoms in another management context:

We now have site supervisors... they do everything, they look after the place. I don't have this thing about people throwing their mess on the grass (and the business of) I'm not picking it up³ that's

¹ Meaning - following this interview.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

all gone... But the lovely thing is, as long as we can find the money within the budget and get governors' approval we can do it, which, you know, wasn't there before [Int 13].

A report about the enthusiastic response to a principal's actions was contained in the reply:

The assistant principals have got a gain out of it but the reason they enthused about it is because they've got a clearly focused specialist task and the freedom and the full authority, as second in line to me, to do it [Int 14].

4.4.4.6.6 The middle-management tier in colleges

Many of the management structure changes in colleges involved the delegation of more day-to-day management to middle management¹:

and then having seven schools instead of three departments, with a head of school all on the management spine... [Int 4].

The unit that constitutes our regular Thursday meeting is now called the college management

³ It was clear from the context of the discussion that this attitude was struck by cleaning staff who did not see this as part of their job. (See full transcript on attached disk for further details)

¹ In further education these were the academic posts of senior lecturer or the lower reaches of the newly introduced management spine of remuneration gradings -previously principal lecturers. Posts which had invariably carried with them some management responsibility previously

committee and it includes everybody who's on the management spine [Int 7]

Well, it's got smaller it's gone down from seven to five. But things that senior management previously did I don't think they should have done, I've pushed them to middle-management and I've tapped a valuable seam of middle-management talent that was waiting to be tapped [Int 14].

4.4.4.7 Effectiveness of changes in college governing bodies and other college committees

Question **4.7** asked **Do any of the following function better/worse/same since ERA.. (i SMT) (ii Academic Board) (iii Governors) (iv Govs Advisory Committees)**

together with the rider: **4.7.1 In what ways are they better/worse.** Figure 7.1.467¹ illustrates generally the direction of their replies.

4.4.4.7.1 Other Factors affecting committees' effectiveness

During the discussions sixty per-cent [Ints 1,2,3,5,7,8,10,13,15] of those questioned argued that the 1988 Education Reform Act was not the sole factor effecting changes or generating improvements which had taken place in this context².

¹ See chapter 7 of thesis for details of figure.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Well it's not only the Act that's had the effect [Int 1].

I don't think it is due to the Education Reform Act [Int 3].

Well I wouldn't put the Academic Board decline down to ERA it has, frankly, disappeared ¹ [Int 13].

On being questioned further about the Academic Board: "Has that altered as a result of ERA?", one replied: "Yes, that's right." On the other hand, when asked: "You haven't changed the Advisory Committees? The Governors haven't decided that they would like something different?", responded:

No. We had² changed them, but nothing to do with ERA or the Governors [Int 15].

Reasons given for changes varied but included similar strands of reasoning, encapsulated in the following comments:

On SMT it's not so much the Act as our own reorganisation that's had a significant effect... Academic Board - again whether it's to do with ERA or not, but the function of the academic board is different. It's difficult to say whether it's yet better or worse, it certainly is different; because now my academic board is exercising much less of what it used to do: a management function, of interfering with management; and now the focus is very much more towards the academic board having a quality control

¹ There were sardonic overtones in this response which were communicated in the timbre of the conversation (See full transcript on attached disk for further information).

² The interviewee's emphasis, implying that changes had been made some time before the 1988 Act.

function in terms of academic planning, of reviewing,
evaluating plans and what we do. Does that make sense? [Int 1].

One interviewee, speaking about the senior management team in this context
said:

I think it's due to the fact that we got together as a
group and decided we needed to work together; and we
went on some team building courses and things of that
nature [Int 3].

By way of explanation of a more effective SMT another respondent commented:

I wouldn't have said it's because of ERA actually, you
know, I think it's just (that) times are such that you
have to be more efficient [Int 5].

A further explanation about the operation of a college senior management team
included the enigmatic rejoinder¹:

Well it's functioning better now but I don't know
whether that's to with the Education Reform Act
or to do with the loss of certain people [Int 8].

Discussions about 'other factors' affecting the functioning of governors' advisory
committees provoked the following remarks:

We altered them but not as a result of ERA. We'd
altered them two or three years ago² [Int 10].

We've aligned them more closely to the vocational needs

¹ Further information about this response may be found in the full transcript on
the attached disk.

² The interviews took place in 1991, dating the alterations at face value at about
1988 or 1989. The remark, therefore, possibly meant two or three years before
ERA.

of the college¹ [Int 15].

4.4.4.7.2 Effectiveness of changes of senior management teams²

Over three-quarters of the interviewees claimed that their SMTs functioned better since ERA³, although some respondents grouped committees together in succinct replies:

Now I believe that SMT, Academic Board and Governors are all functioning better at the moment than I believe they did [Int 7].

I would say that all of them are better frankly, I can say that fairly clearly. They're better because we don't feel, all of them, that we've got other people to refer to as much, but we know what we're doing is ours [Int 10].

And another point of view:

SMT and Academic Board - no difference [Int 4].

Focusing on the SMT, one respondent replied hesitatingly: "I don't (think) ERA has affected SMT perhaps" [Int 2]. Others were laconically less equivocal:

SMT - much better [Int 14].

Senior management team operates better... [Int 3]

Senior management team, that's working more effectively [Int 5].

Most respondents were more informative in their replies:

¹ Taken to mean : more closely allied to departments or other vocational programme delivery mechanisms.

² A group, advisory to the principal, usually comprising principal, vice-principal, CAO and heads of the academic departments or their equivalent.

³ See figure 7.1.467 in chapter 7 of thesis for further details.

I think the senior management team functions better because it's got a lot more to do and it's got to make decisions¹ [Int 6].

Several claimed high degrees of success as a corollary of their new found freedoms:

SMT works a lot better because we feel we can do something now [Int 11].

With regard to ERA, I think the senior management team (is) probably better because we've focused on certain issues more clearly, we understand our responsibilities better [Int 15].

In another case success was attributed to new SMT appointments using different job criteria:

Well the senior management have been interviewed and appointed on the basis that the college is a business, providing an education service. They were not appointed on that basis before and they did not wish to subscribe to it; a significant number² of the senior managers [Int 8].

Further attempts to change management attitudes were exemplified in the response³:

Well, I've been trying to shape my senior management team into a corporate management team and I have to

¹ Implying that SMTs did not make 'decisions' before ERA.

² The interviewee's emphasis.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further examples.

admit that I have not succeeded very well... I still think there's too much of still working for their own programme area and not working across¹ [Int 9].

4.4.4.7.3 Effectiveness of changes of academic boards²

More than half of those questioned saw improvements in the effectiveness of their academic boards since ERA. Few principals saw little or no change in their effectiveness³:

Academic board - I don't think there's any real change in the academic board working since ERA [Int 3].

The academic board - I've never quite known how they function⁴...but there's no change really [Int 6].

An interesting case was described in one interview where little improvement in academic performance was initially reported: "The same. Almost the same." However, on being pressed on this issue: "What about academic board? Is it the same as before ERA or different?", replied:

Well of course the questions you ask me are very difficult because the college was put together at the time all this was taking place anyway⁵. It is no

¹ Meaning: not adopting a collegiate attitude and taking a cross-college role within the senior management team meetings.

² A group, comprising senior college management, librarian and elected college staff and students (See DES Circulars 7/70 Annex Section 4; and 9/88 Section 3 for further details).

³ See figure 7.1.467(B) in chapter 7 for further details.

⁴ This was a flippantly presented remark, which insinuated critical undertones (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

different from...¹ Members of the academic board
come from all directorates and the academic board
is open to all members of staff.

This comment was pressed further: "To see the meetings taking place, do you mean, or to attend?"², bringing the retort:

To attend. All the committee meetings in the college
are open to everybody, and I don't think there have
been any votes yet, so it's no different actually. People
who attend are no different from...³ they can speak [Int 12].

Most respondents, however, reported changes⁴; some in a forthright manner:

It's difficult to persuade some members of the academic
board that the world's changed, but there you go [Int 1].
I hope it's⁵ affected the academic board because I had
a pretty moribund board before that didn't meet, so
there's an opportunity to have a new board that isn't,
and has some real functions; and, I think, is an
improvement [Int 2].

Academic board is operating better but... it's academic

⁵ Meaning : during the period leading to enactment and implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act.

¹ A deliberate pause implying : no different from previous academic boards in the college prior to re-organisation, or perhaps academic boards in other colleges.

² The author's emphases, meaning: as observers only or as full members of the board.

³ Another deliberate pause implying : no different from the 'members' of the board - thereby suggesting a differential between those present at meetings.

⁴ See figure 7.1.467 in chapter 7 of thesis for further details.

⁵ Meaning the 1988 Education Reform Act.

advisory¹ board and, therefore, it's become less of a political arena; and I think it's functioning better than it used to. It has a clearer role as an advisory body.

This point was pursued a little further: "You talked about your NATFHE² branch earlier³, as being sharp and so on, are they still pushing for executive status⁴ ...?", bringing the response:

No, not here. I think they've accepted that ERA actually says it's an advisory board.

Further supplementary questioning on this issue drew the following, strongly held, generally supported⁵, principal's view:

Because, I mean, I'm as much a democrat - well perhaps not as much now as I used to be - but I believe in democracy. But, in the end, if something goes wrong in this college the (person) who gets the sack's me. I carry the responsibility and I don't see why I have to follow group decisions. I really genuinely try and listen to what people say because they're an intelligent, articulate and knowledgeable bunch who work here; but in the end, if it's a disputed decision or there's a variety of different views, then it goes what I want [Int 5].

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² See table 7.1.102 for further details about acronyms.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ Meaning the status of the academic board.

⁵ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

One interviewee injected the reminder that not all colleges previously had academic boards, emphasising again the advisory status of the newly formed board:

The academic board, we didn't have one before the Education Reform Act.

The supplementary question: "Do you have one now? Advisory?" induced the response:

Advisory, yes [Int 8].

The question of advisory, as opposed to executive, status of the academic board was stressed by a number of principals interviewed¹, this viewpoint being strongly accentuated in the following discussion: "Is your academic board advisory?":

Yes, it always has been. Only deals with educational matters. Yes, it's academic and I refuse to listen to it².

It's never actually been raised³, but I'm absolutely clear that we were only there to deal with academic matters.

Pursuing this point, the author asked: "And you've never been challenged on that?", brought the terse retort: "Right" [Int 10], an attitude reinforced in the comment:

The academic board is definitely better because we have used the Articles and Instrument of Government to say what should the academic board really be doing⁴; and it

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Meaning : when it engages in issues deemed to be management prerogatives.

³ Meaning : a formal request for a change to executive status.

should be just monitoring the academic progress of students [Int 15].

The wholesale change of an academic board was described in the following candid statement:

Academic board, not applicable... I, in effect, let it lapse for the last twelve months because it was constituted on departmental representational grounds; and we've just agreed... a reconstitution to reflect the new organisation. But I have to say I'm not convinced we'd suffer greatly if we didn't have an academic board [Int 14].

Responses also reflected forlorn hopes and aspirations:

Academic board, I had great hopes for it. Other people told me: the constitution really means it's really a nonentity. Someone said to me: if you weight your academic board with management - which the constitution does - nothing to do with us¹, you're just really having a repeat run at something² aren't you? But the union in the college, when it was first mooted, said that they weren't wasting their time on academic boards [Int 9].

Difficulties about answering this question were expressed by one interviewee:

Academic board - of all the questions, I find that one most difficult to answer.

⁴ For further information see DES Circular 9/88 Annex - Section 3.4 and Note iii.

¹ Using a constitution agreed with the DES in the Articles and Instruments of Government (See DES Circular No 9/88 para 3.2).

² Implying that the board repeated business already dealt with in the SMT.

And, on being prompted: "Is it advisory or executive, or...?", replied:

It's advisory... decisions these days have got to be taken so much quicker and so much more responsive... we tend to focus more on quality issues now... But I find that difficult¹, I don't know how academic board fits in with things [Int 11].

Perhaps the most telling remark in this section came in the response:

It meets once a term because I have to have it once a term.

And questioned: "It's presumably advisory?" retorted:

Oh absolutely. But I didn't understand why it was kept in², because it really is old hat isn't it? [Int 13].

4.4.4.7.4 Effectiveness of changes of governing bodies³

Nearly three-quarters of the sample felt that there had been improvements in the functioning of the governing bodies in their colleges since ERA⁴. Again, many of those interviewed wished to embellish their responses, although some replied briefly:

Governors, much better [Int 14].

The governors, there's a different atmosphere in the

¹ Referring back to the original question.

² Referring to it being retained in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

³ A group, comprising elected or appointed local councillors, business people and college staff and students (See DES Circulars 7/70 paras 3-5; 8/88 Section 2 paras 13-30 and Annex; and 9/88 paras 4.11 and 4.12.

⁴ See figure 7.1.467(C) in chapter 7 for further details.

governing body [Int 4].

The governors I think are getting to grips with things, but it's how much still you want the governors to know and do, I think [Int 6].

Detailed explanations accompanied many replies:

The governors are definitely better, because it's got smaller for a start. We used to have about thirty-five to forty and it's twenty now, and the governors are very committed [Int 15].

One principal acknowledged this major change in the hierarchy of colleges with the remark:

Governors - that's a big one¹. I think with a new governing body, new members, and a change of membership since then², oh, I've got to say that's better. We've a long way to go but it's certainly pointing in a far better direction. (There's a) greater understanding and involvement of governors in what we're about... rather than just being occasional visitors. There was a fair bit of new blood, certainly amongst the employment interest governors [Int 1].

Another slant to thoughts about changes was given in the reply:

There was some local kudos in being a governor of the college, it was a very chummy organisation, and I think perhaps it functions more effectively now [Int 2].

¹ Meaning a big question.

² Meaning : new constitution, new people and reduction in size since ERA.

Training for governors¹ was mentioned in this context and among replies were the comments:

The governors, it's linked up with their training really, I mean, I think they feel they want to do their best for the college. A number of them went on training courses dutifully but they do not have the time to learn about the college... and there is a very real problem: that there are some very able people who have some very senior positions² who come along to governors' meetings [Int 8].

Strong feelings were expressed on the subject of governors' training³ as illustrated in the following remarks:

Training... I've a very clear view about this... if you put a training programme to governors,

- A. it demands their time,
- B. it demands their interest, and
- C. it demands their ability to apply what they've learned by training to the real world. I think the business of the governors itself is a developmental process, and I think it's much more important to see governors being developed and supported rather than trained. I think there is a place for training but I think if you gear it only to a training programme it'll founder,

¹ See DES Circular 8/88 paras 34 & 35 for further details.

² Meaning senior positions in industry and commerce.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

and I think there is evidence enough that it is foundering [Int 1].

The efforts of governors, as were their problems, were keenly appreciated by those interviewed¹:

The governors are clearly taking a much more active role in the management of the college. But I still say the great majority of the governors do no more than come two or three times a year. Attendances have improved but I still think that the governors are too large² [Int 13].

4.4.4.7.5 The emergence of finance & general purposes (F&GP) committees³

Synonymous with replies about governing bodies were comments and commendations about Finance and General Purposes committees⁴:

...the big thing that's changed is my finance and general purposes committee. There's a hard attitude coming through from the industrialists [Int 4].

We're lucky, we've got a highly responsible governing body and I think they're working better since LMC⁵

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Meaning that the number allocated to the governing body by the Instrument of Government is too large (See DES Circular 8/88 paras 13 & 14).

³ Small group of governors and the college principal, appointed by the governing body to advise and/or take decisions on behalf of the governing body. (For further information see the 1988 Education Reform Act part II section 152 (5b); and DES Circular 9/88 Annex section 4).

⁴ These committees had existed in many colleges before the ERA but the Act had lent more impetus to them offering colleges opportunities to use them as executive arms of governing bodies.:

and we've certainly got a quite superb F & GP committee with three very good employers with a lot of finance and business sense generally [Int 3].

Allying this line of thought to the wider governors' scene:

Well I think they have become much more knowledgeable, have much more say. They do a lot of their work through the finance and GP committee of course, so I think a group of them have become extremely knowledgeable, and executive.

This prompted the question: "What's the general feeling of the governors and others about such a small group of people as F & GP having such power, as it were?",

Well I was amazed... they said: if we delegate, we delegate [Int 9].

Reflecting on governors' committees, in a laterally thought out statement, one replied:

the one that really works is F & GP and I couldn't work without that one really... because you need governor approval for quite a lot of things, although it's just approval, don't you? They're fairly committed governors actually, which is good news. I don't know really, I have concerns about governing bodies altogether. I know they've got to be there and everything but I just wonder if... certainly once we get to 1993¹ and we've got to have all sort of

⁵ See figure 7.1.102 for details of acronyms.

¹ Referring to the newly published White Paper proposals (See 'Education & Training for the 21st Century - The Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 1991).

companies all over the place.. Once they're totally responsible I feel they'll need to be involved anyway, more and more, and I just don't know how long we can go with unpaid directors really... so I can't see any way round it [Int 11].

The feelings of most¹ were touched on in the following statement:

In terms of finding enough people who will really actively participate.² I think in most colleges the finance and general purposes committee has in fact become that, hasn't it? That's the thing that meets for about three or four times a term. It does make the decisions... and it's well attended [Int 13].

4.4.4.7.6 Effectiveness of changes in governors' advisory committees³

Many of the less flattering, sometimes overtly critical, remarks were reserved for the aspects of the question dealing with governors' advisory committees. These invariably advised the principal or heads of departments about small sections of the colleges' work and were often only tenuously associated⁴ with governing bodies⁵

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A number of reports expressed doubts about finding committed governors in sufficient quantity (See chapter 2 of thesis for further information).

³ Groups, varying in size, constitution, purpose and allegiance; mainly comprised of invited local business and professional people, college staff and students.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁵ See DES Circular 7/59 of 10 August 1959 and Addendum No 1 of that Circular dated 7 September 1961; and DES Circular 7/70 of 14 April 1970 (which superseded the above) Annex section 3, for further information about governors' committees prior to ERA.

Disappointment about these committees before ERA was regularly expressed during the interviews¹.

The advisory committees are in the process of being established so I'm hoping they're going to function better for us... They'll be a different combination, again reflecting the changes in the industry that we're working with... each one chaired by an industrial governor [Int 6].

Another scathing observation came in the remark:

and then on the sub-committees² there are the retired people who have the greatest difficulty in understanding and remembering anything about the way the college works; and I really do object to the amount of time that I spend on that, nannying old fuddy-duddies, well, I think it is appalling [Int 8].

An abrupt and direct response came in the form:

We don't have advisory committees. We don't have them, they've been abolished³ [Int 12].

A more encouraging picture was portrayed in the comments:

Governors' advisory committees I think are better because we've got the captains of industry in those areas chairing those... well I call them consultative

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details

² Referring to the governors' advisory committees.

³ No further information was forthcoming at this juncture but see full transcript on attached disk for further background details.

committees. I try to ...actually involve them [Int 14].

Various forms of consultation and advice were pursued through these changed college structures:

Advisory committees - we don't have them any more. What we do have is a sub-structure of governors' sub-committees that touch on: well F & GP obviously, we've got marketing, personnel and academic affairs... And everything is better in a sense, rather than worse ¹ [Int 1]

And certainly the advisory committees are far more effective... than they ever were before. We have (changed the actual style of them), one formal meeting a year... the chairman is a member of the governing body ²They have a set of targets which they identify for themselves, and they'll do an annual report to governors based on those targets. As long as they have their one meeting they can meet in any other form they wish, and hopefully they will link with divisions as division consultative committees [Int 2].

Advisory committees - well, oh dear... they still exist, we changed them, I took the opportunity to change them because I had far too many. I have a curriculum monitoring one which meets twice a year, sites and buildings that meets three times a year [Int 11].

¹ A personal style of figurative speech meaning perceived improvement.

² Meaning: in each case respectively.

The governors advisory committees I think have got better. I think it's just us making them work better... Where we've failed in the past is that they've just been talking shops where we talked to the governors about what we've done and look at our results and all the rest of it. Now we're trying to change that and that's not easy... whereby each member of the consultative committee is associated with a course team. We also get the TEC to sit on the consultatives and give us updates on what's happening with the ET and YT¹ and what have you, and the careers service, people like that chip in. We're trying to make the committee an active working committee, bearing in mind that it's voluntary [Int 15].

Less formality was introduced into these committees in a number of cases²

The advisory committees are working a great deal better. With totally restructured advisory committees, we don't have now the four large unwieldy very formal committees that we used to have before. We've now got thirteen small intimate committees that have a staff governor, three employers... teachers and students...much closer to the curriculum... meeting in a much more relaxed informal atmosphere [Int 3].

Governors' advisory committees have disappeared... being replaced here by... steering groups - they don't

¹ See figure 7.1.102 for details of acronyms.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

have a formula... not necessarily coterminous with divisional boundaries... governors setting them up as essentially delegated to the divisional managers [Int 7].

4.4.4.7.7 Some miscellaneous views about college committees

The question drew many perspectives about the colleges' committee system out of the fullness of the views supplied, starting with a satisfied comment at progress already achieved before ERA ¹

I've got three (advisory committees)... I think they're about the same... because we were well along the road with delegation [Int 4].

Difficulties encountered with the sheer volume of work in preparing for college committee meetings was outlined in the following response:

Governors' advisory committees... are being re-established... which governors can be involved in if they wish... to do with vocational areas. But I find now, one of the problems is, you know, if F & GP meets twice a term, the personnel group meets at least twice a term, full governors meets once or twice a term, then the academic advisory board, I can go from one meeting to another. It can be self defeatist, because, I mean, who prepares the agendas for them all - yes, that's right, me. I have the major input and inevitably I provide the papers that

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details..

go with them and it's a hell of a work load [Int 5].

One respondent pointed out the necessity of pitching advice at the correct levels:

Governors advisory committees? Well as I say, I put a paper to the governing body just after ERA... advising them which way they could go... The advisory committees that are there I think are all going moribund because I think the alternative model is proving us right..because I think the advisory function is being more integrated, at the right level.

Asked: "How do you mean?", the principal replied:

Well you see, sometimes you might ask somebody from a firm to come and sit and be your advisory person. One of our governors (says) he wasn't always the right person to go in and advise the director of science and technology... You might do better with a training officer going in at that level to advise you on your curriculum... [Int 9].

Variations on this principle were also used in other colleges ¹

The governors advisory committees? ... We have introduced the idea of college visitors. That is, that each governor will be attached to a department, so that gives the governor a constituency if you like.

That's had a mixed success. Some of them have been conscientious, some²... [Int 14].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² The body language clearly conveyed the message: "not so".

4.4.4.8 Support received by colleges since ERA from LEA, HMI, RAC, exam boards and NCVO

Question **4.8 What sort of support since ERA do you get from LEA, HMI, RAC, Exam boards, NCVO** was analysed and figure 7.1.468¹ was constructed from the responses.

4.4.4.8.1 LEA support for colleges

Only 27% of those interviewed perceived their local education authorities (LEAs) as being supportive during the post-ERA period², although many differentiated between the types of support required and that offered. Not much confidence was displayed in the tersely worded rejoinder:

The LEA, I would say, is not much better overall and in some areas is probably worse than in the past [Int 3].

Few interviewees responded as pithily as:

LEA - Less [Int 9].

This was further explained in the barely complimentary comments:

The support from the LEA was quite good but is rapidly decreasing, they're losing interest but that's 1993 not ERA, that's the White Paper³ [Int 4].

I suppose it's reducing because their role is reduced...

¹ See chapter 7 of thesis for details of figure.

² See figure 7.1.468 in chapter 7 for further details.

³ Referring to the recently published White Paper 'Education & Training for the 21st Century - Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 DES 1991.

I don't think we get the same contact with LEA officers as we did in the past. That could be because the Director is not replacing anyone who leaves the FE sector¹ for obvious reasons at the moment [Int 6].

Some LEAs were, however, somewhat tenacious in their control of colleges²:

The support from the LEA is still good, in some cases perhaps it's still over-supportive. Some people, perhaps, at the LEA have not actually realised the changes that are taking place... Education people are having difficulties, I think, in accepting the changes [Int 2].

Others reported that realisation of the new and proposed systems had reluctantly been accepted by their LEAs:

I think they³ actually perceive that they don't have the clout they thought they once had... that they did.

I would say it was a mess [Int 12].

The perceived failure of LEAs to deliver a supportive service to colleges was stressed in the following replies:

I don't think the LEA have been in a huge position to give us support from ERA. And certainly if you were to identify two things that the principals' group would say the LEA had spectacularly failed to do: ...to reorganise their own financial systems to let us get on

¹ Meaning the Director of Education was not replacing any personnel in the LEA Further Education section.

² This response mirrored a fairly widespread feeling - see full transcript on attached disk for further information.

³ Meaning the local authority and its officers.

with our job, and they are spectacularly failing to deliver the strategic planning which they are required to do¹ [Int 7].

Taking up the point about strategic planning and describing a veritable montage of LEA support, one replied:

From the LEA - patchy, but you're asking (what) sort² of support. Very good support in terms of personnel matters, continuing earnest support from officers. I think they don't know anything about strategic planning as such yet, and they're still not very good at it, and that has had an effect. Good support from internal audit, not very good support from county treasurers' and so on. So, it's a bit of a mixed picture that one[Int 1].

Another starkly stated:

LEA - No change. Services on the whole are poor.

Asked: "Is this a lack of officers, or a lack of commitment from officers, or...?"; attracted the reply: "Both." Pursuing this line, the interviewee was subsequently asked: "Lack of interest from politicians or...?"; which brought the more elaborate and obviously cynical reply:

As far as the officers are concerned, there is a lack of officers in the FE branch; and then if we think about educational personnel and treasurers, for example, then they have always run bureaucracies to

¹ See 1988 Education Reform Act Chapter III of Part II paras 139 and 140; and DES Circular 9/88 Part I paras 1.3 and 1.4.

² Interviewee's emphasis.

maintain the power centrally [Int 8].

Further cynicism was projected in the disillusioned remarks:

LEA - I would say it's declined in quantity and quality and it's focused largely on strategic framework. It's been one of the disappointments. The attitude that's being taken is delegation almost means abdication.

Where we've made this point we've been told don't be silly [Int 14].

Explained pragmatically and less abrasively:

LEA - well I think we've got to say less now, inevitably because they have delegated to us a range of functions [Int 15].

4.4.4.8.2 HMI support for colleges

Brief, but politely condemnatory, replies accompanied this part of the question relating to support received from Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI):

HMI - support? Not really. I like our HMI, get on very well with him, comes in occasionally, but I wouldn't say (he gives us any) support [Int 4].

Well HMI certainly have done nothing for this college in terms of responding to ERA, except come and ask me questions [Int 7].

HMI - Well he hasn't come yet. The college HMI will phone up towards the end of September and let me know a day that he would like to come; and he will come; and

he will go away. I don't know what he does in between[Int 8].

This kind of response was echoed in nearly all replies¹, which were probably best summed up in the following exasperated statements:

HMI - Well, do you really want an answer? I don't know what they do. I've no idea what they do at all now, I really don't [Int 11].

An element of compassion creeping into one reply:

HMI is not what it was. HMI used to be great. They were the best (sort of) support... And now they just come and do the odd survey and the college inspector is somebody I may see once year; whereas in days gone by he would know you, he would know all your staff, and it's not so any more. That's not their fault... their role has changed [Int 13].

An attempt at understanding arose in another dispassionate explanation:

HMI - I don't think they have been particularly supportive... HMI for a long time have just been on the edge haven't they. I mean, they come up with reports and they can be useful now and again.

The author, pursuing this point, asked: "Do you sense from your position that their job has actually been altered for them recently?", resulting in the comment:

Well I think there's been an attempt to sharpen them up hasn't there, judging by the White Paper²; but

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² 'Education & Training for the 21st Century - The Challenge to Colleges' Volumes 1 & 2 1991.

they're always stretched and they don't have the power they used to have. Largely because people don't perceive them as having the power they had before [Int 5].

Tolerance was a reaction expressed in another reproachful response:

HMI - well we see HMI so seldom. I think they're pleasant people to talk to... I'm happy to chat to an HMI on the infrequent basis that they come, which is two or three times a year [Int 14].

4.4.4.8.3 RAC support for colleges

Enforced business-orientated changes to the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) for the East Midlands (EMFEC)¹ were alluded to consistently in the exchanges and conciseness was again a hallmark of replies²:

Regional Advisory Council - well of course EMFEC's changing. I mean the old RAC as such is nothing now... and whether or not the new style EMFEC as a business will succeed will very largely, I think, depend on the quality of what it can offer to colleges [Int 1].

By way of additional explanation another said:

It's got to become a company that actually sells services like exams, staff development and things like that.

The follow-up question: "Progressing well do you think, or with difficulty?", provoked the somewhat evasive reply:

¹ East Midlands Further Education Council.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

I mean, I've supported it thoroughly for all sorts of reasons, I wouldn't like to be held to the fact that they'll still be there in five years time [Int 2].

Equally damning was the faintly-praising remark:

...nothing very significant there, some staff development, sort of curriculum events which they are organising, which I think are quite useful; but I would say no major impact since Education Reform Act [Int 3].

Its implied demise was presumed in the exclamation:

RAC - well that's just about given up the ghost, certainly as far as (we are) concerned [Int 6].

And even less ambiguously summed up¹ in the comments:

Regional Advisory Council, I haven't got one really [Int 9].

RAC - No. I mean, that's changed.

This was pursued a little further: "Is it changing for the better or is it...?", attracting the more revealing reply:

Well I don't know. It's become a company you see, so we shall see. I would say they've provided some support in running the odd course sort of things, but not as much as they should have done; and that's what hopefully we'll² be changing [Int 10].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Implying that college managements were steering the reforms to the RAC.

4.4.4.8.4 Exam boards' support for colleges

Principals did not indicate any expectations of support from examinations boards¹ during this period, nor did they disclose forthcoming support:

No. I think we just work with them really [Int 11].

A coldly derisive response perhaps epitomised the reaction of most to this question²:

Exam boards - I haven't noticed any difference [Int 12].

Harshly critical comments included:

Examination boards - well they're a pain. Examination boards are only concerned about themselves... and all they seem to do is pile more and more work upon individual members of staff, without any proper recognition of what it entails.

Asked: "Is it lack of resources or is it attitude?", the interviewee replied:

It's attitudes. I think they all think they've got to keep on changing the ship all the time... and they make too many demands [Int 5].

In a particular context one respondent made a heartfelt invocation:

Exam boards. BTEC drive me insane because they're very late in producing documents and guide-lines and when they do come out they are subject to interpretation [Int 8].

¹ This was interpreted by most to mean BTEC, City & Guilds and RSA.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further information.

These arguments were supported more generally¹ in the mildly mischievous comment:

Exam boards - I can't think that they've changed dramatically, or noticeably. I think they're being driven by other forces. I think they've become very commercial... they'd do anything for a buck wouldn't they basically... I get very cynical about it [Int 15].

4.4.4.8.5 NCVQ support for colleges

This rapidly developing and strongly government-supported organisation, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was regarded sceptically in this survey which uncovered some concern within colleges about the Council's proposals :

NCVQ - well that's like looking into the darkness that is. Pass!² Although, of course the implications of the White Paper³ on that one are not insignificant.

Asked: "There's a lot of government push behind this isn't there...?", the respondent replied:

Well, Education's dragging its' heels on NCVQ... I suspect it's losing some of the educational values. In a nutshell, that's the concern [Int 1].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A reference to a currently popular television programme in which intellectual contenders responded to unknowns with the reply: 'pass'.

³ 'Education & Training for the 21st Century... DES 1991'

Speaking for many others one retorted:

NCVQ - Oh my God! That is the one that (is) the most difficult situation at the moment. I find myself, and many other people, totally confused about the way forward there, and the strategy.

Going on to explain:

...you've really got to treat each part of the college almost as a separate entity in relation to what NVQ¹ in that area is demanding, and it's very difficult.

Probing this avenue further: "So there's a communications problem, but are there also differences (between) perception (and) expectation?", attracted the reply:

Yes. And it has not yet been sold to employers².

Absolutely totally unknown in many areas [Int 2].

Returning to the question of support for colleges, one offered the reminder:

On NCVQ, again support is not the word. I would say tremendous changes taking place and we ourselves are going through a lot of staff development activity in NVQ... I see us putting a lot of the work in and not necessarily getting a great deal of support [Int 3].

A different perspective was put on this aspect by another principal:

N(C)VQ have done nothing to support ERA's implementation but of course they are, and I suppose you could call this support, beginning to have considerable effects on the assessment side of things,

¹ National Vocational Qualification.

² Meaning: the concept had not been fully explained to them.

and what we expect to be the threats of the (sixth forms) [Int 7].

Exceptionally sceptical views of the Council were purveyed in some comments:

"It's the same with NCVQ¹, they don't really want to

listen to FE they want to dictate, don't they [Int 5]",

and a counterpoint [Int 6], similarly comparing: "...nor with NCVQ really, I

don't think they have been directly influenced by ERA ". Or, as another [Int 8]

put it: "...they seem to leave you floundering ".

4.4.4.9 Principals' perceptions of what recently had affected their colleges

The question **4.9 What recently has most affected your college...** encouraged no single issue to rise to the surface. Six major areas emerged and are outlined in figure 7.1.469².

4.4.4.9.1 The perceived effects of ERA³ upon colleges

In one case the answer was simple and straightforward:

Well ERA must have done really, and the change of philosophy that it brought,

adding a rider:

and the change in the industries with which we are associated, that's the biggest effect [Int 6].

¹ An analogy drawn with examining boards.

² See chapter 7 for details of figure.

³ ERA in the minds of most also covered the whole gamut of delegated budgets, staffing and the new responsibilities confronting FE managements as a result of the Act.

Finance was uppermost in most principals' minds at the time¹ and this came through in the following reply:

What's most affecting me is the worry about the fact that our finance is now tied to student numbers, which can fluctuate quite markedly and even if we tried very hard, with the failing rolls that are still occurring I still think we'll decline. I think we're going to have problems in dealing with a substantial reduction as a consequence [Int 4].

Bowing to the inevitable as one comprehended:

Well I suppose it's the budget isn't it;

Then, proceeding, broached a particular aspect which touched a raw nerve:

...having to make people redundant.

Sensing the innuendo to follow this line of discussion the author asked: "How much worry has that caused in the college?", which prompted the unexpected reply:

Well human nature's a funny thing isn't it and so people get all very steamed up and worked up and then it's: Oh thank God it's not to me, and back the ostrich is... [Int 8].

Another reluctant acceptance of this factor emerged in a different, not untypical² slant to the theme:

Well I think ERA, there's no doubt about that; the delegated budget. If your not careful, you spend all

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

your time on that. The balance, as I put a paper recently to someone, the challenge is keeping a balance between, if you like, running an entrepreneurial college but keeping a balance about your educational philosophies and values. Very difficult. And I'm not sure that you eventually...¹ something has to go [Int 9].

4.4.4.9.2 The perceived effects of reorganisation² upon colleges

Many principals had recently reorganised their management structures within colleges³ and this was still a source of concern in some cases⁴ as indicated in the following response:

Reorganisation, recently, without a doubt.

Then proceeding to outline what had become for many a serious challenge to their planning procedures⁵:

But more positively than that, and again it's not in a sense of arrogance or what, but I think we know what the business is about, and I suspect that many colleges yet haven't caught up with that: I think in terms of putting up our own corporate plan - three year corporate plan, one year business plan, which we've now updated for the

¹ A pause which strongly implied : give in to budget demands; but equally, could have meant: fall between two stools.

² Referring to internal reorganisation of the management structures in colleges.

³ See chapter 4.4.4.6 for further information.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁵ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

second year, shows that this college knows what planning is about [Int 1].

It was difficult for most to differentiate between the various challenges facing colleges at this time and even more difficult for some to choose just one¹:

Reorganisation and obviously delegated budgetary control, which has come but hasn't been fully implemented for reasons we've discussed earlier², including the LEA's own bit of it... Our reorganisation threw the college into turmoil... The curriculum aspects of the college have taken a back seat. I mean, my judgment, and certain colleagues, is that I think the affairs of two or three years are very systems efficiency orientated, and when we come out of that we'll get back to the quality orientated things, doing what the college wants to concentrate on [Int 7].

Embracing this topic with a concise reply one stated:

Curricular changes without the slightest doubt [Int 12].

4.4.4.9.3 The perceived effects of the 1991 White Paper³ upon colleges

Combining the effects of the 1988 Education Reform Act with the currently released 1991 White Paper one responded:

I would say it's the combination of the previous

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991'

freedom and the White Paper, the two combined, in terms of our land and buildings; because if I want to do what I'm supposed to do now: give a vision of the college, I can only do that in the context of where we are and in what buildings... [Int 10].

Straight to the point came the next unembellished reply:

I think the thing that's most affected my college is the White Paper, without any doubt at all [Int 11].

Equally directly:

Nineteen-ninety-three¹ - absolutely.

Pursuing this point the author prompted: "What about if it doesn't come off, sort of thing. I mean, how much apprehension is there about it faltering, or is everybody feeling: this is it?", brought the confident response:

No, I'm convinced... as far as we're concerned it's 1993 and it's coming too quickly. We're doing our best to keep up but I think we would all prefer it to be 1994 [Int 15].

4.4.4.9.4 The perceived effects of NVQ/APL² upon colleges

The issue of assessment and accreditation was to the forefront of many principals' minds at this time³ and some thought it high enough on the list of

¹ Referring to the changes in legislation proposed in the 1991 White Paper to take effect from 1993.

² Implicit in the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) question was the whole issue of assessment and accreditation of prior learning (APL).

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

priorities to include it in their response to this question. Adding to the initial comments:

I think the biggest thing that's affected our college - three big things - I think the whole thing about income generation as a cultural shift, is one of the biggest factors affecting this college... It isn't any longer a bolt-on luxury. The other major areas are things like NVQ¹ and accreditation of prior learning. They are new modes of thinking and there is a wholesale shift in the institution towards those activities [Int 3].

An uncertain start to the question came in the response²:

I actually couldn't tell you. I think we've responded to different things as appropriate; I don't think any one has affected us more than anything else.

Then, as if recapturing an evasive thought, continued:

Except that for the average member of staff it's been the changes within examination boards, responses to NVQ I suppose [Int 5].

¹ See also chapter 4.4.4.8.5 for further information.

² This sort of hesitancy was typical of many replies, reflecting the breadth of new initiatives impacting on the sector at this time.

4.4.4.9.5 The perceived effects of growth upon colleges

Growth having been the hallmark of the further education sector for so many years¹ was still causing concern to many colleges during the period of the research². One aspect of this was touched on by an interviewee:

I think the big thing is the increasing participation
in post-sixteen³ [Int 13].

Or, put very succinctly:

Growth basically that we've engineered for ourselves...⁴ [Int 14].

4.4.4.9.6 The perceived effects of staff training upon colleges

This topic was mentioned in several different contexts during the course of the interviews⁵ and, after a hesitant start here, was referred to as a major concern:

It's hard to say. I think perhaps the biggest single
event would be the reduction in in-service training. It
was reduced by fifty per-cent this year... cut to
£60,000 this year... and that's a very interesting
change. There's all sorts of...⁶ in the way we develop

¹ See chapter 2 for further information. (See also figures 7.1.274, 7.1.275 and 7.1.276 for details of growth).

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Meaning the increasing numbers of young people staying on in schools and colleges beyond the age of sixteen.

⁴ Meaning : due to the marketing and entrepreneurial activities of the college.

⁵ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁶ An indecipherable phrase, but the sense of the argument is apparent from the general surrounding text (see full text on attached disk) meaning: techniques or manoeuvres.

and how we afford to develop.

Pressed to respond further: "And it pales a lot of these others into insignificance?"¹, answered simply:

Yes [Int 2].

4.4.4.9.7 The perceived effects of age profiles upon colleges

Displacement of age profiles had also been a subject of discussion throughout the research² and was highlighted at this point in the comments:

The one other thing is the major shift towards more adult students. There is a very major change in the age profile of the institution [Int 3].

Following another comment: "It's like a factory isn't it? The product's changing, therefore you've got to have a different kind of factory", the author made the follow-up point "What you're implying to me, and I may have got the wrong sense of this, is that your product has really significantly changed and gone up-market, so to speak; but your buildings and resources haven't", which brought the additional response:

It has. Fifty per-cent of our full-time students are now over nineteen. That's an extraordinary change. I didn't realise how much that had happened and although we've had a deliberate policy on going after older students... I was quite shocked actually... pleasantly shocked [Int 10].

¹ Meaning all the other factors affecting FE at the time.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

4.4.4.10 Principals' preferences for future control of colleges

Question **4.10 asked: Would you prefer to stay with your LEA...**

or be controlled by the District Authority

or be part of a regional authority

or be part of a national education service.

Responses are summarised in figure 7.1.470¹.

4.4.4.10.1 Local Education Authority control of colleges

The majority of interviewees favouring staying with their LEA² coupled this propensity with their new-found freedoms under the 1988 Education Reform Act³. Not all were unilateral in their preference, as one rejoined:

Very mixed feelings, but I think we are well treated by the LEA, we've done very well. I like to feel that we're part of a local authority structure. On the other hand there are some advantages to be seen working as part of a national service where funding is not perhaps as dependent on local whims and competition with other local services... so very mixed feelings [Int 2].

Dissecting the question and weighing the pros and cons of the developing situation, another propounded:

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² See figure 7.1.470(1) in chapter 7 for further details.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details. See also comments in chapter 4.4.4.8.1 for additional information.

Well it's conjecture isn't it really: 'prefer'. I think as we've got delegation I would prefer to stay with the LEA... I think it's a lot less bureaucratic than the DES is going to be and so I prefer to stay with the LEA; as it is now¹, not as it used to be... years ago [Int 4].

Some LEA orientated responses included the additional comments:

Yes. It's a good LEA, it's been supportive. I think the lobby that persuaded the government that everybody wanted to get away from the LEA was not representative of most people within the FE service² [Int 5].

I am seeing the LEA as somebody who is supportive of the LEA. I don't know what led me to that conclusion but I don't think it's many miles from the truth. As long as you don't have arbitrary central control, as long as you can manage your own affairs, I've got nothing against being in with the LEA... Because FE colleges are very much about the local community, so why should not local government have the influence [Int 7].

Hesitation lingered in some quarters, possibly engendered by the recent White Paper publication³, as witnessed in the reply:

I wouldn't like to answer that until I know what the

¹ Implying : with delegation of powers to colleges following the 1988 Education Reform Act.

² Strong feelings were expressed at principals' meetings during this period about the factions supporting and opposing the new suggestions (eg see 'Newslink' (organ of APC) May 1991 p1). See also full transcript on attached disk for further information.

³ 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991'

White Paper - you know, what the enabling legislation says. But I suppose we've been happy with the LEA, there is a certain amount of bravado of being your own boss and running your own business, but I just wonder how many of us... it's still a pretty big responsibility... are really geared up to running things like that [Int 6].

Epitomising a more general feeling¹ one insisted:

I've always said the LEA was a necessary buffer and I believe that if you're going to have a strategic planning, to deliver an education service of quality and equality provision, you must have a body that can be a strategic planner... I believe that strategic planner should be democratically elected... Having said that, I don't think the present structure for local government can stay... what I'm saying to you (is) yes it has to be LEA but not under the present structure. Whatever the local government reorganisation brings up - and I think it will bring unitary authorities... I would see that unitary authority ought to be the strategic planner from cradle to grave...

This cautiously supportive stance was then extended illuminating a different perspective:

Here the LEA was a very bureaucratic LEA in many ways, a lot of red tape, and that I have to say I didn't support and

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

couldn't support. So under ERA it's been lovely to be relieved of that... Our LEA is also a buffer. For instance, if we just go back¹ to budgetary control; one of the big things you have to get right is your cash flow. Now the most horrendous thing about college budgets is we take our income all at one time, we don't have to worry about cash flow, the authorities got that sorted out [Int 9].

Deviating from total support for the LEA another referred to consideration of the students' grants problem²:

As a personal preference I'd be very happy to stay with my LEA... I think provided we can sort out these grants nonsense... I was never a principal who actually wanted to get out of the LEA because having a local influence is very useful isn't it. I still believe that if you can go and see the whites of their eyes it actually helps [Int 11].

Refusing to see any major difficulties in the proposed transition, one (self-proclaimed) impregnable prepared LEA supporter declared: "Yes, I'm all right." And on being pressed: "But it still begs the question that there are alternatives coming up and what do you think of these alternatives?", sceptically replied:

It doesn't worry me actually... If their influence on...FE is going to be money, and I can't imagine the

¹ A phrase meaning: 'refer' back.

² A problem exercising many principals' minds then and subsequently : Students whose homes were away from the college catchment area were finding it increasingly difficult during this period to obtain non-mandatory awards to support them at college. See Times Educational Supplement March 12 1993 p14 for further information on this continuing saga.

government is doing this for any other reason, if it is based on some sort of formula, the college is strong enough; in fact so strong that whatever they do to us, I mean, we can't miss out. We have prepared ourselves so that we are in a position of strength [Int 12].

Those who wavered in their reactions to the changes included one who replied:

Yes, I would prefer to stay with the LEA. The LEA that I know, yes. I think it's where you're coming from¹ isn't it really. At first I was rather excited by the idea of independence, I'm not now [Int 13].

Suggesting that the question could rapidly retrogress to one of academic interest as the scene hastily changed, another retorted:

Well it's a bit like saying would you have preferred that the second world war didn't start. Well of course I would have been happy, with the degree of delegation we had, to have carried on² [Int 14].

4.4.4.10.2 District Authority³ control of colleges

Although no-one opted for this alternative, adverse comments⁴ included the revealing observation:

¹ A colloquial term meaning 'where your starting point is'.

² Meaning: to have continued with the LEA.

³ The question presupposed that the district authorities under discussion were the existing District Councils, a layer of local government below County Councils.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Would I like to be controlled by a district authority... you're into unitary authorities... When I look back to my previous college I always used to reflect on how disastrous it was that the district council didn't feel their college was something to support... I think it's how local government manages to avoid that disastrous chasm of its own affairs that's got to be put right¹ [Int 7].

4.4.4.10.3 Regional Authority control of colleges

Most identified this synonymously with the national educational service, as a structural arm of this organisation², explicated in the following response:

At a personal level, and I think at a college level, we want to try to give every possible support to the new regional councils as being proposed under the White Paper. We haven't a wish to stay closely with the LEA [Int 3].

4.4.4.10.4 National Education Service control of colleges

There were mixed initial reactions to the proposals for the FE service advocated in the newly published White Paper³, characteristically described in the response:

¹ A patent criticism of the apparently poor relationships that were perceived between county councils' LEAs and the district councils.

² For further information see 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991' Cm 1536 Volume II chapters 4.2-4.4.

Well, I mean, it's a personal feeling... I think, yes I'm generally in sympathy with the intention of the White Paper to give us autonomy, although there are a lot of conditions to that preference... I would regret in some ways losing the accountability to the LEA... it might lose sight of the needs of the local community... But in general, yes... to have greater autonomy, which is where ERA was leading us to in part. It now takes the next big step and I think in general I prefer the way that the White Paper is...¹ But there are a lot of questions [Int 1].

Replying to the initial question about preference for staying with the LEA and then ruminating on any possible disadvantages to the college, one haltingly explained:

On balance no. That's not because our relations are not good but I think on balance that it won't work... I have to say that I'm not particularly worried, as long as we become a corporate body. I think, on balance... it would need some more money... for capital. We've never had any capital programme. My odds on getting it nationally are far higher than getting it locally [Int 10].

³ 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991'

¹ An unfinished sentence implying the phrase: 'taking us'.

4.4.4.10.5 Don't know...

Vacillations of principals¹ were depicted in the following comments, which also implied criticisms of some perceived aspects of the proposals² and perhaps also inferred retrospective admonition of previous administrations:

I haven't a clue. I'd just like whoever it is to plan in advance, to have their criteria very clear and to keep to them and to have some concept of cost and quality, and be very clear up front³ about that and keep to it.

I don't think that's unreasonable [Int 8].

I think I'd rather answer it this way. I know I would feel happier if I could perceive us as part of a strategically controlled service. But I'm not sure where that lies, whether it's at local authority or district or region or national, but if there was a clear strategy... I do not believe in a market for education, I think it is a recipe for disaster [Int 15].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991' for further information.

³ A phrase meaning: openly declared beforehand.

4.4.4.11 Principals' initial thoughts about the proposed Further Education Funding Council (FEFC)

Question **4.11** asked **What are your expectations of the proposed new FE funding council.** and the responses are outlined in figure 7.1.471¹.

4.4.4.11.1 High and hopeful expectations of FEFC

Initially a number of principals were better informed about the proposal to form FEFC, some displaying more optimism than others, comparing it with descriptions of disingenuous support from their LEAs:

Our expectations. We at this college hope to gain rewards and incentives for expansion. Currently we are not being encouraged by the LEA to expand. In fact there's a lot of evidence that they want us to stand still, tremendous amount of evidence... we've been turning students away wholesale...

Under the new funding arrangements... the signs are that... expansion... will be funded at roughly full cost rate... There is enormous potential to grow where we're sited, we've got the catchment and we've got the curriculum portfolio where I'm confident we can grow [Int 3].

Other aspects of the proposed transference of funding were identified in the remarks:

Two observations... Well of course immediately it will

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

increase every college's budget to the extent that the excepted items of spending by the local authority will be taken away¹ buy back in some way² White Paper is that aspect of funding which is being heralded which is performance based, and that in a sense is hopeful because I think the Authority's ability to fund performance is very limited [Int 1].

After a cautious beginning one principal outlined strategic planning role comparisons, culminating in a somewhat heroic tone:

Well if it happens then one thing I would certainly expect it to do would be to approach strategic planning in a much more systematic way than the LEA here have been able to do so far. I mean without that I just don't see any point in having the (regional) funding council³ ...What I would expect (a central) funding council to do would be to ensure that central government realised how valuable the FE service was [Int 7].

Concerns about some of the proposals led one interviewee to identify concerns about the regional advisory councils but potential advantages from a national viewpoint:

Well what area I'm worried about is a regional body...

¹ These items included capital and major structural maintenance, administration and advisory services, grants and special funds (see DES Circular 9/88 Part 3 pp22-30 for detailed information).

² The author detected a touch of irony followed by wryness in this remark.

³ These are described as regional advisory committees in the 1991 White Paper (chapter 4.2).

that's the only bit I'm apprehensive about.... My expectations are that we'll have a far more healthy debate about an FE national system of what we're doing, and that there will be money available for capital money¹ we've been trying to do² [Int 10].

4.4.4.11.2 Cautious expectations of FEFC

The price of efficiency, promulgated as a government expectation, was targeted in the remark:

I should be worried if it operated in the same way that PCFC³ is: bidding and tendering, SSRs and whatever... If all we hear is right⁴ then the resources being offered might be more significant, on the other hand its going to be the efficient colleges that survive [Int 2].

Optimism was also tempered in the following circumspect comment:

Well my expectations are that if in fact it is true, that we are below average funding in this county⁵, then yes I do expect good things. But I don't believe

¹ Money allocated for the purchase of large equipment or land and buildings for the college.

² An allusion to previous personal failures to obtain LEA support for college development.

³ Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (For acronyms details see figure 7.1.102).

⁴ A vernacular phrase meaning: 'if what we are told is correct'.

⁵ This interviewee had recently learned about adverse comparative funding allocations to the college on an LEA basis and anticipated an amelioration of this perceived anomaly through the FEFC.

that the government or the funding council will be in a position to take the necessary steps because I don't think it's prepared to face up to the consequences of causing a lot of colleges to close down [Int 13].

4.4.4.11.3 Sceptical expectations of FEFC

Fears about potentially diminishing resources were expressed by many¹ and the following remarks reflected this scepticism:

Well I don't know. I mean, they have said that when they kick off they will take cognisance of current and historical formulas but I think, without any doubt at all, that the budgets will get tighter and tighter as the years go by [Int 5].

Apprehension about competitors accessing colleges was generally anticipated², epitomised in the following case:

My expectations are that it could be even worse, when you think about the TECs coming in as well³ [Int 8].

Anxiety about severe curtailment of the service was voiced in the following instance:

Unless a commitment is made to spend more on education, they can only deliver the same amount. The only thing

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Referring to TECs being represented on college governing bodies (see chapter 5.7 of the 1991 White Paper for further details). TECs were considered by many principals to be competitors (see chapters 4.4.3.4.6 and 4.4.3.6).

that they can do is change the criteria for handing out the money. Therefore, unless it's an increase it won't bring anything to colleges. In fact some colleges will go to the wall I think¹... You wouldn't even dream of contemplating to take on the business if you were Harvey Jones². If he did a survey of the four-hundred colleges now in the UK³, in a market economy, he'd tell you the market economy could probably only support two-hundred of them, and that's what worries me [Int 9].

Efficiency, as depicted by some government agencies⁴, was a theme touched on by a number of respondents⁵ and seen as anathema by one:

I mean, what I think in reality they will do is... I think they'll put it up to grabs⁶. I think they'll just look at costs and efficiency measures and work out where they can get it cheapest. I do believe that honestly, and it may be a terrible thing to say. I will fight against it because I think what they should do is really do it in a much more balanced approach. But unless we get changes in philosophy I think it will be very...⁷ I

¹ There was a general fear demonstrated by respondents that many colleges would be forced to close if the White Paper proposals were implemented without due regard to colleges' individual situations, particularly some smaller colleges in or near large cities.

² A well known contemporary writer and broadcaster on management subjects.

³ An approximate figure (see FEFC Circular 92/05 for detailed information).

⁴ See for example the Audit Commission Report 'Obtaining Better Value from Further Education' 1985 pp 27-44.

⁵ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁶ A slang term meaning in this context : 'let the work go to the lowest bidder'.

think so [Int 11].

Concerns about levels of funding were widely expressed¹ and illusory political connotations were strongly implied in the response:

...I mean all I'm waiting to see is what they're instructed to deliver to colleges so far as money is concerned. And nobody seems - the mechanisms aren't available to any of us at the moment. I'm just assuming that the unit of resource might drop to sixteen-seventeen hundred². Because one assumes that's why it's all being done³, they're not doing it just for fun [Int 12].

A totally sceptical view was forcefully expounded in the reply:

What are my expectations? Total chaos actually⁴. I think the decisions that will be made out of gross ignorance are quite alarming... Well where are they going to get these FE Funding Council people from? Even if they appoint the right people, that is former LEA officers, former principals, vice-principals, etcetera, they've got a learning period before they

⁷ A deliberately unfinished sentence, left unsaid for dramatic effect and in this instance undoubtedly implying: 'harsh' or 'uncompromising'.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Meaning '£1600 to £1700 per full-time equivalent student', the present figure being in the region of £1940 (see chapter 4.4.4.1.2 for further information).

³ This was a fairly widespread belief at this time (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

⁴ The respondent's tone of voice indicated exaggeration in this sentence, proceeding to adopt a more sober tenor in the remainder of the reply.

know the patch [Int 14].

Once again in the following response the resource reduction theory was targeted, coupled with a strongly expressed belief that staff relations difficulties would ensue:

We will probably see what's happened with polytechnics¹, and that is: a very strong pressure to reduce the resource. And I don't see us getting that many more students through in the same period of time that polytechnics are going to have to expand, because I don't know where all these students are coming from... And we'll have to cut down, and have to change the conditions of service for staff. The Silver Book² will be rewritten in a very short period of time and, therefore, we're in for a hard financial time and also some industrial disruption in the next four years. It's pretty gloomy isn't it? [Int 15].

4.4.4.11.4 Some detailed expectations of FEFC

Several principals took the opportunity to outline wider expectations or fears arising from the new proposals³, for example:

...But I would expect that the funding council, however

¹ Meaning the FEFC would apply the same criteria to the FE colleges as the PCFC did to the higher education colleges.

² 'Conditions of Service for Further Education Teachers in England and Wales' 1981, subsequently amended.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

it operates, at least ought to give us elbow room to do what it is that we've got to do¹ [Int 1].

Differentiating between rewards for delivering quality or for other designated parameters, one said:

The worry is about quality I think. Will they fund quality or will they fund statistical performance indicators². Those two conflict at times [Int 2].

Homing in on a particular interpretation of efficiency, another commented:

I can see that business of efficiency being thrown at us and it's so much more difficult to respond in FE. We can't shove a hundred people into a classroom and run a big lecture like you can in polytechnics. I'm worried about that [Int 5].

Comparing college starting situations, one principal foresaw:

Certain colleges, there's no doubt, because of their geographical location, perhaps because of their market share already, they can take off as a business³; no problem... Others will not take off, and it will be nothing to do with the success or otherwise of their management [Int 9].

Having checked a point with the embryonic FEFC unit staff, one appeased principal declared:

I had a chat with someone from FEFC the other day, who

¹ Meaning : freedom to make decisions about offering smaller specialist courses to meet local demands.

² See DES 1991 White Paper Cm 1536 Vol II chapters 8.1 - 8.4; and DES Joint Efficiency Study Report 1987 chapters 4 & 5.

³ Meaning in this context : 'get started' or 'having a successful beginning' as a business venture.

said: 'well in the first two or three years we're not going to be all that tough'. And yet when I heard originally, they said: 'well it's going to be crude but you're going to have to work it out'. So, I think there will be a lot of fudging, in the short term anyway [Int 13].

One respondent identified an apparently insuperable local difficulty:

I think the biggest problem that we will face in this county is the lack of understanding of the rural provision... In some cities you can legitimately say we will put all the science in one college, and mining in another, and catering somewhere else; and then start doing some clever rationalisations... You can't say to someone from the other side of the county I'm sorry that provision is now two hours travel away. That's not on for young people, or indeed for people in work [Int 15].

4.4.4.12 Principals' feelings about the LEA personnel department

Question **4.12** asked **Do you find the LEA personnel department helpful or otherwise...** Responses are depicted in figure 7.1.472¹.

4.4.4.12.1 Feelings that the LEA personnel department was helpful

Some colleges expressed complete satisfaction with colleagues in their LEA personnel departments, willingly extolling their virtues:

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

Helpful, very helpful, largely due to the people in it [Int 1].

Extremely helpful, extremely helpful. I've got nothing but the highest praise for them [Int 3].

LEA personnel department are very helpful [Int 7].

An element of caution, however, emerged in the following supportive response:

Yes, we've got personnel department and education department and we've got our own¹, but it's helpful, yes [Int 10].

Support was qualified in the initial statement: "It's helpful but it's slack.", pursued by the question: "But they do actually help you with personal problems?", which prompted the enthusiastic response: "Oh yes, oh yes. Very, very good at this, and when we've had to deal with early retirements and voluntary redundancies, excellent" [Int 15].

An historical view was portrayed in a number of instances², as one observed:

Getting more helpful, terribly obstructive in the past and I would have been happy to have seen them disappear for ever but they are now recognising life and becoming a lot more helpful [Int 4]

Differentiating between types of college staff, one principal also alluded to personnel department attitudinal changes:

The LEA personnel department, it's always been helpful on the teaching side; it's never been very helpful at all on the non teaching side. It is now more helpful than it used to be because it hasn't got the control. But they

¹ Meaning : we have assistance on personnel matters from these three sources.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

used to be a real pain [Int 5].

A brittle response, reflecting others' experiences¹, was directed at part of the department in question; harshly implying that differences between individual Personnel staff held significant sway on the type of assistance received:

There are two people in the LEA personnel department who provide me with a service, the rest of them push bits of paper around. They are working at it but unfortunately I get conflicting advice and that causes very, very real problems [Int 8].

Drawing the distinction between advice about teaching and non-teaching staff, another noted :

They try to be helpful but they haven't got the expertise about teaching. The personnel function has always been with education departments², as you know, that's always been a bone of contention. Recently³, last year, they decided to transfer it to the county personnel; but talking to the County Personnel Director, he's a very nice bloke, he would have to admit that I know more about personnel matters in teaching than his staff do [Int 9].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² There was a universal feeling in further education colleges that all staffing, teaching and non-teaching, should be under the jurisdiction of the Education Departments, mirroring a general dissatisfaction with personnel departments (See Coombe Lodge Report Volume 20 Number 11 1988 p766 for LEA concerns following the ERA).

³ The distinction from 1989 was that personnel staff advised executive governors and college principals, no longer holding powers of decision over colleges (see Education Reform Act Section 148(3) for details).

4.4.4.12.2 Feelings that the LEA personnel department was not helpful

Strong, robustly expressed feelings were articulated about the shortcomings of LEA personnel departments¹ and in the following case these were vehemently stated:

This is an honest answer, not regarding²: absolutely no use whatsoever. I think the personnel departments of county halls, I can only speak for about two, certainly I can speak about this one, they spend most of their time trying to ensure that the sea is calm. They don't like getting under the water at all.

Progressing to bluntly explain:

I mean I will actually tell you that they have no chance whatsoever of being our personnel people after 1993. Nothing personal about it because I've got some people I like in there, but they're just no good [Int 11].

Some principals felt that personnel departments, as they were structured, had no place in future plans for their colleges³, As one put it: "It's of no significance to me.", and on being questioned: "No input into the college?", replied: "Not really", continuing deprecatingly: "obviously they look after the cleaning services and things like that, but I have no problems." Pursuing this point, the author probed: "But they don't advise you on early retirements or redundancies?",

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A curious way of saying what is sometimes expressed as : 'without any disrespect to...', and which may or may not be seriously meant.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

extracting the confident reply: "No, no, we do it all ourselves, we have the expertise here, we've developed that expertise here" [Int 12]. In another self-sufficient situation the interviewee responded to the question negatively:

No.

Proceeding imperiously to explain:

If we sometimes ask them for help, yes; but we don't - we have our own personnel officer and very occasionally we have a legal problem which we ask about,

then lapsing into a critical observation:

but they've got the old attitudes that if in doubt give in [Int 13].

This theme was taken up by another principal who outlined the 'inadequacies' of the department in the response:

Personnel, yes, they try to but they fail to understand some of our problems sometimes. But I'm on very good first name terms with them and if we ask long enough and hard enough and nicely enough they do try to help. But they suffer from ignorance, it's the head office syndrome when they don't understand¹ [Int 14].

¹ Meaning : referring difficult problems up to higher authority rather than trying to solve them, sometimes colloquially termed 'passing the can'.

4.4.4.12.3 Feelings that the LEA personnel department was obstructive

Searingly critical replies to the question included the comments: "No. They are messing around in affairs they ought to have given up and have actively impeded industrial relations locally by crass activities. They are totally inappropriate for our needs. So very unhelpful at the moment." By way of clarification the author asked: "Is this an officer problem or an authority policy?", attracting the response: "It is specifically an officer problem" [Int 2].

Caustically, one principal retorted: "Apart from one man, they could all go tomorrow. Oh it's the most impossible department it really is." Encouraging further explanation of this explosive rejoinder, the author inquired: "Is it the way that it's structured?", which induced the no less exasperated accusation: "Well they've just restructured it. They've got a lot of clerks pushing paper and they've got hardly any one who really knows what personnel is all about" [Int 6].

4.4.4.12.4 Some additional feelings about LEA personnel departments

During the discussions various peripheral points emerged, including the following report outlining futile union negotiations:

Just to give you two quick examples they've negotiated a set of local conditions with NATFHE¹ where in principle the management involvement was purely as a member of APC². We are now rejecting those at the

¹ National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (For acronyms details see figure 7.1.102).

² Association of Principals of Colleges (For acronyms details see figure 7.1.102).

college level, which puts us in bad odour... And secondly they produced a set of guide lines on technicians negotiated with NALGO¹ - based on the schools sort of the conditions that apply there²; and they happily sent us a letter saying regrade your staff and take them to your governing body and let us know... And the letter was the first time we'd been involved. No involvement in negotiations or advice asked for or whatever. Now that again has created an industrial relations problem [Int 2].

Changes to personnel department staffing in an unsatisfactory historical situation was implied in the statement: "They've just appointed a new personnel officer who is very good but one man single handed cannot change the department over night" [Int 6].

New financial procedures³, following the 1988 Education Reform Act which originated bidding for college services by local government departments, were in most principals' minds:

They're currently bidding now for our - all these: personnel, treasurers, buildings side, are all bidding for...⁴

In the vast number of cases it's the principals, for us, to retain their services after 1993. So they've all become

¹ National Association of Local Government Officers (For acronyms details see figure 7.1.102).

² See chapter 4.4.4.1.(b) for details of some comparisons with schools.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details. (See also chapters 4.4.4.1(b) and 4.4.4.1.1.(i) for further information about budget controls).

⁴ An intended unsaid phrase, meaning : 'our business' or 'our contracts'.

very helpful¹ [Int 4].

Discussing the new responsibilities assigned to personnel departments, they were described as disadvantaged when dealing with the subject of teaching staff:

I have to say, this sounds very big headed, but I think myself and my director of resources; and my CAO has to deal with support services staff; on the teaching staff side I think we're more knowledgeable, they'd be the first to admit it². They've never handled it. Education officers always did that, and the education officers have gone so there's not even a transfer (of expertise to) the personnel section. On the support services side they are very knowledgeable I have to say, because it's always been part of their brief, and they represent you in a tribunal and they do it very well because they know it; but they don't know the teaching personnel [Int 9].

The alacrity demanded by some college staffing situations was not always seen to be met by the LEA personnel department:

For instance when they say 'oh it will take four weeks to get medical clearance for this canteen assistant'. I say: 'can't wait four weeks, that means I've got to close the canteen.' 'Oh well that's a shame isn't it', they say. I say: 'who's going to feed the students.' 'Oh you've got a problem haven't you.' They have no sense of urgency nor appreciation that they are people, every

¹ This comment was heavily laden with sarcasm.

² Meaning: the LEA personnel department staff.

one of whom is not interested in the college's delays;
to that individual it is one-hundred per-cent of his
concerns at the time.

Finishing with a grudging concession:

But they try [Int 14].

4.4.4.13 Principals' feelings about the LEA treasurers department

Question **4.13** asked **Do you find the LEA treasurers department helpful or otherwise...**. The responses are arrayed in figure 7.1.472¹.

4.4.4.13.1 Feelings that the LEA treasurers department was helpful

There were few unqualified positive replies to the question² and although on the whole some saw the department as helpful, responses, in the light of developing circumstances, were tinged with caution:

Treasurer's department has always been helpful,
certainly the FE sector of it, but still with niggles,
but helpful really [Int 5].

A willingness for them to succeed in their efforts to accommodate recent changes was characteristic of a number of responses³:

Treasurers department are trying to be helpful,
and adapt and I hope have been relatively

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

successful [Int 2].

Distinguishing between languishing treasurers' systems and the departments' staff imperfections was the subject of a number of discussions¹:

Yes not too bad but there again it's their system. I mean the individual officers are very helpful but it's their system again that's got to be changed² [Int 6].

A crisp reminder that this question had been addressed earlier in the discussion was a precursor to comments about the quality of staff in the treasurers department:

Well I've answered that³, that ostensibly they're helpful but in reality they struggle. The quality of people there cannot cope with what's happening⁴. Struggling [Int 10].

Complementary to this stance was the wish to see more of the treasurers' officers in the college:

The officers are helpful actually but not enough of them at our place [Int 11].

Of those questioned a number differentiated between the quality of various services offered by the treasurers department. "The payroll they do excellently. I see no wisdom in looking for another payroll provider." This was pursued by the

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² It was clear that this referred to the specifics of further education and was not intended as a general remark.

³ See previous comments in the full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ Referring to the Treasurer's staff reactions to changes in education as a result of recent and impending legislation. (The tone of the conversation was such that the impression communicated was of a treasurers staff who had little desire to be cooperative in the circumstances).

enquiry: "Do they offer any sort of computer link to colleges, or is it a paperwork exercise?", resulting in the reply: "No they do the print out but -¹" Again the matter was probed a little further to seek information about computer links between the college and Treasurers: "But you haven't a direct..?², bringing the rapid and somewhat cynical interjection: "No they're not that sophisticated" [Int 9].

4.4.4.13.2 Feelings that the LEA treasurers department was not helpful

Many explanatory reasons were put forward³ about the dearth of treasurers' help for colleges:

Not very, because they can't provide us with proper feed back information⁴. We have one set of our accounts, they have a set of our accounts and the two never meet⁵, and it's not very helpful [Int1].

Responses included some tersely intonated disappointed reactions⁶, for example:

The Treasurers department we're not finding very helpful at all [Int 3].

No. I do not, but it could be that things are beginning.

¹ A pause which signified an end to the comment, and which implied that the college received a paperwork computer printout from Treasurers.

² The question was anticipated and quickly dispatched.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ A common complaint (See full transcript on attached disk for further information).

⁵ This was a reference to the time displacement between information being generated by Treasurers and when that information was communicated to colleges.

⁶ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

to change because of people like me saying that. So I'd want to qualify it. But LEA Treasurers department at this point in time I could not say I find them helpful [Int 7].

A totally disillusioned but pragmatic view was postulated in the forthright rejoinder:

The LEA Treasurers Department was run as a County Council Service, was never really helpful to the education department, let alone understand colleges under delegated budgets [Int 9].

Carefully thought through replies prior to statements being made included the following:

Treasurers is more difficult. At the individual level they're not awkward or obstructive, it's the systems, and I blame the managers not the individuals who are not properly trained, briefed, etcetera [Int 14].

Other differentials which affected the relationship were identified: "I think they're encumbered by a slow computerised accounting system. They could resolve that I'm sure. I mean the advice we get is sound." This was explored further with the prompt: "The willingness is there?", which enticed the reply: "Oh yes, it's just that they've got an (outmoded) system that's not very good." Then thinking better of this remark, tempered it by adding: "Well it might be good for their purposes but it's not good for FE colleges. At the end of the day they're not set up for us, they're set up for the county council" [Int 15].

4.4.4.13.3 Feelings that the LEA treasurers department was obstructive

An analogical account incorporated critical observations on the perceived absurdity of a rigidly controlled obstructive situation:

Well it's all to do with the college tabs¹ and the Authority's tabs², and we find that we can't have (a) bank account to pay our own bills and things like that, they all have to be paid by the Authority³ and it does strike me as absolutely daft that we employ a lot of people who spend all their time checking this, checking that, have you done this?⁴ [Int 8]

One discussion commenced with the assertive retort:

The Treasurer's department are not helpful at all.

Then continued with a tonal change:

They can be, it depends, it depends. I mean I do get worried that sometimes the Education Department is driven by Treasurers instead of the Education Department being driven by Education and then taking cognisance of obviously financial restraint.

Finally, the topic was concluded with a reluctant acceptance of the Treasurers perceived role:

No, I mean Treasurers exist to save money really no

¹ Computer printouts from the Treasurers sent to colleges.

² Computer printouts from the Treasurers sent to LEA officers.

³ Meaning the same organisation

⁴ Meaning local authority staff in the Treasurers Department.

matter how you wrap it up and that obviously is going to get in the way of principals who are trying to push things forward [Int 12].

4.4.4.13.4 Some general comments about LEA treasurers departments

Following up an earlier supportive comment¹, the author asked: "Just a quickie on that one: do you find that they're coming up with the accurate sort of answers that you require?" attracting the surprising but not totally unexpected reply:

"Well I've got my budget out-turn delivered to me on the phone yesterday, I've not had it in paper form, they said they're going to fax it through to me today and that's since the end of March², it's taken a long time hasn't it?" [Int 5]

Degrees of increasing cooperativeness by treasurers departments were perceived by principals³ as an awakening of awareness in the face of new (or lost) business opportunities:

Yes. They are all bidding to retain our services after 1993 so they've all become very helpful⁴ [Int 4].

As a counterpoint to this, however, the question: "Is this attitudinal or is it because of lack of resource?", drew a response which illustrated a subtended disposition:

Oh until recently they see that they've got several colleges, and they've got bigger fish to fry, so that

¹ See chapter 4.4.4.13.1 for further details.

² This was some four months earlier.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ This was presented in the interview as a facetious comment.

they don't build their systems around letting us get on with our job. And in terms of the, for example, knowing what you've spent, knowing what your payroll is, it's been like getting blood out of a stone to find out those basic things [Int 7].

On the other hand one explained, not without understanding, that the received help wasn't of the desired quality, the motives were questioned and the perceived attitudinal change was thought to have come too late:

Yes, they're helpful. We have problems with payroll which I think is very poorly done, lots of mistakes, but they too, are under a lot of pressure. But they're having to change their attitudes because before they were doing us a great big favour, now they're bidding for our money aren't they. So they're improving, but I think they can't do it in time [Int 13].

A further attempt at achieving affinity was displayed in a compassionate *cri de coeur* echoing others' observations¹:

I think it's not that they are deliberately unhelpful, I think they have a serious overload problem and that we can't get answers to our questions on payroll, we're short of information. So it isn't that they're being deliberately obstructive they are overloaded and are overburdened and in that sense we can't get the help we want [Int 3].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Treasurers' belated realisations of the dynamics of the further education infrastructure was a hallmark of remarks prognosticating an uncertain future relationship¹:

No, they hadn't realised what was hitting them. Having said that we've got a new appointment in treasurers who's looking after the education section. He's new blood, he understands the problems but I think he's come too late. They have not understood what is required and when colleges have the chance to purchase it², I wonder if they're going to purchase³ [Int 9].

Explaining examples of difficult areas with Treasurers, a particular problem was highlighted:

And so somebody phones in and says you haven't paid me yet. Well, we say, well we've sent it to the Authority and so of course we can't use some people because of the time lag⁴ etcetera, etcetera.

Then, turning to another 'bone of contention':

We've got an imprest account, that's the only account we can have.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Referring to the proposals in the 1991 White Paper about the new corporations purchasing their own services from the local authority or from any other source. (See 'Education and Training for the 21st Century.....1991' Chapter 5.3 for further details)

³ Meaning : it is questionable that they will be purchasing future services from the Treasurers.

⁴ Referring to the period between a part-time member of staff teaching a class and the payment received for the work.

This was explored further with the query: "Do you have a computer link with Treasurers?", which enticed another reference to separate Treasurers' accounts being made available to colleges and LEA; and included advice received about tackling serious errors:

No, so their tabs and our tabs run entirely separately, they shove things out¹ and it has been relatively laissez faire. When the auditors came in last time they said in words of one syllable 'you must have somebody checking your tabs because you will be debited for other colleges'. It is so easy to just get one figure wrong and it's totally reliant on you². And yes the Authority had done us this £6000³, we hadn't picked it up and it is the awards section not transferring exam fees. But is that really the way to go about it [Int 8].

Accountability procedures were critically analysed and measured against the new criteria for colleges, and were seen in the following to be incompatible and irreconcilable:

I think they're geared up totally to deal with -⁴ their whole philosophy is based on accountability. I know we're going to be accountable because we're public, but their whole accounting systems, their whole advice, their whole...⁵ procedures are all based on

¹ Meaning: send out spurious information.

² This was the interviewee's explanation to the author, meaning: the responsibility lay with oneself for checking the accuracy of the tabs.

³ A phrase meaning : miscalculated to the detriment of the college.

⁴ An unfinished phrase used to contemplate the direction of the commentary.

accountability, not helping people to manage. And I spend most of my time fighting which is ridiculous when you think about it. But I think they've got monumental problems to change. I think the whole system was being devised for a totally different animal to what I am, and I can't see how they can change it [Int 11].

Persistence and patience were presumed to be essential qualities when dealing with the Treasurers Department: "I've constantly asked will you second some of your key staff to a college for a week to just see what it's like. Every reason under the sun why they can't do it, because they don't want to know the truth."

The reminder: "You mentioned previously about their obvious help with payroll and so on¹, where do you think they fall down then?", prompted the reply:

"Payroll is good. It's payment for purchase orders. The number of times we get cut off², the local paper won't print an advert because they haven't been paid for the last six and so on. The key person in invoice section went sick recently so no cheques were signed for a fortnight. Now really, 300 million pounds worth of county expenditure all contingent upon one lady being fit. It really is nonsense."

Homing in on supply of management information, the author asked: "What about Treasurers' department feeding you with information?", which brought the heartfelt retort: "Oh it's desperate, yes, desperate. We get a tab one month and we think ah! that's good and we then get the same tab for the next three months³. We have poor and irregular financial information" [Int 14].

⁵ An inaudible word, but probably meaning 'administrative'.

¹ See earlier responses in full text on attached disk for further details.

² Meaning: business being sequestered.

³ Meaning: an unchanged tab (not brought up to date).

4.4.4.14 Principals' feelings about the LEA FE officers

The question: **4.14 Do you find the LEA FE officers helpful or otherwise...**
sought responses which are tabulated in figure 7.1.474¹.

4.4.4.14.1 Principals felt that LEA FE officers were helpful

Succinct, unhesitatingly positive replies characterised many responses to this question²:

FE officers I find helpful [Int 7].

LEA FE officers yes, they have been always very helpful [Int 2].

Yes, yes. They've got a good team there, very helpful [Int 6].

A hint of equivocation was detected in the answer:

For the most part they're very professional [Int 15],

and a little caution crept into other responses:

Helpful, certainly not obstructive, but concerned to do
the best they can for us, to that extent they're very
helpful [Int 1].

The FE officers are helpful, not enough of them³ but very helpful [Int 5].

Reductions in numbers of officers was also referred to in other replies:

In general I find LEA FE officers helpful, yes.

Not very efficient now because of the reduction
in people, but helpful yes [Int 4].

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ An allusion to reductions in the ranks of LEA FE officers.

Helpful actually, but not enough of them at our place,
not at all¹ [Int 11].

And, qualifying a positive response:

Yes, they're O.K. But again you see their staffing
is...² as people leave they're not being replaced so
they've lost two senior people recently [Int 13].

Bluntly worded counterpoint balanced one ambiguously affirmative reply:

Helpful, but struggling. A bit out of their depth I
would say. They are under trained, quality is poor,
with one exception [Int 10].

4.4.4.14.2 Principals felt that LEA FE officers were not helpful

Not all sceptical replies were as vociferous as the principal who stated:
"Wouldn't pay them in washers basically." Asked: "Because of quality or
quantity?", the interviewee analogically replied: "Quality, relevance, and frankly
I think FE colleges have had to wean themselves off the mother syndrome in a
way that schools haven't gone very far along that road I fear" [Int 14].

However, one sceptic answered very much to the point³:

Not at all, no [Int 12].

Contemplating difficulties encountered by LEA staff it was observed:

¹ A ruefully oblique reference to the depleted number of officers in the LEA
further education section (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

² The tone suggested disappointment, and the author was left with the
impression that the interviewee drew back from a villifying comment to continue
with a more cautious response.

³ This was pressed further by the author and the reply is included in chapter
4.4.4.14.4.

The LEA officers; I have to say not particularly

helpful, partly I think their hands are very much tied¹ [Int 3].

Drawing the author's attention to limitations of LEA officers' background and experience, another discerned:

Well they don't have the expertise in post 16 FE² [Int 9].

4.4.4.14.3 Principals felt that LEA FE officers were obstructive

The nearest that any interviewee came to declaring obstruction³ in this context occurred in the inferential discussion: "They are under very strong political pressure, they aren't enterprising, they're not encouraged to be enterprising and they are reluctant to support us in risk taking and new initiative." Asked: "Does that go from top to bottom?", the respondent replied: "No I don't think it does, I think one of the chief officers is very supportive but I think it's the problem that officer level has with the politicians⁴ and I think it -⁵ I'm not able to answer it clearly but it's partly calibre of people, it's partly pressure that they're under and when I look to beyond the White Paper I don't see a role for the officers of the authority in the post 1993 era. Where I can see a role for advisers, I can see a role for personnel, I can see a role for (the) legal department, I cannot see a role for the officers as such" [Int 3].

¹ An indirect reference to the degree of political control at LEA level.

² This was a reference to the fact that most if not all LEA officers were recruited from the ranks of secondary teachers, many having no experience of further education.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ The reference was to politicians at local authority level.

⁵ There appeared to be a genuine desire to rationalise thinking here, hence the pause followed by a recapitulation of the salient points.

4.4.4.14.4 Some general comments about LEA FE officers

Asked: "Is there a big team of them?", an interviewee reacted with the belligerently worded retort: "There was an FE officer here - god knows what he did, he seemed to have no effect on policy. The FE officer, who's now resting¹, was mad about statistics and saving money for the Authority to prove that he was a competent officer and he'd forgotten what education was about. I don't really think I need to say any more. The chief education officer is absolutely wonderful." Prompting further: "And presumably has an interest in FE?", the reply was elicited: "He thinks it's wonderful, can't believe...² Terribly supportive" [Int 12]. Among the references to changes to staffing in further education sections³ was the explanation:

The senior education officer for FE has just moved and is not being replaced directly. They've moved another officer across for three days a week. The long term is that the functions will become functional rather than FE related so finance, education, development, whatever; and that's created a big change [Int 2].

Detailing why there was a less than a satisfactory service from the LEA FE department one explained:

It's only a small department. They've gone from four to two, so the two most senior people are still there but

¹ This was said with much feeling and not without cynicism.

² The pause was of a nature which implied that the completed sentence would have been 'can't believe it could be so good'.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further information (see also chapter 4.4.4.14.1 for further details).

an education officer's gone, senior assistant's gone.

They're overstretched but they do their best [Int 13].

4.4.4.15 Principals' feelings about the LEA Advisers/Inspectors

The responses to question: **4.15 Do you find the LEA Advisory /Inspection Service helpful or otherwise...** are outlined in figure 7.1.475¹.

4.4.4.15.1 Principals felt that LEA advisers/inspectors were helpful

The adviser vis-a-vis inspector scene was set early in the discussions, a clear line being drawn between advisory and investigative functions:

They try very hard to be helpful and for the most part they succeed. That's in an Advisory capacity.

In an inspectorial capacity I don't know whether you can say that they're helpful or otherwise.

They've got a job to do, they get on with it [Int 1].

Some accepted the generic terminology, for example:

LEA Advisory and Inspection Service I find helpful [Int 7],

but, weighing a point, by force of omission one differentiated clearly between the two functions:

The LEA advisory service - I would say far more helpful than unhelpful [Int 3].

Without differentiation² helpfulness was acknowledged whilst referring to the small numbers of staff involved:

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

The LEA Advisory/Inspection service, the few people we have with FE are helpful, in fact we've got one or two of very good quality but we're talking about one or two¹ [Int 5].

A dearth of advisers/inspectors was identified in the recollectively supportive comment:

We haven't got an Inspection service hardly. Used to find it good, yes [Int 4].

This sparseness of advisers was discerned by many², again, drawing a distinction between advice and inspection, one responded: "That's been diminished somewhat. When it was around it was very good, it's diminished quite a lot, the standard is still good but we don't see them very often. I found them to be helpful, but we just don't see them." And, when questioned: "As well as advice, do they do inspection?", replied: "No it's mostly advice" [Int 15].

The theme of low staff numbers and infrequency of visits permeated the discussions³:

We've got one FE Adviser in the County and he's very good [Int 6].

Well the same thing really⁴, helpful, when you see them⁵ [Int 11].

² It was acknowledged later in the conversation that they were mainly advisors and did not do much inspecting (see chapter 4.4.4.15.4 for further details).

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ Following on from comments about FE officers.

⁵ There was a hint of light sarcasm in this response.

Many LEA education departments had been, or were undergoing, reorganisation and rationalisation following the 1988 Education Reform Act and ensuing government action and this was noted in many of the discussions¹:

Well that's all just been reorganised. It had nothing to do with FE² that I could see, we now have a new structure where we hope that the advisers will have more influence on us [Int 12].

4.4.4.15.2 Principals felt that LEA advisers/inspectors were not helpful

The twin issues of reorganisation and background experience were repeated in the following sceptical response:

Well they've just reorganised again, and again it's mainly schools orientated [Int 9].

Shortcomings of the service in most instances were associated with advisers' lack of affinity to further education³:

They are under trained, the quality is poor with one exception; we've got an FE Inspector whose O.K. he's good, but the General Advisory service is outdated, they've not been exposed to other things and they're struggling⁴ [Int 10].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A somewhat cynical reference to the perception that advisers or inspectors were not FE orientated, seldom visiting colleges.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ A reference to the fact that advisers and inspectors were invariably recruited from the ranks of secondary teaching, few entering with a background knowledge of FE.

Drawing a distinction between advisers and inspectors, one derogatorily declared:

Advisory Service - I wouldn't spend much on it. Inspection - Well we've got to have haven't we. They've done a fairly objective job on some inspections that they've done and I respect them as individuals sometimes¹ [Int 14].

4.4.4.15.3 Principals felt that LEA advisers/inspectors were obstructive

The nearest any interviewee got to declaring obstructiveness was contained in the narrative: "But on the twice time a year contact that we typically have with our area inspector; we've got an area cluster inspector who, as about 3% of his duties, does² for us, that means twice a year I see him and I tell him how well we're doing. How can he learn enough to be able to advise us?" Reminded: "So when you talked about 'wouldn't pay them with washers'³, was it the advisers you were thinking of, or the officers?", solicited the pragmatic reply: "The Officers we have to have, don't we, because they're the gamekeepers on the budget, to some extent; but the advisers/inspectors I really think I'd rather have the money and choose to buy back their services because I really don't think they're a lot of help to us" [Int 14].

¹ There was an element of tongue in cheek cynicism in this 'sting in the tail'.

² A mumbled comment, very difficult to interpret from the recording but almost certainly 'very little'.

³ A reminder of a previously made comment (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

4.4.4.15.4 Some general comments about LEA advisers/inspectors

The question of suitability for further education work was raised frequently¹, and efforts were explained which attempted to alleviate this perceived deficiency: "...most of the service has not been very helpful but has been very school orientated. I had a meeting last week with the chief adviser to get that message over." Then, drawing a distinction between advice and inspection went on to observe: "But I'm not knocking it, it's a good service, it's much more advisory than inspectorial. Hasn't gone the way another county went which I thought was the wrong way because it became too directorial" [Int 5].

Delineating the rare case of an expanding service, one reported a dynamic scene:

"Advisory/Inspection Service. Well there is one person. Well there was one person, there are two now and there's a third one coming on stream; all the advisers are really only interested², only have the experience of schools." Then, proceeding to illustrate the point with a practical example, the interviewee continued: "We have a college general adviser³, poor man, he spent two years trying to learn about the place, had a heart attack, disappeared for a year. What used to happen was the LEA Adviser for FE would come in with these other two people⁴ and look at business studies courses, look at travel and tourism course, come once a term and do something like that. I said at the end of last

¹ See chapters 4.4.4.15.1; 4.4.4.15.2 and full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² It was felt that the direction of the sentence was altered from : 'interested in' to 'experience of' in the interests of caution and diplomacy, reflecting principals general thinking about this inadequacy (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

³ The colloquially structured phrase means : a further education adviser.

⁴ These were understood to be two general inspectors.

year, when he said what would you like to do next year, I said, I don't find this the most helpful thing, why don't you come in¹ and get involved in some of the curriculum development work that we're doing. So that's what's happening now, which I think is a step in the right direction [Int 8]. Another reference to the diminutive size of the service and the dubious background experience of advisers culminated in a reluctantly expressed positive response:

Well we only have one FE Adviser who is, he does his best, you know, but there is a tertiary adviser an inspector they call him, as an assistant. But they're mostly schools orientated. The special needs people give some help, they're mostly plugged into the schools aren't they, we never look to them for a lot. So, yes they're helpful [Int 13].

An attempt to understand advisory department difficulties was identified in an expression of new expectations:

But they realise that² and their new assistant director does try to lure me there³ ... because they realise the difficulties. They know where their weakness is with the appraisal coming in⁴, you see they won't have any credibility if they don't⁵ [Int 9].

¹ Meaning: spend a longer period in the college.

² Meaning: they are schools orientated.

³ A hint at 'head hunting', ie the covert offer of a job.

⁴ A reference to proposals for staff appraisal to be introduced (See DES consultation paper 'Maintained Further Education : Financing, Governance and Law' August 1987 p9 para 2.13 for further details).

⁵ Implying : if they don't recruit staff with relevant FE experience.

Going on to explain efforts to achieve greater cooperation between college and advisers, one persevered: "I mean that sounds just like gobbledygook speak¹ but that's true, and we've had quite a few people here already from the service who never used to come before. But I must admit that seems to be their learning curve rather than ours. But we do go to the Authority quite regularly for help... And certainly the curriculum development adviser who controls a lot of the county is helping us with work. So it depends really what you want." Prompted: "So advice there helpful. Inspection?", the respondent replied: "No they don't do any inspection.", begging the further question: "Is it anticipated that they might." which elicited the enlightened and enlightening rejoinder: "No, no, we have in-built monitoring evaluation which we're supposed to make sure functions. And we try hard here and it doesn't work well, so I don't know what happens in colleges where they're really not interested" [Int 12].

The limitations of the advisory service were outlined and its doubtful prospects underlined in an exploratory view of the financial aspects of the FE sector:

Advisory and Inspection service is helpful as far as it can be. But we have one adviser for the county, plus all other services of schools advisers, and we're currently challenging that at the moment, because a quarter of a million pounds is deducted from college budgets for advisory/inspection services and we reckon we're getting about £60,000 of the service. So we actually have a meeting between some of the principals

¹ A reference to a previous comment : hoping that a newly organised advisers' team would be more influential on the college (see chapter 4.4.4.15.1 for details).

and the chief adviser about this [Int 2].

4.4.4.16 Formal quality control systems in colleges

The question **4.16 Do you have a formal quality control system in your college** is outlined in figure 7.1.476¹.

4.4.4.16.1 Colleges purporting to have formal quality control systems

In nearly all instances there was a strong sense of wanting to answer this question positively and a keenness, anxiety even, to report progress towards achieving a formal system²:

Yes, we do. There's a follow up: that we're redressing it all. There's a whole series of things at the moment which are disjointed, so academic board in a fortnight and then to governors a month afterwards, we're introducing a further quality control policy bringing everything together [Int 10].

That the task of organising a formal college quality control system was delegated to other senior staff quickly became apparent in some discussions³, implied in the vagueness of some of the technical terminology used, although this did not necessarily negate principals' underlying understanding of the nature of the concept: "Yes we do, we're not going BS whatever it is, we're actually

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

doing it through what's called Investors in People Initiative with a TEC".

Prompted: "It is TQ?", the subject replied: "Yes, whatever it is. We'll get there, eventually." This was followed with the question: "What's the reaction of staff on this one?" which attracted the reply: "Quite good actually. What's quite interesting was when we launched it, because everything when I first came was all about economics and efficiency and everything else, I think in fact it was a plus point I'd got an area in which I didn't psychologically...¹ because here I was talking about quality which all good teachers always worry about and I think they thought oh well it isn't all...² this" [Int 11].

An emphatic introduction was once again succeeded by cautionary phrases about the exact type and style of system in the discussion: "Yes we do." "You do? Is it of a particular nature?" "All programme teams and all programmes have a monitoring and evaluation unit in them which is continuous, all programmes are reviewed regularly. Now regularly might mean different things. It could be monthly, it could be termly, depending...³ depending. And that's got nothing to do with some are lazy and some are not lazy. It's to do with the way the programmes function. Yes we have a constant monitoring" [Int 12].

A more modest response contained explanations of the headway being made in a college progressing along a commissioned, eventually self regulated, path:

Well quality control. We have a quality control unit
in the college now which is in its first year, so the

¹ The impression here was that the word 'fit' was going to be used.

² Again the impression gained was that of omitting words which by implication were 'money, budgets, efficiency etc'.

³ A theatrical style double-take - stopping as though about to give an explanation, then, thinking better of it, leaving the listener to form opinion by puckishly repeating the adjective.

answer to that is yes and we're obviously trying to build up. We did get, what's it called? a training agency grant for the first year of it but they've not renewed it because they think there are too many, but we've still got a person responsible for that and there's a team working and it's beginning to show results [Int 13].

Experiences from other tested sources were explained¹ as were reasons for attempting a dual approach to the quest: "Yes we do. One which we developed based on other people's experience, it's not been developed here completely. We've also been trying to secure BS5750 (via) consultants². So we've got two things going in parallel, one which covers the broad mass of the college and then for one particular part: BS5750." Questioned: "Yes, and do you have specially appointed staff to operate this system?" the reply assured on one point and clarified another: "From within...³ that's right, the deans of study who are senior managers operate the quality system and the BS5750 is being implemented within our consultants" [Int 15]. Commencing positively in the future tense, the overtones of one interviewee's response were tinged with the subject of appraisal:

Yes, we're establishing a monitoring evaluation system, we've got a staff professional interview development system. I won't call it staff appraisal you know, but

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Meaning : awarded the seal of approval which recognised the college as having achieved the standard of excellence stipulated in the British Standard.

³ An omission implying 'the college'.

there are a number of quality control systems that are emerging quite rapidly within the system [Int 6].

4.4.4.16.2 Colleges admitting to not having formal quality control systems

In many situations there had been initiatives addressing the problem¹ even where admissions of no formal system were made:

No, but I am just about to actually get a working party going on to quality management. We've got to do something about it. We have got quality control systems of course in various places and we have course evaluations and all sorts of things and we have academic board meetings and we discuss the exam results and the evaluations and a variety of things, but not what I would call a total quality management system. No, no [Int 4].

Other explanations were couched in tentative terms² although starts had been made in generating quality control systems:

No, we're working on it but the answers no. We do have a faculty head now completely in charge of curriculum and quality is their province. So there are systems, but it's not one that you would call general but a move towards it [Int 5].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

A terse reply was tenaciously developed into a description of management shortcomings following the comment: "No we don't." Asked: "Are you thinking along those lines at all?", evinced the response: "Yes, it will only come when we've got our new management system." Pursuing this course the author asked: "Yes, you talked about quality as being an essential part¹." which enticed a monosyllabic retort: "Yes." [Int 8], further probed by the comment: "So you're hoping to develop that?" which in reply merely achieved a nod.

A very modest straightforward response came in the reply:

Not in the system at all in the way of a TQM system but we are trying to work towards it [Int 14].

4.4.4.16.3 Colleges in the process of developing formal quality control systems

A number of principals acknowledged pursuit of the goal of a formal system for controlling quality² in the college, some being further along this track than others:

It's on the way is the answer to that one and we're moving fairly fast down the line. We haven't quite got it yet but we've got the groundwork done for a very clear one. Quality is something which, you know, in itself needs definition but quality control, quality assurance, BS5750, total quality management, these are

¹ Referring to a previous comment (see full transcript on attached disk for further information).

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

all within our debate and there is presently a draft document because this will be very largely a matter for course teams to address [Int 1].

Recapitulating on an earlier conversation¹ the question: "Back to the quality control, you mentioned this earlier.", encouraged the continuance:

We started from the perspective of the Avon documents², the questionnaires and whatever; and the person who was running that, who is our quality manager, decided very early on that that really wasn't the way to go and is concentrating on improving the way the course team works and improving the quality of documentation [Int 2].

A planned approach was described in a carefully envisaged scheme to embrace the predicament posed by the problem:

We haven't one yet but we are starting. We have appointed a quality manager in the institution who's an internal appointment at senior lecturer level and we are assigning abatement to quality control³. We know the importance of it, we have visited three other colleges to look at their systems, we've visited industry... we've looked at their quality control systems. We're looking very hard at it and we are making an investment in it now. We are moving more

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Reference to a recorded project produced in another local authority.

³ Giving a form of remission from some teaching duties in order to undertake the task (see chapter 4.4.2.1 for further information on remission/abatement).

towards a quality control ethos¹. We're looking at TQM as opposed to British Standard 5750 [Int 3].

Expressed succinctly, another implied a similar process:

We're beginning to have a formal quality control system, we're doing a fair amount of work on that [Int 7].

Citing a position achieved by many in the cohort², one described:

We have started the basis of one by having a monitoring and evaluation review of course teams. We've got a monitoring and evaluation course document, which all course teams have to prepare. That's been implemented this year... so that the VP who has the brief for quality assurance will be monitoring and coming back³ and telling us what's happening [Int 9].

4.4.4.16.4 Some general observations about college quality control systems

There were many observations and explanations given for perceived achievements, difficulties and failures of quality control systems in colleges during these discussions⁴: Asked: "Where has the main drive come from for this. Is it senior management team or academic board, or governors?" one replied: "Well if I don't drive it then it doesn't go very far." Following this up: "Right, so main impetus from yourself?" induced the more detailed explanation: "Yes, but

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ A term meaning : reporting to the college management and academic board.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

within the senior management team and I think within the general culture of the college itself... Quality is about the perception of the clients of the service that you provide, it's not some kind of esoteric exercise that doesn't have any relationship to...¹ So I think there is across the grass roots, if you like, of the college a commitment to being² quality. I think it has to be related to a fundamental view that it can be improved and it doesn't just touch on the academic staff and what goes on in teaching. It has to be about the whole corporate body from the caretakers to the receptionists, to the refectory staff. You know, it's about the quality of the service in toto... We're not objectives driven, the whole business of performance indicators, however you view them, it's not just about collecting information, it's about setting targets and having processes that will enable you to understand whether you're achieving those targets; and why you're not, if you're not. I think this has got to be inherent in the whole process of definitions of quality. Because if you can't define it you can't control it, you can't assure it, and I think we begin to have a much greater understanding now of what that's about" [Int 1].

The desire to explain or seek definitions for quality, quality control and assurance was not confined to just one principal³: "Getting across the whole thing that quality is in the eye of the beholder, it is a customer centred thing. It isn't for us to decide whether we're quality, it's for the client to tell you in the client's view whether you are quality and if you're not quality, where you're falling down on what you're doing. So how a curriculum team receives a student, how it inducts a student into its programmes, what sort of counselling it

¹ This pause implied the word 'reality'.

² The interviewee's emphasis.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

gives in careers, what sort of systems it sets up that allows the student to comment freely on the teacher's performance, having an open style with the student, allowing the students to openly criticise as long as that criticism is put within an objective structured framework. Having an open honesty with the student. That is what we are looking for in quality and we're looking for the students and the employers to be dictating those sort of issues. That's the ethos that we're looking for." Prompted: "Yes, the big question of course is the one that you've already answered in a way, how do you measure quality in a service industry as distinct from a production industry?" this attracted the reply: "That's right, and one of the ways I believe very strongly you measure it is by using measures that other people tell you that they're looking for. I mean, answering the telephone, the way in which you write letters, the tone of your letters, the way you receive people when they first arrive in the building. Whether you're going to offer them some car parking, whether, when they arrive, the receptionist has actually already been notified that they're coming and he or she has a name, things of that nature you know need to be worked through by curriculum teams. The warmth with which you receive somebody when they first join the faculty or whatever, it's up to them to work through what they think are the important things. Now we've started training on that; we've taken all our receptionist staff and our secretarial staff through training programmes on telephone techniques and writing letters and things of that nature, we've actually done some work already on that" [Int 3].

Another perspective in the pursuit of quality was described in terms of marketing aspects: "Well, I said, if you like, that one of the threats from outside, the real competition, was the increasing expectation outside that you can

demonstrate¹ quality in addition to delivering it. Because as you know, colleges have always said, as far as I can remember, we deliver quality, high quality from us rather than from these cheapskate private providers. We've not often been able to demonstrate it and now you have to² be able to demonstrate it." The unguarded speculative acknowledgement: "Right, so there's an awareness", was challenged in almost gladiatorial manner in the riposte: "Oh there's more than an awareness, it's gone beyond awareness, it's gone to the point of systematic exploration... its being driven by respective members of the management team who either have a job description responsibility for it or have had a de facto involvement that they have been prepared, with approval from me, to push forward" [Int 7]. Explanations included illustrative descriptions of college system developments: "At the moment we have very detailed monitoring of exam results we have a strong staff development programme, we have a development plan with specific monitoring of performance for the institution; so there's a whole series of things but the quality policy's going to academic board as I say in a few weeks' time, that will try and bring all these things together. But the core of it will be what we've had for several years... enhanced as a course review system... So we're going to have an annual review and then a three year major review but that's being based on what we've been doing for the last four or five years. So that's going to be the core of it but we're not going down BS750³ or anything else." Clarifying this point, the prompt: "Or total quality management or any of those sort of things?" induced the reply: "The elements of those things are within our policy so the answer is yes we do" [Int 10].

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² The interviewee's emphasis.

³ This was an oratorical error meaning: BS 5750.

A more pragmatic approach was advocated in the response: "Well I think what we are moving to is the idea of the contract. The quality control is to a degree aims and objectives between student and teacher and then performance. We think that's better than course evaluation, or going out and asking them well what do you think, you know, teacher A or teacher B" [Int 13].

Historical perspectives were explained in one account: "I started evaluation procedures, I had a bit of cultural resistance to that but we are getting better all the time. I think we've got past the point of having to convince staff that they are good, such systems, and they have more to gain than they have to lose. I think I've got the punitive aspect put secondary to the positive aspect. I say that, though there are some who will never believe me, they think I'm going to use it to weed out the incompetents" [Int 14].

Following up earlier observations about experience of recently introduced systems in the college¹ a principal was asked: "And how do you perceive this, do you actually see, has it manifested itself in better² systems?" This induced the response: "Yes, it's relatively new, we've been working on it for about two years. Prior to that we had all the regular sorts of controls, we might be looking at exam results and so on. But I think it's sharpening peoples' minds up and it's helping us spend resources better. It's providing the justification for a lot of feelings that we had. You know, we felt: we do mean this and we do mean that and now we can turn round and say well yes, everybody else says this too because we did survey them, their views were this; and we can support

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Another word might have been used in retrospect but the value judgement based request had the desired ultimate effect of producing an unfettered reply.

prejudice¹. And also occasionally you look at it and you find - well the nice thing to find out is that we have been wasting money on newspaper advertising, you know, we've gone down and asked students how do you get on the course [Int 15].

¹ This slightly mischievous remark was made with a knowing smile, although it was obviously intended to communicate serious undertones.

4.4.5 Education Reform Act

4.4.5.1 Senior staff leaving colleges following the ERA

Question **5.1 How many senior college staff have left posts since ERA...** together with the sub-question: **5.1.1 Was their leaving linked with ERA?** was illustrated in Figure 7.1.477¹.

4.4.5.1.1 Reports of senior staff leaving colleges following the ERA

Interviewees, careful to check what was meant by: "Since ERA?" were content to broaden it in the spirit of the question: "Well if I'm going to include this year², do you want me to include this current year?³" "Yes." "There will probably have been three or four, let's say four" [Int 10]. Others wished to clarify the meaning of senior staff in this context: "What do you call senior?" "I'm really talking about the management team at the top end." "Since ERA, Oh let's say... we've lost - after the restructure, let's think⁴, I've only lost one. But if you actually talk about since 1988 when we moved to a delegated system we've lost one, two, three, about four" [Int 11].

An interviewee's query: "What do you regard as senior college staff?" was answered "I suppose I was thinking of the senior management team really. VP⁵,

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² The academic year 1988-89.

³ The academic year 1989-90.

⁴ This developed literally into a 'finger counting' exercise as the interviewee thought through the arithmetic of the reductions.

⁵ Vice-Principal.

Heads of Department and so on.", encouraging the enlightening response:

"Three out of the six have gone" [Int 8].

Referring to an earlier discussion¹ the interviewer prompted: "You've almost answered this one for me haven't you?" attracting the revealing response: "Two and if you count me three" [Int 1].

The following two interviewees also admitted to be imminently personally leaving their posts:

The Education Reform Act and how many senior staff have left posts². It's interesting that only one at this college and that's me, the Principal [Int 3].

In the second instance qualification of the term senior staff accompanied the admission: "When you say senior staff do you mean heads of department?" "Yes, I'm really talking about management team." "None, I shall be the first one to leave, I think, yes" [Int 9]. In another case two leavers were explained:

Two. One to another job, promotion, and the other one early retirement [Int 14].

Single leaver admissions included the following:

One post. Not linked with ERA [Int 2].

One has left [Int 5].

And, enigmatically:

Apart from one, I don't think we have had, no [Int 7].

Finally, making a non-ERA linkage point:

How many senior staff? Yes, my vice-principal.

It wasn't linked with ERA though [Int 4].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Mulling over the question before responding.

4.4.5.1.2 Reports of senior staff not leaving colleges following the ERA

Short answers accompanied most nil returns to this question:

Well none really [Int 6].

None [Int 12].

None [Int 13].

Clarification of the terms of the question: "Do you mean as a result of natural wastage or?" was answered "Well really I was thinking in terms of ERA but... I'm thinking of LMC¹ really." which brought the response: "No, not really"² [Int 15].

4.4.5.1.3 Some linkages between senior staff leaving and the ERA

Changes to the college management structure were explained in one principal's response: "And so one new one has come in so we now have four, and the continuing ones have taken a vow, a different approach." Prompting: "This is a job description change...?" encouraged the response: "Yes, it's a whole ethos change." and, pursuing the subject further: "Was their leaving linked with the education reform act?", attracted the ambivalent response: "Well yes and no. I mean it's just a change in approach isn't it. So yes, but I felt the college had been

¹ Local Management of Colleges - the section of the 1988 Act dealing with the delegation of responsibilities to college governors and principals (see also note to chapter 4.4.5.1).

² Again this alerted the slight doubt about the underlying reasons for senior staff leaving (see footnote in chapter 4.4.5.1).

developing along certain lines anyway without the education reform act coming in¹" [Int 8].

Another slightly uncertain response stated simply:

I think the answer to the question is yes [Int 11].

Asked about a certain course of action with respect to a senior staff member leaving: "Was that linked with LMC and ERA.", one principal replied: "It was. He was a bit tired at 55, he saw that the heat in the kitchen was a bit hot and he'd rather not be in it.", and describing the results of this, together with another vacancy, continued: "The other one was a chap of 37 who used us as a launch pad to a better job. And that gave me the golden opportunity, two senior vacancies, which triggered the reorganisation because I had the money to play with." This scenario was pursued with the supplementary prompt: "So that was the chicken, and the egg was -": "I started with a pilot when the head of business studies, business and technology went. I didn't replace him for twelve months, I split up that department into three divisions and piloted on three divisional heads², and that experiment proved to me we shouldn't go back, we should go forward to the whole college" [Int 14].

Drawing attention to a salient point in one discussion: "The more important question was, was their leaving linked with ERA and the answer to that was no really wasn't it.", drew the brief but ambiguous response: "Not directly"³ [Int 1].

¹ Another example of the aforementioned doubts about the unwillingness to ascribe credit for development to the Act (See also chapters 4.4.5.1 and 4.4.5.1.2).

² Usually senior teaching staff on senior lecturer grade.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details, again raising the coyness factor about linkage with ERA (See also chapters 4.4.5.1; 4.4.5.1.2 and 4.4.5.1.3).

Or, in another situation when seeking clarification: "...and that isn't in any way linked to the education reform act..?", was informed "None of our staff have left. We've got the same senior management team and we've actually grown it by two since ERA [Int 3].

And another, when questioned: "but it wasn't because of ERA?", gave the rather intricate reply: "He would have moved even without ERA. So it's not really linked with ERA although it was convenient" [Int 5].

Referring back in another interview to an earlier discussion: "So really the whole of your management as it were is the same people revamped, as you described earlier, doing different functions and so on?"¹ achieved the monosyllabic reply: "Yes" [Int 12].

4.4.5.2 Principals' feelings about management freedom following the ERA

Question: **5.2 Do you feel you have more management freedom, post ERA,** brought the anticipated response illustrated in figure 7.1.478².

4.4.5.2.1 More management freedom following the ERA

Three interviewees succinctly and unequivocally replied:

Yes [Ints 4,13 and14].

Positive responses were individually intonated in the following instances, some preceding additional comments³:

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See chapter 7 for details of figure.

³ See full transcript on attached disk and chapter 4.4.5.2.3 for further details.

The answer is yes we have and it's greatly appreciated [Int 3].

Yes, the answer is yes [Int 1].

Yes, definitely [Int 5].

Yes, you have¹ [Int 6].

Yes. Considerably more [Int 7].

Five-two, the answer's yes [Int 10].

Yes, the answer to five-two is yes [Int 11].

and

First² the answer to five-two must be yes [Int 15].

4.4.5.2.2 Accountability and responsibility following ERA

Two principals also identified the obverse characteristics, appending comments about accountability and responsibility³:

More responsibility, more accountability in a way, not quite sure⁴. Freedom is one thing, but there's the other side of the coin... there is more freedom to take decisions but there's much greater responsibility and accountability for them [Int 1].

Or enunciated more concisely:

More responsibility but more freedom in that sense [Int 5].

¹ Meaning: Yes we have.

² See chapter 4.4.5.2.3 for additional comments.

³ There is very little doubt that the issues of accountability and responsibility were uppermost in most principals' minds when responding to these questions (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

⁴ This was a 'thinking aloud' process in a carefully thought out reply.

4.4.5.2.3 Some general comments about freedom and responsibility following the ERA

Discussions ranged around what forms the freedom had adopted, opening up further lines of inquiry, for instance as one explained freedom had enabled the college to:

(change) the technician structure for example, we've created technician teams which we'd been unable to do with the LEA prior to ERA. We've totally changed the administrative structure again¹ which had been outstanding since reorganisation in 1987 [Int 2]

Another explanation included a not untypical² revelation about local authority reactions to the changes: "...but this county hasn't let go of too many of the reins compared with some other counties." Pressing this point the author asked: "What is the attitude of yourself and your colleagues about this, are you pushing them or are you - are they things that you're happy that they do keep³?", which cajoled the interviewee into replying: "I think we would have done. I mean it was really like personnel' and treasurers' departments and various other departments at county hall still wanted us to play things by the old rules, despite delegation⁴. And it's a question of ongoing debate really as to how the FE Principals see their management responsibilities under delegation as compared to

¹ Meaning: which has also...

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Meaning : content to relinquish these newly won powers to the LEA.

⁴ Referring to delegation of powers to colleges under the ERA.

how the FE and various departments¹ see them [Int 6]. Conversely, in another college a disparate situation prevailed:

I have to say prior to ERA I don't think I had much interference with the curriculum management of this college or the personnel management; I have to say that, although people see this county as very interventionist. They have their policy steers and they can jump on people, very bureaucratic. New technology: you know, everything had to go up to a committee and I always used to say they regarded an electric kettle as new technology, you know, that was their state of the art. But I have to be fair, no-one has ever interfered with the curriculum management or the personnel management to my knowledge in this college [Int 9].

Similarly, in a reportedly supportive and unobtrusive authority situation² the interviewee replied with a starkly negative:

No.

provoking the author to encourage further revelations: "Which implies that you had a lot³ before really doesn't it? The monosyllabic response "Yes." was probed further by the question: "How much. I mean, did you have complete virement across budgets and this sort of thing?", which enticed additional clarification:

¹ The further education and other local authority departments.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Meaning: a lot of freedom.

"Well the answer's yes... this is why I regret the disappearing...¹ I won't say they didn't care², because they cared deeply, but nobody hassled you." Searching for additional details about this generous LEA delegation to the college the author then prompted: "So if you wanted another head of department or a new senior lecturer, or wanted to reorganise...³" enticing the totally revealing reply:

"Absolutely. Whatever." [Int 12].

In another instance the interjected question: "Can I dwell on that for a second? I suppose it's important in a way. How do you sense these freedoms, how are they managed?", attracted the reply: "Oh I think it goes back in part to changed relationship with the LEA, it goes back to the changed nature of the Governing Body." Pursuing this theme the author asked: "So a little more than just budgetary things?" The answer: "It's never a long way away from budgeting, but not budget in terms of the amount of money you've got, but rather what you can do with it...", led into the following topic: "How far down the college, into the staff, do you feel that this sense of freedom is?" which in turn provoked the explanation: "I think now this has gone a long way down this college because put it this way... I mean it's difficult for me to say this knowing that I'm correct⁴. All I can do is just read feed-backs...⁵ I think that for example the way I manage in a manner that lets people, without too much risk to myself, take on responsibilities." Investigating another line arising from this the author asked: "I was going to ask you the question about risk and to what degree do you sense

¹ Meaning the LEA's powers being delegated to the Governors: and what was perceived as moves towards Central Government control (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

² Referring to the LEA.

³ Meaning and understood to mean : reorganise the college management.

⁴ Meaning: discerning whether or not I'm correct.

⁵ Meaning: listen to information imparted to me.

that there's a feeling of risk to staff within this freedom?", which was queried: "Do you mean on their part?" and being confirmed: "Yes.", continued: "Quite a lot... I hope that that's not an imperfect perception on my part. (The) particular answer to your question about how far down; I've several times referred to this team manager cadre¹, that's 20 odd people. You know you're talking about a big chunk of the college's staff who now have got delegated responsibilities in a lot of areas." Again the point was pressed further: "And with those delegated responsibilities, access to formal recognised paths with information and..?" and answered: "Yes, increasing... and in fact this is a problem in itself, because they're now beginning to realise the workload that's involved and kick a little bit, say(ing) 'you know we're being asked to do an impossible job' [Int 7]".

Attempting to assess the rationality of the new-found freedom in another case the author sought to frame a question: "How does this feel to you, how do you feel you've - in what sense do you feel it?", which was acknowledged: "I think we're all looking towards 1993...² In a sense because there are no end of frustrations to do with largely resource issues and constraints on capital expenditure... going out to tender for cleaning. It's just a waste of time, there's no point in giving you freedoms and then tying you up with all of this... at the moment being part of the local authority means you have to follow a lot of bureaucratic procedures which encumbers them and imposed by national government. So I feel sorry for them"³ [Int 15].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Referring to the Government announcements in the White Paper : 'Education and Training for the 21st Century...1991'.

³ Meaning : sorry for the LEA which was reportedly burdened by Central Government bureaucracy.

4.4.5.3 Principals' perceptions of change in college size since ERA/LMC

Question **5.3 Has your college size grown/diminished since ERA/LMC.** is represented in figure 7.1.479¹.

4.4.5.3.1 Perceptions of growth since ERA/LMC

The 73% who felt that their institutions had grown included principals from all types and sizes of college. There was a propensity to give unhesitatingly abbreviated replies to this question², although some did extend their answers a little giving details which are included in chapter 4.4.5.3.3. Answers ranged from one word replies:

Yes [Int 11].

Grown [Int 10].

to slightly more expanded yet not expansive responses:

It's grown [Int 1].

We have grown, since ERA [Int 2].

We've grown since LMC [Int 3]

Yes it's grown since ERA [Int 4]

It has grown [Int 13]

Delineating between large and small increases was not commonplace:

It's grown enormously [Int 14].

It's grown significantly since ERA [Int 12].

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² It was thought that as this subject was known in some detail to most of the interviewees and that there were widely held expectations of a burgeoning FE sector, this encouraged apt, truncated replies.

to

It's grown a little bit more [Int 15],
and one interviewee introduced a slight element of doubt:

It's increased I think, yes¹ [Int 9].

4.4.5.3.2 Perceptions of no growth since ERA/LMC

Some interviewees were non-committal, offering cautiously worded responses:

Well it's more or less where it is² [Int 5]

The apparently enigmatic statement: "Well it's the same but changed" [Int 6],
was indicative of other replies³ in that growth in some areas was being offset by
diminution in others.

The retort: "College is about the same size" [Int 7]. was straightforwardly put
without further explanation.

The following response was the only admission of reduction in size in the
sample, again stated without embellishment:

It's diminished [Int 8].

4.4.5.3.3 Some general comments about college size following ERA/LMC

A direct connection between the 1988 Act and growth was made in the

¹ In the author's opinion this reply was symptomatic of principals' wishes not to indicate any diminution of work which would have been contrary to the Government's expectations of the colleges at this time (This also applies to some of the replies in chapter 4.4.5.3.2).

² Meaning: remained the same size.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

additional comment¹:

and partly as a result of ERA and LMC [Int 13].

Details of expansion rates as well as historical and prospective relationships were outlined in the comment:

...by about 5 or 6% but we grew very significantly in the year before LMC, and I have every confidence that we can grow more as time goes on [Int 3].

Referring to a previous discussion², both growth and decay were explained:

but I told you about the growth before, about going up and down [Int 4].

Growth in some areas being offset by decline in others was also implied in the reply:

in terms of general size, it's not diminished any way [Int 5].

And, talking in terms of the overall staffing of an institution one explained:

I mean, we are taking on, I suppose, more administration people³ because of all the requirements that are coming along [Int 6]

¹ It was noticeable from attitudes and oral inflections in a number of interviews that there were many accepted associations between ERA/LMC and college growth (see full transcript on attached disk for additional indications).

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details and chapters 4.4.1.2 and 4.4.1.3(d) for additional information about college recruitment.

³ Many colleges had started, or were considering, the process of expanding their office staffs in view of the extra administrative burden on institutions following the Act.

4.4.5.4 Perceptions of ability to maintain/improve college buildings since ERA/LMC

Question: **5.4 Have you been able to maintain/improve your buildings since ERA/LMC** is outlined in Figure 7.1.480¹.

4.4.5.4.1 Ability to maintain college buildings since ERA/LMC

The impression gained from many of these discussions was a singleness of purpose in tackling what was portrayed as an urgent, sometimes complex task following ERA/LMC:

Maintenance is a problem [Int 13].

We are maintaining them but I think that's a problem we face. Without it being the fault of anybody I think we're already on a slippery slide towards seeing our buildings deteriorate in quality and they are as you know, I mean, a substantial asset for the college; at least on this main site. And it's a problem that's grown and I'll have to do something about it [Int 7].

A number of colleges moved swiftly to establish self-help facilities:

We have improved the buildings I think, because we've taken on some of our own maintenance staff. So we have for example a painter and decorator, we could never get anybody before² [Int 2].

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

Several indicated assurance¹, sometimes with the help of supportive LEAs:

We've been able to maintain them all right [Int 4].

I've been able to improve my buildings, yes, and maintain it. Still a lot of support from the LEA in that and actually one of the things I've been doing over the last couple of years preparing for ERA and afterwards [Int 5]

Yes we have been able to maintain, so that hasn't really affected us yet [Int 6].

Not all principals felt comfortable with the lack of progress made:

We've touched on that and the answer is basically no we haven't done very well in terms of maintaining and improving our buildings. In fact we've done very badly and it is a worry. We haven't had the funding to do it [Int 3]

In one case the ambivalent answer: "Again, yes and no." was stimulated with the prompt: "You mentioned a project that you'd done...²?", which was responded to with the equally evasive reply: "Oh yes, I think it's a whole new business, premises, maintenance and premises development, again it's a budget question" [Int 1].

4.4.5.4.2 Ability to improve college buildings since ERA/LMC

Unpretentious admissions in some cases masked much pioneering work done by

² Meaning : it was difficult to obtain services for this work through the previous LEA route.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See chapter 4.4.4.2 for further details.

colleges, and in some instances LEAs, on improving college premises¹:

Improvement - yes in small ways [Int 4].

We've improved the buildings inside, but we've not been able to do much else [Int 10].

...improvement yes we have done that [Int 13].

Not all interviewees were diffident about their achievements, or LEA assistance where it applied, in this sphere:

Yes, vast improvements, I think that was one of the first things we learned to do [Int 14].

I've had some big improvements. My creche is being extended at the moment, that's LEA supported. They've improved the (named) building over the last two years... a new science block has opened, so there's things happening all the time.

So I'm very happy with that [Int 5].

Others were keen to mention the problems being faced²:

We're certainly not improving it and we're having great difficulty in maintaining it.

Queried about college support staff involvement: "How much of this is done by yourselves...", revealed a reply indicating the LEA's reluctance to delegate this responsibility to college management³:

Well, we still have to put tenders up to technical

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk and particularly chapter 4.4.5.4.2 for further details.

³ See DES Circular 9/88 Section 4.3 for further details about the degree of delegation expected by the DES.

services and we're very disturbed that we're getting quotes from them that are far more expensive compared to when you put it out on the quiet to a local tenderer [Int 9].

4.4.5.4.3 Some general comments about college buildings following ERA/LMC

Talking about awareness of the magnitude of maintenance and repairs needed in the college one respondent said: "...for our own part I think we're much more aware (of) many of the things that need to be done, only we now can do¹ them." Acknowledging this: "Right, yes.", the interviewer asked: "And there's nothing that you've had to shelve because of budgets, that you needed doing; on simple maintenance for instance.", which was laconically answered: "Not really, if it's got to be done, it's got to be done." [Int 1]. In another instance the author, recognising that finance had been transferred from one heading to another, added: "So switch resources to...?" arousing the entrepreneurial rejoinder: "So our maintenance I think has significantly improved and we are also selling that to the College of Art and Design as a service, so that should get some income for us [Int 2].

Exposing a universal ploy², one principal understated with refreshing openness techniques now accompanying improvements to college buildings³:

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Such tasks generally needed to be less than £10,000 to be within the limits of 'Competitive Tendering' under Part I of the Local Government Act 1980 (amended in 1988). For further details see DES Circular 9/88 sections 4.19 to 4.30.

I mean, delegatory budgetary control does mean you can do a bit of beautifying; that's easy isn't it? You don't have to mask around that you're doing something else. Curriculum development by putting pot plants in the lounge is no longer a necessary strategy, you can do it openly, and we've done a bit of beautifying... [Int 7]

A humble start introduced a chronicle of enterprising developmental activity:

I would suggest that we've just about been able to maintain. Well of course we've had all the expansion so we've actually funded a lot of expansion ourselves. Buying portacabins and things so I wouldn't actually blame the Authority for that¹ [Int 11].

The problem of deteriorating real-estate was outlined in a number of cases²:

"We've still got - like again all colleges, we have some buildings of low quality which need an awful lot of money spending on them, that is still a problem..."

This was pursued by the author who asked: "Have you had an audit done by your Authority...?"³, to which the answer was: "No" [Int 13].

Enterprise was demonstrated in a number of situations⁴, as one interviewee explained: "We had 12,000⁵ delegated maintenance, first thing we did was bought a set of tools for the caretakers and a set of paint brushes." Questioned:

¹ See also chapter 4.4.4.1 for further details.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ This was a mechanism utilised by LEAs for ascertaining the state of college buildings in readiness for handing over responsibility to governing bodies under LMC.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁵ Meaning £12,000 had been added to the college governors' budget for maintaining the fabric of the college buildings.

"What sort of reaction have you had from that?¹", the principal responded: "I've got no union reaction from NUPE or NALGO...²"; and proceeding: "We've saved money of course because the numbers of times we previously hired a joiner to put that door back on it's hinges (at) £60³, the caretaker's done it in two hours; even if that's overtime hours that's only about £12 perhaps, plus a few screws. The local plumbers and joiners have lost a lot of business"[Int 14].

Describing college buildings improvement activities, another identified the enormity of the task under consideration:

We've certainly been able to take on board certain improvements which we wouldn't have been able to do previously, but having said that we have got a range of old buildings that are deteriorating and...⁴

Pursuing this line of discussion the author asked: "How will you cope with that? Supposing you've got a big problem with an old building getting older... but the problem's yours⁵?", the interviewee responded:

Yes, I think you're going to have to be able to produce a much better case than we have in the past⁶ and that will require us to have better means of measuring space utilisation and that's going to be the key to it. You could say we have a (high) occupancy and good market

¹ Meaning what sort of staff (or union) reaction have you had to your action.

² National Union of Public Employees and National Association of Local Government Officers.

³ A hypothetical example of an item at a cost to the college of £60.

⁴ This sentence terminated in a 'knowing shrug'.

⁵ Meaning and understood to mean: no longer the LEAs's problem.

⁶ Meaning : supply details to the newly proposed FEFC, suggested in the freshly published White Paper: 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991'

research shows growth in this area, and what have you; then you're going to stand up better than someone who just says well I've got an old building...¹ they're going to say well why don't you get out of it and live within what you've already got, and sell it or something like that. I think if you want the money you've got to produce a better case. That's something we've not spent a great deal of time and effort doing in the past because it's been done by the Authority [Int 15].

Identifying another aspect of improving college premises, one respondent added:

And again it's part of the quality thing. If our clients can't experience a reasonably redecorated building then they're going to be going elsewhere [Int 3].

Some of the complications encountered when trying to optimise the services of college caretaking staff in maintaining premises were outlined in a philosophical manner:

We did negotiate in the support service restructuring that I did last year, that caretakers would take on certain aspects of maintenance. Very difficult. NUPE we had negotiating, that was very tough... With all the constraints, you know: they can't put up big ladders and they can't do this, that and the other; but at least

¹ A deliberately unfinished explanation implying that it may not be heavily populated.

it's there¹. Now if you can tackle your maintenance on an every day basis you can stop minor things becoming major and long term you can save money. Unfortunately the backlog of not doing minor maintenance is with us and I can't see any way of knocking that off at the moment [Int 9].

4.4.5.5 Principals' changes to college internal management structures since ERA

Question: **5.5 Have you changed your internal management structure since ERA...** is outlined in Figure 7.1.481².

4.4.5.5.1 Changed college management structures since ERA

Starting with the author's question: "You've answered the next one haven't you: Have you changed your internal management structure. Yes³?", the respondent replied:

"I think so⁴, you'll read about that in the plan anyway⁵ [Int 1].

The response: "Yes we have", was followed by the proposition: "Yes, you were in the process of change when...", which occasioned the interjection:

¹ Meaning: agreement had been reached.

² See chapter 7 for details of figure.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ Meaning : I think I have replied (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

⁵ The respondent generously gave the author a large amount of printed material about the college's management, which was taken into account when analysing the responses.

We moved from a departmental structure to a matrix¹ structure but, I hasten to add, that was not motivated by Education Reform Act² [Int 3].

The questioning of the influence of the Education Reform Act was reiterated in several cases³:

I've changed my internal management structure since ERA yes. Changed it quite markedly really. But it's following a pattern and I would have changed it even without ERA [Int 5].

Yes we did change it but we didn't do it particularly as a result of ERA we did it as a result of merging the colleges [Int 15].

Continuing a previous conversation one interviewee added:

We now have a Sites and Services officer ... We've changed our internal management structure significantly since ERA, as you've already heard⁴ [Int 7].

Scathingly critical of some previous practices, another acerbic response reflected a strong desire to democratise a management situation:

Internal management structure changed, yes. Because there wasn't management here, it was paternalism of a particularly and what I would call nasty and invidious

¹ See FESC Coombe Lodge Report Vol 21 No 2 'Managing Flexible College Structures' Part V for further information about non-departmental structures.

² See also note to chapter 4.4.5.5 for further evidence of this reaction.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ Referring to an earlier response (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

type [Int 8].

One brief rejoinder simply stated:

Yes is the answer ... [Int 11],

and even more concise:

"Yes" [Int 14].

Introducing the topic of management reorganisation for one interviewee, the author prompted: "You haven't really have you, not since ERA?¹". Correcting the misrepresentation the interviewee replied: "Well we did do support services staffing we put some new posts in like building and services manager and things like that. So the support services have had a restructuring since ERA [Int 9].

In other situations changes included some regarded by principals as less than major²:

Not radically, but incrementally I would say. Yes [Int 13].

4.4.5.5.2 Perceptions of immutable or imminently changeable college management structures since ERA

A clear explanation accompanied one reply:

We haven't changed our internal management structure,
because of the reorganisation in 1987/88 [Int 2].

On the other hand:

No we haven't [Int 12],

contrasted with more expanded revelations:

¹ The author incorrectly assumed that as a result of previous reorganisation it was legitimate to lead the interviewee towards a monosyllabic confirmation and was proved wrong (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Well there's quite an important point there, that we introduced three years' ago now, concept of accountabilities for all the senior managers, based on performance review¹ [Int 10].

Opportunism tinged the cautious comments of one interviewee: "Not yet. I mean we did try and set up a structure in lieu of ERA coming but we will be changing it from September 1992 because certain staff will be leaving." This was followed with the prompt: "Ah! and that gives you the opportunity to do something. From a sort of departmental system to...²?" which was answered:

"No, basic college structure stays the same" [Int 6].

The defensive reaction against ascribing total credit to the ERA was repeated³ in the comment:

Well we're going to. We're going to change it yes.

That's partly in response to ERA but I think we need to in the new climate [Int 4].

4.4.5.5.3 Some general comments about college management structure changes

Some very informative discussions about management structures, their strengths and weaknesses, took place during answers to this question. As one stated: "I think matrix was what was needed anyway..." a theme taken up in the spur:

¹ See chapter 4.4.5.5.3 for further details.

² The question remained unfinished due to the contiguous reply.

³ See notes to chapters 4.4.5.5; 4.4.5.5.1 & 4.4.5.5.3 for further evidence of this attitude.

"Very interesting comment, so you wouldn't have a will to change, because you like it.", invoking the response: "No¹, It matches what I think you need in the sort of four functional directors across college and sixteen divisions, or fifteen perhaps; fifteen divisions providing the operational (programme areas)" [Int 2]. Describing a developing college scene, one interviewee went into some detail about the discussions which had taken place within the institution; with some additional personal comments:

It was motivated very strongly by a feeling amongst virtually all the managers² that the departmental system that we'd got was not responsive enough to change, and we found it had got too much inertia in it. People had got so accustomed to coming to meetings wearing a departmental hat that it was inhibiting cross college thinking and we decided that the only way to do it was not piece meal but to go through a major reorganisation and that's what we did... So we restructured, not because of LMC³, but we're glad we did it because it looks as though we've got...⁴ We will be I'm certain into a highly competitive environment, more competitive than we've had in the past, if these White Paper proposals go through. Unless we are very actively marketing and promoting...

¹ Meaning : no change, in agreement with the author's suggestion.

² Members of the college management team.

³ See notes to chapters 4.4.5.5; 4.4.5.5.1 & 4.4.5.5.2 for further evidence of this attitude.

⁴ This pause- break was born through adopting a characteristically cautious approach to the value judgment.

we will lose our competitive edge and our market share and we can't afford to do that and because marketing is so very strongly linked with income, because the better our marketing the better our student numbers and therefore the better our income...[Int 3].

An explanation of one type of matrix structure of management adopted was described in the following situation:

It's gone all matrixy but there are basically three delivery faculties¹, and there's an administrative faculty and then there are three faculties which stand outside the delivery faculties. So there's a matrix organisation but I'm not a strong fan of matrix in several ways, that's the funny thing about it. But I've devolved a lot of responsibility down to SL² level: to divisional leaders. So I've changed it.

Asked: "And first thoughts?", responded:

So far so good. Yes, there's some positive stuff come out of it [Int 5].

Querying the status of one college management structure the author inquired: "But you changed formerly from a departmental tradition to...?", which swiftly drew the revealing response: "We were a matrix and what happened was nobody would take responsibility because there were too many people involved with all sorts of things and the people that were paid the highest salaries had the least

¹ Academic faculties.

² Senior Lecturer.

responsibility¹". Following this with a reminder of a previous comment: "And from what you've told me you're really down to a functional system now.", which induced the information: "We've got three assistant principals and I think it is very important that the one who looks after support staff is paid exactly the same as the other two², and they are well up on management spine...³ And then of course linked up with that is going corporate isn't it: getting payroll systems and personnel systems, or buying in services...⁴" Pursuing this line of inquiry the author asked: "What's the initial reactions that you got on this one..? they're taking on these tasks, these challenges..."; continuing to clarify this question somewhat with the explanation: "Change in attitudes within the senior management team? - do you perceive change?⁵", extracting the acknowledgement: "Oh yes, yes⁶" [Int 8].

A different perspective on changing management was explained in the following account:

So we have a performance review system which was introduced for the Principal, the Vice Principals and

¹ This general theme embraced a not uncommon feeling among college principals at the time (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

² This was a clear reference to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or equivalent - a strong feeling of many college principals at the time (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

³ Many college principals were investigating the possibility of engaging CAOs on the 'management spine', a pay scale hitherto preserved for academic staff. (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

⁴ A forward glance towards proposals outlined in the 1991 White Paper 'Education and Training for the 21st Century...'

⁵ Meaning and understood to mean : changes in attitudes from other college senior managers.

⁶ There was a considerable degree of relieved satisfaction noticeable in this reply.

SAO¹ and is now for Heads of Department. So that has, therefore, been a big change in managerial accountability. I think it has been for the better; we had some hiccups: difficulty of understanding, loss in pride, but I think it's been beneficial. The only person...² it affects my pay in a sense that I don't get all my pay. It's a very nominal sum, a couple of thousand or something³. And the same with the Vice-Principals', but it doesn't affect anybody else's pay. So that's been quite a change [Int 10].

Encouraging further comments on another initial response, the author prompted: "You still mention heads of departments so presumably it's a traditional system with a functional tier?", which activated the explanation: "Yes we have six what we call quick on delivery heads, and eight courses and students"⁴, and then accommodation, and (soon) we'll have an Associate Principal who is going to be concerned with resources... There will be an academic registrar who's going to set up the central admissions unit... and then (continue) as curriculum and marketing - which is curriculum development...⁵ that has now taken on the link to staff development function, which will also lead us on for the present⁶." This was

¹ Senior Administrative Officer (the equivalent of CAO).

² A slight pause on the realisation that the principal was not quite the only member of staff affected.

³ Meaning : the amount of money withheld by the authority in a total salary of approximately £40,000 per annum.

⁴ Meaning: eight heads carrying these responsibilities.

⁵ An unfinished sentence by way of explaining the meaning of curriculum in this context.

⁶ A colloquial phrase meaning get us through a preliminary phase of our development.

followed by the author's reminder: "And did you say earlier that you hadn't got a vice-principal?", leading to the following personal revelations: "No... I think that the Vice-Principal's role is old hat... because if you remember, vice-principals were never asked for by the colleges, they were imposed weren't they...? people used to go from head of department to principal didn't they? and then they sort of stuck this thing in. Initially I think people just saw it as a slight stopping over for a year/eighteen months. Then it got to be two or three years and now there are a lot of people¹ and there aren't enough colleges are there? and so a lot of people get stuck... I can't see where they fit anywhere; not unless you have an absentee principal. I mean, if you've got a principal who's never in college then I suppose you need a vice-principal, you need somebody to look after the shop. But if I'm away, you know, we've got that covered"² [Int 13].

4.4.5.6 Principals' perceptions on whether college specialisms had changed since ERA

Question: **5.6 What are your college specialisms... Have you changed them since ERA** gave rise to answers depicted in Figure 7.1.482³.

4.4.5.6.1 College specialisms had changed

Probing previous comments made by one the author asked: "And five-six-one⁴ really is have you changed them since ERA. You've been talking... about going

¹ Meaning : a lot of post-holders with the grade of vice-principal.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further explanation.

³ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

⁴ Referring to the rider to question 5.6.

more vocational and that really is a policy shift isn't it?", deriving the enigmatic response¹:

"Well yes, in a sense that we have been encouraged to train" [Int 9].

Commencing hesitantly the following interviewee's response resolved positively:

Five-six is yes we have². Well I don't think we have actually. I think the basic broad base on which we build our college is subjects of a practical nature and always will be, but certainly we now cater for the a whole range of subjects. But the answer is yes we have changed [Int 11].

In response to the question about specialisms the next respondent replied: "We haven't got any." However the issue was pursued further with the reminder: "Broad I would have said from what you're telling me.", continuing: "You mentioned degrees?" which solicited the additional reaction: "Oh yes, actually that's true, yes." Pressing the point further the author asked: "Not as a result of ERA though?". "No, it's got nothing to do with ERA." Again pursuing this issue it was suggested: "Nothing to do with ERA; just coincided with... within that time frame?. Then, changing tack the author asked: "Was this an initiative of your own or were you approached?", which received a more enthusiastic response: "Yes, it was mine." Tracking this course a little further: "It was? So you approached a local Poly³ as you say, and they were receptive to the idea?", the author received the confirmatory acknowledgement: "Very" [Int 12].

¹ See chapter 4.4.5.6.3 for further information.

² Then, on reflection, choosing a diametrically opposite point of view, later reverting to the original.

³ Polytechnic, later transposed to university status along with other polytechnics in the higher education sector.

Some colleges saw their remit as virtually open ended:

Yes, we are very broad. There are certain things we don't do but no we've obviously moved into areas like travel and tourism, leisure and recreation but the college base is still broad based [Int 13].

Following a previous comment¹, an interviewee was asked: "Well you've broadened your college specialisms considerably I think haven't you?", which elicited the following defensive response: "Well I've consolidated as well. I've taken out Motor Vehicle², I've extended into Leisure, and Care, and I've maintained the others [Int 14].

4.4.5.6.2 College specialisms had not changed

Three-fifths of the interviewees felt that the general direction of their college schedules had not changed, or had altered very little during the previous two years:

I think it would be misleading to say our specialisms have changed, they haven't really [Int 1].

We haven't changed our college specialisms [Int 2].

They haven't really changed since the Education Reform Act [Int 3].

Or put succinctly:

Not really [Int 4].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Meaning closed the motor vehicle department (or section).

One negative response was accompanied by a brief explanation of how the LEA had rationalised courses between its adjacent colleges:

Well we do half the curriculum, (a nearby college) does the other half. We do business studies, performing arts, engineering in a big way, computing, general education - that's A levels and so on - we do special needs, we do recreation and leisure. We do English as a second language, that's quite a big thing. And they've not changed since ERA, no [Int 5].

By way of contrast another interviewee felt the college embraced a wide curriculum: "Well we've got everything." Queried: "General?", agreed: "Yes." Questioned further: "Yes, I think that's going to be the case for this type of college in this type of area isn't it?", the respondent added: "And ERA hasn't really changed it." The additional prompt: "No? You haven't had to cut down in your areas because of..?" solicited the instantaneous rejoinder: "Not because of ERA, no" [Int 15]. Referring to a previous statement¹, one said: "Well I think you know that.", acknowledged with: "You've mentioned them.", leading to the confirmation: "And they've not substantially changed or the present"² [Int 7].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A cautious comment reflecting the thoughts of many principals who were waiting before reacting to initiatives by other colleges, indicating hopes that there would be no 'poaching' as a result of the new freedoms (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

4.4.5.6.3 Some general comments about college specialisms

Distinguishing between types of change it was explained:

I suppose in general they've not changed significantly.

I think what has changed is not so much the vocational areas as the style of delivery towards modularised courses and short courses, pick-up, etcetera., etcetera [Int 1].

In another case, conceding a point:

Although we perhaps do more high level work than we did before. HND in Leisure for example [Int 2].

The subject of strategic planning was mentioned in a salutary manner by one who disclosed:

I've talked about introducing beauty therapy, but that's not really ERA linked - Oh¹, it is ERA linked. I think the local authority might have stopped me, because it's not part of the strategic plan; and they recognise now that the strategic plan doesn't... You can drive a coach and horses through the strategic plan², it doesn't hold water any more... [Int 4].

Acknowledging the need but disappointed with previous lost opportunities, one divulged:

¹ There was a sudden and distinct change in direction at this juncture, showing signs of remembering other factors.

² See DES Circular 9/88 Part 2, particularly chapters 2.32; 3.51 to 3.62 and Appendix B for further information on the planning process. See also figure 7.1.504 in chapter 7 of thesis for a working example of strategic planning procedures.

Moving but not really changed them a lot, no. It should have started some time ago, it's a bit late...¹ [Int 8]

Having disclosed areas of change previously² an interviewee went on to clarify:

There's another area though that's important where staff have changed over specialisms. We have a lot of students with special educational needs who come on to discreet courses but we are trying to meet another target of integrating more students on to main stream courses. That means that a lot of the staff need to get help and training on how to deal with *students with* educational difficulties in mainstream courses and a lot of our staff have taken the City and Guilds 730 course which as you know enables people to acquire some basic knowledge and expertise in that area, and a lot have done that.

Asked: "Voluntarily?", it was confirmed:

Voluntarily, yes [Int 9].

Problems of multi-site management entered into another discussion. Prompted:

"Here again it's the (multi) sites, did you tend to put one block of subjects on one site and one on another (etcetera) or did you duplicate them?" the interviewee replied "On balance yes we have...³ it's not always easy to do it because of the cost of moving things about but generally speaking... yes."

Taking this discussion another step forward the author asked: "Did you have to

¹ There was an irritated gesture of resigned distaste at the end of this statement.

² See chapter 4.4.5.6.1 for further details.

³ Meaning: have put subject areas on separate sites.

move them around to achieve that or...?", which enticed the instructive response: "Yes, yes we did. We've had some upheaval but we've stretched it over a long time... Most of the O and A level is concentrated (at) various (locations), we run what we call...¹ community based operations. If we've to run it really across the community we'll run it but on a small scale"² [Int 10].

Describing a developing relationship between a local college and one of the East Midlands Polytechnics one revealed plans of substantial magnitude: And the Polytechnic has been in this place³ and they realise it isn't an itsy bitsy college, it's really something quite special and they are encouraging us to develop our own degrees, we actually just don't take their degrees. The work that we are doing here with our graduates, undergraduates⁴, is our work that is validated with the Poly⁵. And we're just buying a hotel to make sure that takes place⁶. The point was taken up by the author who asked: "As a college⁷?" and was assured: "Yes.", continuing with the further revelation: "And we are going to build a very large research and development park on the site⁸ which is obviously going to be funded by industry and commerce. So the polytechnic sees this as a complementary site to their own and that has happened post ERA but not because of ERA" [Int 12].

¹ An inaudible word but, on checking, almost certainly meaning: local.

² Meaning : encouraging as little duplication as possible in different geographical areas.

³ Meaning: polytechnic staff had visited the college.

⁴ The interviewee's correction.

⁵ Polytechnic.

⁶ This was delivered in an impishly casual tone, obviously intended to have maximum impact.

⁷ Meaning, and understood to mean 'not the LEA or the polytechnic' but your college.

⁸ Meaning the college campus site.

4.4.5.7 Principals' perceptions of whether college governors had received adequate training in readiness for LMC

Question: **5.7 Do you consider that your governors have received adequate training for LMC following ERA**, gave rise to replies outlined in Figure 7.1.483¹.

4.4.5.7.1 College governors had received adequate training

Although the smaller part of the sample felt that governors had received adequate training, many explained in some detail what training had been offered and why, in some cases, this had been cautiously presented to and reluctantly received by governors². Bets were hedged in the remarks:

On Governor training I would say that certainly the Governors will I think have received adequate training and we had a very good training programme. Much of it was run in house and all the Governors will actually have taken some training and we've given them opportunity to identify for themselves what training they want [Int 3].

There has been training. I think they've had as much training as they would be willing to have [Int 4].

Another affirming the success of the venture stated: "I would say so, yes. They've been offered training programmes and we shall continue that policy." Asked

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

about governors' considerations of the programmes: "Well received?", the interviewee replied: "I would say so, yes" [Int 10].

Agreement was accompanied by qualification in a response which commenced:

"Yes." and continued:

But I'd comment on what sort of training. I think what the County did was fairly useless and very few went.

I've always believed that the prime responsibility for training Governors was mine and I've done that by way of small group lunches, tours and explanation. So I've brought all Governors in, in parties of three or four.

And copious information; so my reports to Governors and papers to Governors are typically fuller rather than thinner because I regard them as part of their ongoing education process [Int 14].

4.4.5.7.2 College governors had not received adequate training

The majority of respondents replying negatively to the question, again wished to qualify their observations and delineate governors' predicaments:

Not really adequate, no. But none of them were particularly interested which was equally disappointing [Int 6].

One interviewee's response commenced with the virtually inaudible remark: "...¹ answer it. No, but they have received some helpful training." Asked: "From?",

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details but it was felt that the opening phrase was either 'I don't quite know how to answer it' or 'I find it difficult to answer it'. What was clear, was that the interviewee had mixed feelings about the term 'adequacy' of the training offered.

answered: "From the LEA. We set some up in house, there was a fund of money for Governors training that came to the LEA via the DES¹ and we've tapped into some of that. We've had a residential weekend and we've had sessions here...²", going on to add: "But not adequate³" [Int 7].

A more direct answer came in the form:

No I don't consider they have, but that's to do with them rather than the services that were provided [Int 8].

Critical responses were received such as the following:

No I don't. The Authority decided to do an Authority programme of Governor awareness and did phase one...⁴

And then it all seemed to get suspended... So if you're asking: have my governors...⁵ no they haven't. I think they have to learn on the job [Int 9].

A number of comments were received about shortcomings in LEA training packages for governors⁶, for example: "No I don't think so. I think the County put forward a Governor training programme last year which they managed⁷.

They actually put on courses. But this year I've managed to persuade them that they give us the money... and so we're doing our own governor training and I

¹ See DES Circular 8/88 paras 34 & 35 for further details.

² Meaning in the college. This was followed by a thoughtful pause, obviously making a point about doubts on how to respond to the discerned loosely defined term - 'adequate'.

³ The interviewee's emphasis.

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁵ Leaving the unfinished sentence to imply : 'had adequate training?'

⁶ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁷ Meaning: the LEA managed or administered.

think that will help." Asked: "Are the governors appreciating that?", the respondent replied: "I think they are, they found that the general one was O.K.¹ but in some respects was far too general to actually get anything out of it. But I think there² is a big weakness really"³ [Int 11].

Another replying abruptly and monosyllabically: "No.", was prompted: "Nothing done by the LEA for Governors?", and responded: "There is supposed to be a training programme which has never taken place." This was followed with the question: "So it wasn't governors' antipathy...?", which drew the sharp reaction: "No actually the Governors understand ERA *because of what it is we do, what I do with the Governors; but there's been no...*"⁴

This point was pursued, querying: "But there's been no sort of learning in house? You yourselves haven't laid on any special programmes for them?" Replying, the interviewee stressed: "No. No, the Authority said that they would develop a programme and I was very pleased for it to be seen that it was coming from the local Authority. But the local Authority hasn't done it." Still pursuing the issue the author inquired: "Any come back from governors on that one; have they noted the fact or have they learned enough without.", which led to the final confirmatory retort: "I think they've probably learned enough without" Int 12].

Responding with an unfinished expression:

No they haven't. We've looked at all sorts of things
but...⁵

¹ Meaning : the LEA programme; and using faint praise : was less than spectacular.

² The interviewee's emphasis.

³ Implying that the weakness lay in the LEA's style of presentation.

⁴ A deliberate sentence tail-off which conveyed the impression that the governors desired no further action to be taken.

⁵ An unfinished sentence implying: nothing has been successful.

one interviewee was pressed: "Is it that they don't want, or couldn't have?", acknowledging:

I think they don't want.

Exploring this theme the author queried: "Time?" Agreeing, the interviewee disclosed:

Time. We've tried all sorts of things like the training programme¹, a little bit of training followed by dinner, the one to one...² [Int 13].

During another discussion it was disclosed: "I think this answer's no, and it's my fault. We do our best but..."³ This was followed by the question: "Did you get any response from the Governors?", which was confirmed: "Yes we got some help from the County Council and they've had seminars and we've got an A4 binder produced." Feeling that this was as yet an incomplete reply the author persisted: "Have the Governors asked for any more?", which enjoined the rejoinder: "No, they've been very relaxed about it. It's difficult isn't it, if you are just a Governor you'll only attend five times a year. Well, plus... plus..."⁴ [Int 15].

4.4.5.7.3 Some general comments about governors' training for LMC

Recognising that a previous reply had covered this question⁵, the author

¹ Meaning the LEA training programme.

² Again an unfinished sentence implying : but nothing worked successfully.

³ An unfinished sentence implying the meaning : ' you know the difficulties?'

⁴ A 'second thoughts' mixture of barely audible sounds meaning: extra committee meetings, college events, etc.

⁵ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

commenced by suggesting: "You've answered five-seven as well.", but not discouraging the additional information:

Well if they haven't it's because of this view that I've expressed already¹. I suppose the answer is a general one. Well if they haven't it's not been for the want of trying, in many cases it's been for the want of Governors having time to spare² [Int 1].

The decisiveness with which governors abstained from LEA training programmes was indicated in an enlightening contribution which included:

The Authority did provide training for the Governors; only about, I think, less than 50% took the opportunity for the first round and only about 25% for the second round which was more specialised and...³ We are looking at other ways, perhaps of providing individual training in colleges rather than a County wide basis [Int 2].

Pragmatically one responded:

...we're trying to move to a process in future years where the training is going to be in response to where they have found for themselves a need.

Explaining:

There's been an issue that's come up in Governing Body⁴

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A number of respondents mentioned the time factor (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

³ An unfinished sentence implying: we did not consider this appropriate or, possibly, sufficient.

⁴ Given as a hypothetical example but probably based on actual experience.

and they've felt unable to do justice to it because they've lacked information and knowledge... We look after them and can give a nice meal so...¹ [Int 3].

Faltering on the definition of training one interviewee commented: "Well...² Well they've received more³ training. How can you define it? I don't think they can ever receive adequate⁴ training. They're amateurs. On the outside, aren't they?" Seeking to establish what additional training had been offered, the author inquired: "But certainly more as a result of...?" which was interrupted with the incisive response: "Yes, they've been on special programmes" [Int 5]

Explaining how the very stuff of governors' meetings can, of itself, be material for training, one clarified:

But again, you know, even the operations of the Governing Body and so on have been themselves of a training character. The way we've approached issues, almost learning on the job, there's been a fair amount of that going on... The LEAs had wanted to give a lot more training to Governors from the centre, but the Governors, in my view perhaps a little bit unfairly, and the colleges, told the LEA to get lost; they don't want that training.

¹ Ending in a silence which implied : we hope that's an encouragement to governors to attend the training session.

² A hesitant pause whilst pondering on the choice of words.

³ The interviewee's emphasis. The question of 'more than what' was pursued later in the interview.

⁴ The interviewee's emphasis.

In response to this radical reaction the supplementary question: "Time, or ?", stimulated the respondent to reply thoughtfully and concisely:

Time, timing and quality [Int 7].

The problem of governors' time was raised frequently throughout the discussions¹. As one stated: "...it's all down to time.", a comment which was queried: "So LEAs provided some, you offered some from the college, very few takers; sort of thing...?"² [Int 8].

The time element was taken up in the following interview: "What about time factors with Governors, are they willing to give time or is this a big problem?", and acknowledged in the reply: "It's been a big problem for some" [Int 10].

Analysing governors' reactions to the training and information offered, the author asked another: "What's been their reaction to this, have they...³ ?"

They declare themselves to be very happy but it's a bit of a false perception because, and I'm slightly worried about this, Governors' meetings go almost too smoothly. Either I'm a brilliant manager of them⁴ or there's so much good news it would be churlish of them to be critical [Int 14].

Seeking to identify governors' problems relating to the post-ERA situation and their associated training needs, the author asked one interviewee: "But you don't find them sitting in meetings saying: we didn't understand what on earth you were getting on to there. Ringing you up saying: there's an item on the agenda

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A question accepted with nodding consent and no further comment.

³ An unfinished sentence due to the alacrity of the interviewee's reply.

⁴ Meaning in this instance 'manager of the governors' meetings'.

here, I don't know anything about this can you help me?", which revealed the illuminating reply: "No they've been very good about it. They've accepted the explanations we've tried to give, we've given them extra input on one or two items. But inside I worry that we're a college with a ten million pound budget...¹ perhaps I shouldn't equate them to directors and yet something says that perhaps they are. It's all about understanding role² I think [Int 15].

4.4.5.8 Principals' perceptions about whether they themselves had received adequate training in readiness for LMC

Question **5.8 Do you consider that you have received adequate training for LMC following ERA** returned opinions exhibited in figure 7.1.484³.

4.4.5.8.1 College principals had received adequate training

One adamant interviewee forcefully declared: "Yes, yes. I've received all the training that I had wanted to receive." Clarification was sought by the author prompting: "That implies that you've sought it presumably.", which encouraged the self-assured response: "Where I've needed it. If I've needed to go on a day's training course I've gone; been no hindrance there" [Int 3].

Challenging the concept of externally arranged training, one reacted:

Well I think that's a bit of a chicken and egg because

I think that's up to us. I feel I personally did,

¹ A slight pause here may have been intended to allow the magnitude of this figure to 'sink in'.

² The interviewee's emphasis.

³ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

because I went out of my way to get trained¹ [Int 10].

Placing limitations on a positive reply, one interviewee truculently settled for:

Adequate, no more[Int 4].

Accepting the proposition that training adds an important dimension to the support principals required when facing changes of this magnitude², one replied: "No, I mean one never has adequate training, but we were led into it fairly well I suppose." Asked: "Have you had some help." the author was assured: "Yes.", and following this up with: "Right...?"³, was again rapidly reassured: "Yes" [Int 6].

A stereotype of many respondents reactions to the question⁴ was included in the remarks:

I think I tried to give myself adequate training because I went to a lot of courses on it before⁵, and programmes, but I think I would have probably liked more specific training [Int 9].

On the other hand there were those who 'paddled their own canoes' rather than relying on external agencies⁶:

I mean I didn't go on any courses, nobody organised my training. I don't regard that as a criticism. I mean, I would say that if I had wanted it I could have gone looking for it. It was out there wasn't it⁷ [Int 13].

¹ See chapter 4.4.5.8.3 for further details.

² Implied in the question 5.8.

³ Meaning and understood to mean : and was this satisfactory?

⁴ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁵ Meaning : before the implementation of the 1988 Act and subsequent LMC.

⁶ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Commencing with an inordinately hollow guffaw: "Ha Ha", one interviewee sobered, then almost bridged the divide between the definitives yes and no¹, continuing:

I don't know really. I suspect no. The answer to that question should be no, but I think again it depends on how much we've sorted out ourselves². You see our staff development...³ in the County, the County have had a fairly enlightened attitude you could argue [Int 11].

4.4.5.8.2 College principals had not received adequate training

Weighing the pros and cons of what might be thought of as the generally accepted meaning of adequate training, one argued:

No. I ask myself have I undertaken any specific training for LMC following ERA. The answer is probably not, because I've not gone diving off to all sorts of courses to better prepare myself; though I think I've gone to those I've picked out of several which I think have been significant, and I've gone to them. Whether you call that training or not is another matter - adequate⁴ training. [Int 1]

⁷ A vernacular phrase meaning : it was available from external agencies.

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A phrase accepting that the onus, or the resources, for training principals lay with the colleges.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details of the LEA's delegation of staff development to its colleges in this instance.

⁴ The interviewee's emphasis.

Denying any knowledge of training programmes available to principals in the run up to LMC, it was contended: "I don't know of any training for LMC following ERA, for Principals and Management.", a comment explored further: "You don't?", prompting the retort: "No." The further question: "No one's set any up, none in the LEA?", extracted the information: "Only through the Governor training"¹ [Int 2]. A sanguine response included the Comments: "Well not specifically, no. Hopefully I can cope with what I've got"². Nobody knows quite what training they need to be honest." Taking this point further the author probed: "I suppose really I was trying to get at: did the LEA, or anyone else, provide anything specially for principals within the authority?", stimulating the answer: "No they've not, they talk about it..."³ [Int 5]

Accepting the inevitability of the current situation and taking solace in a personal ability to use one's native wit, an interviewee succinctly responded:

No, I haven't received adequate training. I'm relieved that I have an adequate understanding, because reacting to circumstances and thinking on my feet has got me there⁴ [Int 7].

One detractor admitted:

I would say no, but then that's my own fault because I got drawn into doing (other) things⁵ [Int 8].

¹ See chapter 4.4.5.7 for further details.

² Meaning: what previous experience I have.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further information about the perceived dilatoriness of the LEA in this respect, and also the difficulties of providing uniform training for principals with varied backgrounds, experience and responsibilities who may have differing needs.

⁴ A slang phrase meaning : has helped me to achieve a satisfactory response.

⁵ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Mild criticism about the lack of help from the normally accepted agencies was implied in the response:

I haven't received any. I mean, no must be the answer.

I suppose there are conversations at the Principals meetings...¹ but I mean if the question is: have you received adequate² training, the answer is no. I've done it myself but there's been nothing laid on [Int 12].

A more forceful reply included the observation:

No. But then I gave up expecting to be trained (several) years ago. I've always expected we've got to go out and educate ourselves. So, it's OK; but you know...³ [Int 14]

Without difficulty, one replied in a completely negative sense:

No. That's easy to answer⁴ [Int 15].

4.4.5.8.3 Some general comments about principals' training for LMC

A flexible type of help offered by the Further Education Staff College was described in the response:

And I went to Coombe Lodge, not on a course but on a

¹ An unfinished phrase contemptuously implying disapprobation of the meetings.

² The interviewee's emphasis.

³ An incomplete sentence with a strongly critical implication almost certainly intended to mean : You wouldn't think they would implement such changes without making adequate training provision for chief executives and management who have to carry them out'.

⁴ This was pursued further by the author. See chapter 4.4.5.8.3 for further details.

self study programme to prepare myself for it; so I think it's up to us, not to LEAs.

Asked: "Was there any direction at all from LEA?" the interviewee replied:

Not from LEA [Int 10].

In another instance, after a hesitant start, scant confidence was expressed in the ability of the Staff College to assist:

But I've never been one... you know, I've sort of... there's a lot of things that we do as informal: you talk to other principals and listen to each other, don't you, so that's the kind of training within one's peer group. I've never been a great believer in Coombe Lodge I'm afraid.

This was followed up by the author asking: "What about the Authority's group of Principals, have they¹ supported in this sense?", which generated the reply:

Yes, yes we work together so, if you like, we went through the experience together, helped each other [Int 13].

Low expectations were falteringly expounded by one interviewee:

But you know... but then I wasn't expecting a lot of training really. Until the day comes when this job is one which you actually go away on a three year course and you come out of it at the end as a finished college principal ready to go into a college principal's job, I think you wouldn't expect to have some of the training. And since that day will never arise...² [Int 7].

¹ The author's emphasis.

The follow-up question "Did the LEA offer any training in this respect to Principals?", stimulated feigned surprise in the reaction:

No. Good heavens! [Int 8].

Asked about principals getting together to help each other during this frenetic period: "... have the Principals got together with any special seminars?" one replied: "We did actually have a conference with the LEA which dissolved into nothingness. There's another one coming up..."¹ " The author encouraged further dialogue on the subject by inquiring: "Just dwelling on that for a second... did you find a paucity of helpmates and others?", attracting the ambivalent reply: "Yes definitely...", then softening to a more balanced approach continued: "yes and no.", going on to illustrate a widely accepted concern² in a disarmingly frank exchange:

I think one of the problems I've come across with this is: you rely on people who've got a little bit of expertise. I mean, somebody knows something they say, and you take it on board because you're desperate and then you find out that perhaps it's an interpretation they've got of the area and it isn't an expertise at all. But you grabbed it because they say: Oh talk to Eric Ashton because he knows about that. So you say thank God for that. And then you find out that what he

² There was a very 'knowing' silence terminating this answer, strongly implying : You are aware of this deficiency in the policy of training for college principals and the impossibility of correcting it'.

¹ No obvious enthusiasm was displayed in this phrase.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

actually knows is an interpretation of something he's...¹
and that's a crazy way to have managed a change like
this, it's absolutely insane. And I've found that very
difficult and in the end you end up reading stuff, which
is fair enough but you've got nobody to bat it with²
and discuss what it really means and what's the
interpretation, and, you know, what are the
consequences of, and all those sort of things.

Seeking to pursue this further the author prompted: "How do you overcome
this... Do you do it in college then, VP, etcetera... with your own senior staff?",
eliciting the illuminating response:

Yes we do. Yes we've actually learned ourselves; and there are various
people who've decided to go and be experts on certain areas, and they
come back and talk to us all and we ask them questions.

Inquiring about a reported lack of training received in another instance, the author
asked: "Is that still living with you, or are you still living with that? Is it a learning
curve that you're still on³ as a result of...?", which attracted the discerning reply,
balancing various conflicting demands influencing the type of training required:

Yes. I don't think it will ever go away and I think
it's all to do with understanding... It's a very
complex issue. It's trying to maintain a balance of
priorities against the aims of the college. The aims of
the college must be to serve the community, but you're

¹ An unfinished phrase, possibly meaning : he's been told by someone else.

² Meaning: exchange ideas about it.

³ The author's emphases.

being distanced from the educational side of it as you concentrate more on managing resources, and it's trying to keep your feet on the ground isn't it? I'm not sure you can be trained for that. Yes, I suppose you could. You could be better trained for resource management, to allow yourself to spend more time on other things and it's the uncertainty, perhaps because you're not trained, that's difficult; with things like the accounting and so on [Int 15].

4.4.5.9 Main difficulties experienced by further education college principals following the Education Reform Act

Question **5.9 What do you personally consider your main difficulties to have been since ERA...** gave rise to responses outlined in Figure 7.1.485¹.

4.4.5.9.1 Budgetary difficulties

Of those who prioritised college budget difficulties, most had already waxed strongly on the subject in previous discussions² and these comments were now vehemently further amplified:

Personally the difficulty of actually pinning down what our budget is. It's all right me establishing income and expenditure at this end but the actual details are

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² See chapters 4.4.4.1 to 4.4.4.4; 4.4.4.11 and 4.4.4.13 for further details about college budgets and local authority treasurers' departments.

at County Hall still, and I still do not know last year's out-turn¹, say to within say fifty thousand either way...² [Int 2]

This difficulty of obtaining reliable financial information from the local authority treasurers' department was pursued in the following castigation:

The paucity of financial information from the local authority and the poor quality; inability really to extract financial information and get print-outs. They promise us the earth, they keep telling us of course you can have those print-outs, of course you can [Int 4].

Linking budgets and personnel difficulties, one quixotically alleged: "Yes, I think budgets and personnel are the two that...³ trying to match the two together."

Attempting to probe for further possibilities, the author asked: "Yes. Not running a new governing body or anything like that?", which was parried with the mild rebuttal: "No, that's much the same.", then, adroitly manoeuvring the conversation to return to budget issues, continued: "Having to perhaps establish a clerk to the governors without any extra money or help is...⁴", Conceding the round, the author sought verification: "That's caused a problem or two has it?", which was ultimately confirmed: "Yes⁵" [Int 6]. Accepting that much had previously been said on this issue, the author suggested to another interviewee:

¹ A term meaning the completed analysis of the budget for the previous financial year up to April 1990.

² Meaning : If only I knew to within £50,000 over or under the agreed budget figure.

³ An unfinished phrase meaning: cause the main problems.

⁴ A mischievously unfinished sentence implying : also an imposition.

⁵ A heavily stated, heartfelt reflection of a wider problem of conflict between LEA and college (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

"Well I think you've answered this one in many ways.", which prompted the confirmatory reply: "Oh yes, it's managing the budget." Then carefully qualifying this with added remark: "Managing an inadequate¹ budget I think that's what I'm saying, not managing a budget" [Int 9].

One interview, commencing with the preliminary remark: "We've talked about some of those haven't we?", induced a hesitant start: "We have indeed."

Questioning further: "What's the big one do you think? your own personal big difficulty?", brought the carefully considered grumble: "I think the biggest frustration I've had, and it may change now in 1993, is basically having freedom but not having it; in the sense that if you're given a delegated one line budget, to then actually have to live with² County Treasurers, County Personnel, we've mentioned these people already³, that is the big thing you know [Int 11].

4.4.5.9.2 Other difficulties

Commencing with a paradoxical statement, a subject was presented concerning difficulties in communications between college management and teaching staff, with particular reference to the monetary changes taking place:

I think the basic one is a relatively simple one, but very complex, and that is trying to get other people to understand what it means, how are things. It's very difficult to convey to staff when they come to you with

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² Meaning in this instance: to tolerate.

³ See chapters 4.4.4.8; 4.4.4.12 and 4.4.4.13 for further information about treasurers' personnel departments.

problems, the sophistication of planning a year ahead and that the budget is a budget, and that you decide, and that there's no more money. Those kind of cuts are difficult. They still, the odd person, if they've got problems¹ ...² with their accounting...³ and that irritates me. I think that's the...⁴ [Int 10].

Another interviewee, making a similar point about the difficulties of communicating problems of change to college staff said:

The main difficulty has been helping the institution properly to understand the nature and speed of change. It's not enough to say coping with the speed of change, because I've⁵ had to do that anyway, but it's helping other people to understand what it's about and that's not easy [Int 1].

Looked at from another perspective, one interviewee implied difficulties of matching budgets to staffing in the baldly stated ejaculation:

Well it's the staff isn't it. The change in emphasis on staff⁶ [Int 8].

Difficulties of obtaining information to assist management, mentioned frequently in previous discussions⁷, were raised again in the context of this question:

¹ A phrase meaning : likely to overspend their budget allowance.

² An incomprehensible phrase, almost certainly meaning : are tardy.

³ A meaningless mumble, probably an expletive of some kind.

⁴ An unfinished sentence simply meaning: main difficulty.

⁵ The interviewee's emphasis.

⁶ This unremitting statement resonated with ringing overtones, strongly alluding to previous discussions about staff reorganisation in the college. (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

Information transfer really, I think, and up-to-date information from the County computers¹ [Int 14].

"I think it's management information systems.", said another interviewee, "It's just inadequate to cope with the demand from..."² A pause for thought by the author: "Mm.", was followed by the lead: "And really you're talking about the management information (for day-to-day delivery) management?", seeking to establish whether the meaning was the implied immediate, or whether it was longer term, information; the former being confirmed: "That's right" [Int 15]. Pressures of time were among the problems that most principals had to overcome³, and this was particularly so during the volatile period in question:

Well the major difficulty is finding time really. It's trying to balance all the conflicting...⁴ The major problem is retaining the time for what I have most interest in, and my foremost interest as an ex teacher is in curriculum developments. But all the pressures you have, push you further and further away from it [Int 5].

Describing a scene in which key members of staff were absent during this period of change, one outlined the time problem:

Unique kind of circumstances, reorganisation, doing two jobs for a period of time, etcetera, etcetera. My biggest problem has been, actually, concentrating on

⁷ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

¹ A reference to the questionable quality and tardiness of information from the local authority treasurers' department.

² A poorly articulated phrase meaning : the college management.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ A pause whilst searching for the 'right' form of words.

the strategic dimensions of the job; because I'm so bogged down with a fire-fighting role of getting reorganisation completed and operational type aspects. That's my main problem [Int 7].

Other main difficulties included some mentioned previously¹:

Main difficulties for me personally are accommodation, and the development of the income generation ethos which I feel now I've got over. There is now a cultural change in the institution [Int 3].

In one discussion the interviewee's predicament was in finding a main difficulty:

"I don't think there's anything more that I would say than was in a day's work..."² This was pursued by the author who asked: "So no big ones, like personnel difficulties or...?", which was defended with the comment: "No, I would say it's been mostly good news, you know, unless you consider doing your job a different..."³ I wouldn't think there have been...⁴ [Int 13].

4.4.5.9.3 Some general comments about principals' difficulties

Referring to reorganisation of the college management structure in this context, one explained:

I mean there's a belief that I don't think we could properly

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² At this point the discussion was constrained by an enigmatic and puckish pause.

³ A 'swallowed' word, thought to be : way, but laughingly said in a very impish manner.

⁴ A faded sentence almost certainly meaning : any major difficulties; but also signalling an end to this discussion.

have faced the new world of LMC or whatever on the old departmental structure, and therefore to turn the college inside out was prompted by that need. Now helping other people to understand that that's why you've done it is difficult... Well of course there's always problems when you shake out a business, it takes time for people to adjust to the new structure and new lines of communication. Sometimes I think the main complaint... well no the main complaint amongst many staff is they are still not yet very clear about levels of responsibility... And if you delegate to the teams¹ an ability to make decisions and that has been part of what's ribbed² me. They're still a little tentative on what decisions they can take, but it's slowly coming together [Int 1].

Enlarging upon some detailed budget difficulties, one expounded a surprising but not altogether isolated example³:

...some things appear on my budgets that we haven't allowed for, some income that we anticipate doesn't seem to appear on their budget, there's a discrepancy element⁴. We found for example we were paying for another centre, for the cleaning and maintenance of it. It's got nothing to do with us. It's been in our budget

¹ Referring to programme teams within the college.

² A colloquial term meaning: disappointed.

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

⁴ Referring to budget printouts received from the local authority treasurers' department.

for years apparently [Int 2].

Asked by the author about reportedly poor information from the local authority treasurers' department: "So you're not directly linked to treasurers or anything like that.", another dejectedly replied: "We've got a link but it doesn't work properly, very, very poor, you can't get the reports you want off it. It's very poor.", going on hopefully and wistfully: "It seems to be just around the corner always, the good service. It's better than it was, has improved; it was absolutely impossible" [Int 4].

Tussling with the problem of trying to keep one's eye on the elusive twin balls of education and diplomacy during a period of changing objectives, a principal shrewdly observed:

So you battle hard to still keep the curriculum to the fore and that's difficult. And also the (other) side of the college that most staff would see... You see, most staff would see the principal as somebody who's like a figure head but they like him to walk about and be nice to people and keep a general spirit going. That's more and more difficult to find the time to do, that sort of socialising, you know, because it does take time doesn't it? Socialising might be the wrong word but it's to keep the spirit alive [Int 5].

During a discussion about recently inherited problems, an interviewee revealed with enlightening clarity: "You can't have a fail safe system that means you've got a spare principal in the cupboard who only comes out when one of us is off sick, can you? And in the end you just make the best of (the situation). Asked about a previous comment: "Just picking up one point that you made: the

difference between the principalship and other posts as it were. Do you see an enormous difference or a small difference or..?¹", attracted the reply: "I feel a difference yes...² And I mean, I simultaneously think the change is positive and negative...³ It was mind blowing, the demands on my time...⁴ So it's positive that I'm sheltered...⁵ in that way. It's negative from the fact that I see less people now and I don't think that's good." The further question: "If you had to put two distinct differences forward could you identify two distinct differences?"⁶, attracted the revealing response: "I think the one thing I haven't mentioned is, whatever you do as principal, as soon as you are the principal, everybody else out there has got a slightly different agenda. And whatever you do to try and make it different you never can be sure that you know the full agenda... The other thing, quite clearly, is the relationship with the (staff). I think (these) are (the) two things. Your relationships with everybody else in the institution, whilst they may remain (friendly) by all kinds of means, relative or absolute, they are qualitatively different from being vice-principal [Int 7].

Difficulties arising from relations with the LEA were variously touched on in some detail⁷, and in a not inconsistent statement it was declared:

¹ A deliberately unfinished question, left in order to create an 'open ended' situation to encourage a response.

² A thoughtful pause before proceeding with the narrative (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

³ A further thoughtful pause before continuing.

⁴ This refers to covering for an absent senior colleague for a long period (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

⁵ This refers to a resolution of the absent colleague problem, and the attendant freedoms it brought to one secluded in the shelter of the principal's isolated position. (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

⁶ Referring to differences between being deputy principal, and college principal.

⁷ See also full transcript on attached disk for further details.

...you've got freedom but you still have to live within the County guideline, and to me that is the biggest frustration I have. Where to me, I want to do what's right, but to them...¹ you're slowed down all the time by bureaucracy. I think that's been the problem in LEAs... but some sections of our LEA have found delegation much more difficult to live with than colleges. That's my big frustration [Int 11].

Commending the advances which a new management information system had made to the management of the college and acknowledging the attendant element of luck, one interviewee explained:

In the past we've had (another computer system) which was really implemented to produce things like FESR, AMS² and stuff, which was no good to man nor beast because by the time you'd got the stuff it was all gone³. Whereas we've got EMIS running this year and it's been a revelation; absolute revelation. We've been able to make management decisions within days of things actually happening, so that's been very, very helpful. And we're getting true management information out of it at last, being able to analyse things and prepare for next year... We've been lucky in this college because coincidentally we've got some good staff in that area. But it was real luck.

¹ A deliberate pause filled with exaggeratedly portrayed exasperation.

² For acronyms details see figure 7.1.102.

³ Meaning: time had overtaken the event.

Seeking to establish some detail about the reported luck, the author prompted:
"And they've been able to get into this database and sort it out...¹ and so on?",
which was confirmed:

That's right... [Int 15]

¹ A major breakthrough at this period in the development of computerised management information systems.

4.4.6 General and Personal Perceptions

4.4.6.1 Predominant factors affecting change in the further education service

Question (6.1) referred interviewees back to responses received to the 1989 questionnaire, revealing the information:

6.1 Responses to my questionnaire in November 1989 indicated that the majority of principals in the East Midlands thought that the following five factors would most affect the development of further education between 1989 and 1992..

- i. Demographic trends**
- ii. The 1988 Education Reform Act**
- iii. Other Central Government policies**
- iv. LEA policy changes**
- v. Labour market trends (eg employment/unemployment)**

Going on to inquire:

What do you now think is the predominant factor affecting change in the FE service?

The results of the reactions to this question are tabulated in figure 7.1.486¹.

4.4.6.1.1 Central Government policies affecting FE change

Still accepting that some of the original responses were valid, the majority went

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

on to change the emphasis of their replies to number (iii) of the 1989 question:

What's important? Well they're all still important and I suspect number two¹ is not so important any more but certainly three², on the White Paper, is now significant [Int 1]. Demographic trends I think is less important than we anticipated. The Education Reform Act has probably been overtaken by events anyway and this White Paper³ really could have been the Education Reform Act if anybody *had* really sat down and thought about F.E. [Int 2].

Drawing the various strands together one replied:

The Education Reform Act of course and other central government policies are very strong, particularly the White Paper. So really the strongest bits are two/three and possibly five⁴ but it's still related to one really [Int 5].

Acknowledging that priorities had been influenced by the changes and proposed changes in government policy, another summarised:

Yes, I think we all feared demographic trends but it hasn't been quite the problem. I think two and three⁵ are still the major ones [Int 6].

Searching through numbers for an appropriate response, one commented: "Well the most immediate one is, what was number three⁶?", and being reminded

¹ See number ii in above question.

² See number iii in above question.

³ 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991'

⁴ See number v in above question.

⁵ See numbers ii & iii in above question.

⁶ See number iii in above question.

"central government policies, yes, mainly the White Paper?" , continued: "Yes, and incorporation if it comes...¹ certainly I don't remember worrying about demographic trends because we've already seen that...² [Int 7].

The newly published White Paper³ was obviously uppermost in most interviewees' minds during this period of the discussion, colouring many replies with anticipations, doubts, and some fears: "Well there's the Government White Paper isn't there?", and waiting for response: "Yes.", continued: "That's part of three⁴ isn't it? That's raised the whole thing up in the air again hasn't it?"

Attempting to further encourage discussion with the query: "Yes?", the interviewee continued: "LEA policy of course has reduced to zero." Asked: "As a result of,⁵ or...?", brought the swift interjection:

"Yes. Again of course TECs are...⁶ in there aren't they with their...⁷ [Int 8]

Questioned: "Has it changed?⁸", an interviewee replied:

Yes. I don't think demographic trends now are...⁹ you see there's been big changes...¹⁰ It's the other central Government policies now, because we're waiting now,

¹ Echoing general doubts about whether it would be thwarted by lack of parliamentary time and the approaching general election.

² Meaning: seen our way through that difficulty.

³ 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991'

⁴ See number iii in above question.

⁵ Meaning, and understood to mean: the White Paper.

⁶ An enigmatic pause indicating a slight cautionary reflection.

⁷ This remark was directed at the proposal that members of local TECs should be members of new governing bodies for colleges (see 'Education and Training for the 21st Century...1991', Cm 1536 Volume 1, section 9.7 for further details).

⁸ Meaning : has your order of priority changed since the 1989 response.

⁹ An unfinished sentence implying : have the same importance for us.

¹⁰ A clear effective pause implying : arising from the effects of ERA and proposals in the White Paper.

whatever they do is going to affect how we deliver [Int 9].

The following exposition was an example of an interviewee under pressures of time, thinking on his feet:

Well I think they're pretty well the same apart from the election. I think we ought to put the impact of the TECs and obviously...¹ but I think they're all there actually, yes, and the White Paper obviously [Int 10].

As the interviews progressed it became clear that the White Paper was entering the forefront of most principals' thinking, exemplified by the following succinct statement:

The White Paper as far as I'm concerned [Int 11].

Elements of doubt about its final progression into a parliamentary Act lingered in some minds²:

Well the biggie that is... it isn't concrete enough, but the biggie that really colours all our thinking every day I am sure of this, is 1993³. Everything we do here; I say: how does that fit in with what it is we think we are going to be about in 1993⁴? [Int 12].
You see I think under 6.1 I would say under all of those⁵, you cannot ignore any of those factors; but I

¹ An unfinished sentence used to literally cover whilst reading the question.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Referring to the proposals for a new Act and subsequent incorporation for colleges in 1993, outlined in the White Paper.

⁴ A colloquial phrase meaning : how this college will be governed and managed when the White Paper becomes an Act and colleges are incorporated, as suggested.

⁵ All the factors mentioned in the 1989 response.

don't think that there's any combination of them that would give you the answer to '92 and '93 [Int 13].

The reform act is - well it's done and dusted now. It's irrelevant to the extent that we've got 1993; so after LEA policy changes, 1993 is the next major one, so that's other government policies [Int 14].

Well it's got to be 1993. Demographic trends haven't been anywhere near as significant as we thought, because the staying on rate has amazed everyone...¹ So I think 1993 comes top [Int 15].

4.4.6.1.2 Other important factors affecting FE change

Earlier in the interviews, details of the White Paper² were still sketchy in many principals' minds which tended to leave earlier factors dominant:

The main things just very quickly, I like the Education Reform Act, I like the freedom of virement³, it suits my style OK. I like it and the predominant factor is freedom of virement, it's given me room for manoeuvre that I desperately wanted [Int 3].

Searching for the meaning of the question after an interruption by a member of office staff advising the principal about another pending appointment, one

¹ Meaning the increased staying on rate of students beyond age 16, both at school and attending FE colleges.

² 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991'

³ Meaning : the ability to transfer monies across budget spending headings.

graciously continued, querying:

Predominant factor you're asking me?

Then proceeded with an interesting qualification:

Yes, I mean, in a sense I think they all are aren't they. I think in terms of managing the college I think the '88 Act, but in terms of the college itself, the rest of the staff, I think demographic trends are what's most important [Int 4].

Clarification of the meaning of the question to one interviewee: "What do you think is the predominant factor at the moment¹?", drew a response recalling a dramatic shift in emphasis which had occurred as a result of the recession during the preceding two years:

At the moment it's the labour market, the labour market trends. I mean, I'll be interested in what the enrolment is coming up...² A lot more people unemployed...³ I mean only a year or two ago they were saying the demographic trends meant that people would be fighting for young people to be employed, remember? That's a rapid change isn't it? They were talking about young people being able to choose where they wanted to go...⁴ Struggling hard for jobs again now [Int 5].

¹ The interviewer's emphasis.

² Meaning the forthcoming enrolment for the academic year beginning in September 1990.

³ A slight pause to collect thoughts.

⁴ A sentence issued more in terms of a rhetorical question, with a challenging pause before the delivery of the answer which followed.

The recession was reported as having serious effects on young people in colleges' catchment areas¹:

Unemployment is a major problem area. ET is disappearing rapidly. The TEC at the moment don't seem in a position to take on the needs of the unemployed... And yet the unemployed people that are turning up from the Department of Employment Offices; we're having to try and respond quite rapidly to that and there's no real financial process to do that [Int 2].

The subject of recessionary forces was also addressed in the dialogue: "Labour market trends...² I would put that number two I think, because irrespective of whether we become incorporated or not, the way in which we plan to meet what the demands are is the key issue... Number three for me is not in the five³ but it's related: And so student centred learning, educational technology the arrival of multi-media in computer based systems for learning support, I mean the technology's moved along dramatically.... So in other words, number three on my list would be flexible curriculum... and I don't really think you can do that with a conventional course..." Clarifying this: "So largely delivery systems?", the interviewee confirmed: "Delivery systems becomes priority number one once you've sorted out your business so you know when you're solvent and when you're not, and you set that in the context of having good communications with your potential clients within the framework of central Government policy. From

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² A thoughtful pause.

³ See numbers i to v in above question.

thereon in you're absolutely back into delivery systems and regrettably where I¹ haven't been thinking for quite a long time in the past. So that's a challenge for us" [Int 7]. Undeterred by more recent events, another interviewee stuck to the original 1989 response²:

Well LEA policy changes is still number one [Int 14].

4.4.6.1.3 Some general comments on factors affecting change in the further education service

As with other questions about the changes taking place in the further education service at the time, this question encouraged principals to comment broadly on the issues surrounding these transformations:

I think too, central Government policies in respect of the creation of TECs has been significant. LEA policy changes: I'm not quite sure how LEA policy has changed frankly to any great extent. Labour market trends still very important, an important factor. I think really I've got to say now that three³ of late has become suddenly very important.

The question posed: "Yes. Mainly as a result of the White Papers?", was verified:

Yes [Int 1].

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See number iii in above question.

Variations on the intricacy of demands on further education managements were embodied in a response which compared previous priorities with those detected since the 1989 questionnaire:

Other factors in this college swamp the effect of demographic trends. I mean the construction industry booming and busting is far more important to us in that area than demographic trends are. So demographic trends are, I think... probably have more significance in colleges for whom full-time school leaver age student population is significant. Coupled with the fact that a lot of us of course have moved into Access courses in adult business in a way that was originally triggered by fear about demographic trends but now puts us into areas of potential business that make demographic trends less important.

Asked: "Successfully?", the interviewee replied:

Oh yes¹, to some extent yes [Int 7].

Explaining how colleges had coped with the previously identified 'democratic' trends challenge, an expressed view was:

...colleges have adjusted, they're getting more adults, we have to compete in Europe, we know that we've got to look at our training courses throughout [Int 9].

Commenting peremptorily on the previously presented principals' choices of influential factors another mused: "I mean just looking at that list you've got

¹ The adamant was then tempered slightly to include a touch of added caution.

there, it's interesting isn't it? I suppose you'd have put those down wouldn't you. I was just trying to think if there was anything else I'd have put down¹." The author then explained the origin of the choices: "Well that's how you all came up with the things.", which elicited the conciliatory reaction: "Yes. *Managing colleges efficiently*² is the big thing though, my word" [Int 11].

Difficulties concerning demographic trends and other previously identified factors were explained away during the discussion: "Demographic trends don't worry us because we know there are fifteen thousand people out there we can get our hands on. The education reform act doesn't affect us...³ but it certainly is in our minds. Nineteen-ninety-three⁴; I really want to get to grips with whatever it is the regional council⁵ is going to throw at us and then just go from there."

Following this line, the author stimulated: "This implies a sort of general acceptance that 1993, the White Paper, will transform itself into a bill, an act and so on. Do you think that any change in Government would affect this or not, or do your vibes think this is the general direction in which we're going?"

Prognosticating, the interviewee responded: "The only alteration I'm sure would take place, which I would welcome, is that the LEA will be put back in some way or another. Which way I do not know, and I would welcome that. I might not welcome it in (named county), but certainly I⁶ would be very pleased." A

¹ This was thinking aloud, in a not unpleasant manner, whilst switching thoughts from the previous question.

² This was a reference back to the 1987 DES Report 'Managing Colleges Efficiently' but presented here in a more generic context.

³ A cogitative, anticipatory hesitation.

⁴ A ruminating remark, said with enforced emphasis.

⁵ See the White Paper 'Education and Training for the 21st Century' Cm 1536 Vol 1 paras 9.4 to 9.11; and Vol II para 4.2.

⁶ The interviewee's emphases.

further prompt: "So 1993?" enticed the cautious reaction: "Yes. Having said that, I don't know what it means, that's the problem." Encouraging further speculation on the part of the interviewee the author continued with the leading acceptance: "Well of course, it's a bit amorphous... Presumably you're talking about incorporation and so on and so forth, and autonomy?", which activated the defensive yet informative retort: "None of that bothers us in the slightest. Because we actually have created a structure here that is that anyway. I mean, this is a plc now¹ in those terms..." Requesting a more precise meaning of this comment the author pressed: "But you're not a company presumably, you're not talking about that?", attracting the confirmation: "Oh no no." Finally, honing this with the question: "No, it's completely LEA?", an observation which received an assenting nod [Int 12].

During a discussion about meeting the challenges posed by educational demands, another respondent explained:

...we are notoriously good at getting it right, without knowing the reasons. Because most colleges have an open door policy and are continually reviewing their curriculum aren't they? They are keeping an ear open for new demands upon them and the successful college, if it's doing all those things, and has a flexible staffing policy and development policy, should be able to do better than cope [Int 13].

Checking through the 1989 responses and relegating them to a lower division in the face of more recent developments, one interviewee disclosed:

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

Demographic trends is number five now, because I didn't realise then how much we would buck the trend... Labour market trends... no I don't think that's significant because we are now positioned such that we can respond either to the unemployment market, the employed market, the full-time market, the women returners market, in a way that we couldn't before. But I'm in all those areas, I'm in ET, I'm in women returners where I wasn't before [Int 14].

Continuing this theme and commenting on the increased staying on rates in both schools and further education an interviewee heatedly noted:

Now that might have been compounded by the recession which encouraged people to stay on rather than get a job...

Certainly central government policies, they are so...¹

At the moment they are almost flying by the seat of their pants when you get stuff announced...² There's so much direct ministerial intervention that you cannot judge where things are going... GNVQs being announced in May of one year and meant to be implemented in September of the next, there's too much political intervention and I think that's a very serious problem for us and we can't cope with the pace...³

¹ A thoughtful pause before proceeding.

² A further diplomatically generated hesitancy before taking the plunge into a perceived delicate area of discussion: politics.

Asked: "Do you think that that is more significant than the actual pace of change itself: a new bill¹, the new act² and so on?", the principal replied:

I think it has a demoralising effect when people say things when they're shooting from the hip, and it does look as though they're shooting from the hip. No research to base this on, they're not prepared to pilot... People start saying well what's the point, and they send things out for consultation and you think why bother [Int 15].

4.4.6.2 Feelings of personal job satisfaction following ERA

Question **6.2 Has your job become more/less satisfying following ERA...**

elicited responses in figure 7.1.487³.

4.4.6.2.1 Comments from those feeling more satisfied with their job since ERA

Musing on the question: "More or less satisfying?", one principal replied: "I think the job of principal has become itself satisfying, irrespective of LMC"⁴ [Int 1]. Most, however, replied in unequivocal terms:

³ Meaning: the pace of the changes taking place.

¹ Meaning and understood to mean the F&HE Bill arising from the White Paper 'Education and Training in the 21st Century'.

² Meaning and understood to mean the 1988 Education Reform Act.

³ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

Oh yes, more satisfying [Int 2].

It's made the job more satisfying. It's allowed
virement, it's allowed creativity in staffing, it's
allowed sponsorship. It's opened doors [Int 3].

More satisfying. To me anyway [Int 10].

Oh very satisfying, This last year's been very good [Int 13].

4.4.6.2.2 Comments from those feeling no more satisfied with their job since ERA

Very few interviewees demurred, most considering their new jobs as more or less satisfactory, although some evaded the direct association with ERA or refused to perceive the issue in graphic black and white terms. Only one principal clearly indicated a lessening in job satisfaction since ERA¹:

Ah well...² I think I have to say less satisfying. I've spent less time on considering how I can help the college deliver educational programmes of quality and more time on how I can make this budget go round [Int 9].

Few interviewees found difficulty in assessing the job as wholly satisfactory but, as one explained:

There are times when it's more satisfying. There are times when it's more exasperating. It's just the weight

¹ This interviewee only accepted job enjoyment and prospects 'up to a point' during the 1989 questionnaire survey.

² A surprisingly enigmatic pause, given the previous enthusiastic responses from this principal. However the cautionary hesitation was explained in the following statements.

of work that makes it less satisfying. But I mean it's always nice to see a healthy...¹ Less time to relax so that's less satisfying [Int 5].

A perceived paradox was evaluated in the description:

Well in two ways. It's become more satisfying in that I'm doing more managerial work, you know real managerial work. But less satisfying in a way that I'm sat at my desk doing paper work all the time and I think if you're not careful you get divorced from what's going on [Int 6].

One found some difficulty in replying directly, due to a series of college management problems which could only be loosely ascribed to ERA²:

Who's to say, I mean it's been a nightmare.

Queried: "A nightmare? Right, satisfying was probably the wrong word to use...", a reaction which attracted the hurried, partial explanation:

But I don't know that the Education Reform Act...³ I think I would have had my fights and my battles anyway⁴. The Education Reform Act gave strength to my elbow in a way [Int 8].

¹ An unfinished sentence, implying a healthy college, almost certainly meaning a healthy student enrolment.

² This principal also showed some doubt about job enjoyment and future prospects during the 1989 questionnaire survey (see chapters 4.3.13 and 4.3.14 for further details).

³ A broken sentence implying : had anything to do with the problem.

⁴ See earlier responses of this interviewee for further details.

4.4.6.2.3 Some general comments on principals' feelings about job satisfaction since ERA

Some of the comments attached to interviewees' responses, even in personal statements, epitomised more general attitudes¹:

I think greater responsibility and accountability has made it more challenging, and if challenge satisfies you, and on the whole it tends to satisfy me, then I'd have to say it's become more satisfying [Int 1].

Referring to this subject during a later conversation², the author inquired: "I wonder if I could just go back to 6.2 just for a second, where you say it's become more satisfying in general terms. In what ways do you find it more satisfying?", soliciting the additional comments:

Well far less frustration not having to work through the local authority. The sort of things like personnel. I feel that we can do what our governing body want us to do and if we don't do it it's our own frustrations and lack of capability rather than somebody else's. A lot of the time in the two years I spent before ERA was in a sense fighting through the local authority, not in any vindictive way, they were helpful in many ways, but there was bureaucracy. It was difficult to get through [Int 2].

This style of argument was supported in the response:

Less frustrating, in the sense of people getting in the

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² The result of a recapitulation during the discussion of question 6.5.

way. I think, you know, being thwarted. It's very upsetting really all the time, I'm not being snobbish but when you get some S2 clerk¹ able to refuse you stuff, you know, it's terribly irritating [Int 4].

During a lengthy explanation, covered a number of illuminating points associated with job satisfaction:

I'm not so sure it's anything to do with ERA...² I mean if you start trying to do this cost business rather than just cover your superficial costs, which is what most principals think covering costs is about, you'd be bankrupt in a week. I mean we can't even meet our staffing costs... it is supported by the tax payers; end of discussion. And we do have lots of programmes here that do bring in lots of money, but I don't particularly want to go down that road because we certainly would not have our students who have cerebral palsy here³. You wouldn't would you? And you wouldn't have women returners who can't pay. I remit fees as though there's no tomorrow...⁴ I'm not sure

¹ A term expressing dissatisfaction at less academically qualified, non-teacher-trained, local authority staff giving what was perceived as educational advice or taking decisions affecting educational matters in colleges.

² A theme pursued by a number of interviewees at various junctures throughout the discussion (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

³ Referring to special needs students, who were also catered for in a number of other colleges.

⁴ Meaning : with impunity. The authority subsidised these students whom the principal recommended.

they'd let me do that if we weren't delivering the

County Council's policy. I mean they would tie you up¹. [Int 12].

A different view on the subject of job satisfaction from a fairly recently appointed principal included the following refreshingly personal insight:

The first year I didn't know whether I was coming or going. I didn't know whether I could hack² it as a principal. I think it was satisfying anyway to be a principal after being vice-principal, but it is more so because I know I can live or fall by my own decisions.

And that puts a burden on one, but I share them³ with the senior management team and with Chairman of Governors and F&GP [Int 14].

Some pros and cons of job satisfaction following ERA were analysed in the following dialogue: "You've got more control I guess. Not personal control but the college has got more control, I don't think I've⁴ got any more control. But I think the fact that you've got a little bit more control of your own destiny...⁵"

Asked: "Does this give you personal satisfaction as a principal...⁶?" elicited the carefully considered response: "It gives you a little more confidence to face the future because there are so many factors... but having said that, against all of that is that you've got nothing to fall back on. In other words the LEA were

¹ A colloquial term meaning : make every difficulty for the principal, a concept better described in the succeeding paragraphs.

² A slang word, in this case meaning : tolerate the routine of the job without losing patience.

³ Meaning: share thoughts, decisions and actions.

⁴ The interviewee's emphasis.

⁵ A faded sentence leaving an implied: is satisfying.

⁶ A slight pause in order to encourage an interjection from the interviewee.

there to make sure you would ultimately survive, what the new funding council will be like I don't know." Acknowledging this concern: "So that's the worry that...?" the author induced the agreement: "That's the...¹ yes" [Int 15].

4.4.6.3 Principals' feelings about the fairness of their salary since ERA & LMC

Question: **6.3 Do you consider you are getting a fair salary for your job following ERA and LMC**, attracted answers depicted in Figure 7.1.488².

4.4.6.3.1 Principals who felt that the post-ERA/LMC salary was fair

Although some 'satisfied' answers were brief and to the point:

Yes, yes... [Int 15];

others were a little more frank about future prospects

I think I'm getting a fair salary but I wouldn't mind more [Int 7].

A description of a governors' salary assessment process and its attendant problems was included in the response:

Reasonable salary. The governors have actually set up a group to look at it and I shall get an increase from the first August. They are trying to look at performance factors³ but find it very difficult.

Yes...⁴ [Int 2]

¹ A pause which implied: problem.

² See chapter 7 for details of figure.

³ To assess the principal's performance.

⁴ A final unfinished comment meaning: I think it's fair.

A collective decision was accepted in the comments:

Fair salary. I've not been very happy about the salary position and the fact that we've had to negotiate our own salary¹. I set up a group and we worked out a basic formula agreed with the LEA... So the salary's fair, and it has to be better than it was...² [Int 5]

4.4.6.3.2 Principals who felt that the post-ERA/LMC salary was not fair

A bellicose beginning was made to an otherwise amicable discussion about the principal's salary:

No is the answer to six-three...³ Pardon me.

Asked "No extra payment for the new responsibilities?", the interviewee continued:

No. My governors, because of the financial state that we were in, didn't support any argument to pay me over the odds⁴. So I don't think that I get a fair salary in relativities terms⁵ for the job I do [Int 1].

¹ This apparent reluctance to negotiate one's own salary appeared to be fairly widespread among those interviewed (See full transcript on attached disk for further details).

² These mixed and alternating feelings were not uncommon among principals throughout the period of the interviews (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

³ This was a completely unprintable, totally ungrammatical phrase of strongly expressed oaths from a normally placid, carefully thinking individual who quickly recovered, offering an abject apology.

⁴ The interviewee's heavily sarcastic emphasis.

⁵ A frequently used term meaning : comparisons which were being formally and informally made between the salaries of college principals, and head-teachers,

Relativities was uppermost in a number of principals' minds:

I don't think it's fair at all, no. And I'm not just...¹ I get the maximum in my group, but in my group I was nearly at the maximum anyway² [Int 4].

No, no. Not compared with other people of equivalent positions in industry and business. Because I have to say that the role is now chief executive [Int 9].

Bringing figures into the reckoning, one illustrated:

No, I'm not getting a fair salary for the job. My salary is £39,500, I think it's insufficient, I think it should be something like £45 to £50,000 [Int 3].

Taking a very strong line on this problem, one replied:

Certainly not. No chance. Even the Union says so. The Union's fighting my case in London.

Anxious to clarify this, the author asked: "In London? I was expecting you to say Governors.", but the interviewee vehemently and with finality reiterated:

Well the fighting is in London with the Union [Int 12].

4.4.6.3.3 Principals who felt that the post-ERA/LMC salary was questionable

Those with mixed feelings about their salaries were both pessimistic and optimistic³:

sixth-form college principals and chief executives in industry and commerce. (See figure 7.1.503 for further details).

¹ The implication here was : 'it's not just the extra money I'm craving'.

² See figure 7.1.503 for further details.

Oh well. I suppose not too bad really, continuing wryly:
but when I look at someone in private industry with a
four million pound company... they'll be getting a bit
more than I would, I expect [Int 6].

I and a number of the county principals...¹ We worked
for the Authority and the Authority gave us what we
should have had according to the strict percentages.
Since then the governing body have not looked at my
salary at all [Int 8].

I find that difficult. I was treated relatively
generously and they² gave me a car which was a big step
forward as far as I was concerned, that was good
psychologically. I will be reviewing my salary in
January³ again, based on comparisons with other
people. I think the difficulty is that it's
comparisons isn't it, that relative to sixth form
college principals or some head teachers I don't feel
that I'm getting a fair salary. But I would say it has
improved on balance, yes it has improved [Int 10].

Finding the question ironically amusing, one exploded with a hearty guffaw:

Ha Ha! That's a leading question. I think it's
difficult because I actually believe the answer to that

³ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

¹ An unfinished sentence implying : agreed a formula with the LEA.

² Meaning: the governing body.

³ January 1992.

is still probably no [Int 11].

Accepting that a personal situation had improved but much remained to be achieved on a wider front, another explained:

I think our salary position has greatly improved.

Not as a result of national negotiations...¹ I think they've been a great disappointment. It's amazing the way in which the Government has been keen to recognise the Head Teachers' position, but not to do anything for College Principals [Int 13].

This thread was woven into another, more angry, response:

Relative to other colleges yes, relative to sixth form colleges definitely no. I think it's grossly immoral.

Now I don't know whether we should be higher or they should be lower [Int 14].

4.4.6.3.4 Some general comments about principals' salaries since ERA/LMC

The theme of comparabilities was continued throughout many of the interviews², and feelings about incentives were raised again in the response:

And I think there should be incentives in the salary for certain things which at the moment don't exist. A car, various things like that... and I think there's a

¹ There were some seriously meant, but good natured disapproving rumblings at this point.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

long way to go in that thinking. They haven't been encouraged by the Authority to think in those terms.

The Authority has actually held down incentives, they've not allowed the governors the initiative to create those things. [Int 3].

If you're talking about relativities of course you have to know a lot more than I do presently... Everybody tells me for example that a head teacher or a sixth form college principal presently will earn more money than I do for managing a much smaller institution. I read the ACM¹ papers and that's what it tells me, and that can't make sense. And then the other way of relativities is about: well in the end if you really do want managers to come and run colleges or to run training institutions of all kinds, then presumably the market relativities have got to be good too [Int 7].

One description of coyness, or caution, on the part of a governing body when dealing with this subject was included in a discussion starting with the question: "Have the governors considered a request from you for this, or is this...?". Queried: "My salary?", was assured: "Yes", which enticed the retort: "...² They don't really like talking about money." Accepting this as a finality, the author replied: "Right.", upon which the interviewee continued: "I presented a kind of

¹ Association for College Management (for acronyms see figure 7.1.102).

² This was a totally indecipherable mumble, strongly suspected of being an impolite reaction, before continuing with the explanation.

written case to them and the F&GP¹ sat and considered it... and then they told me..." Digressing for a moment the interviewee reported: "My VP² gets less than one of the heads of department, you know one of those³ cases; I asked them to put that right and they wouldn't." Then continuing with the main point: "They didn't just refuse it, they said: well you've got to do this restructuring (it's about three months' ago⁴). They said we'd like to wait and consider the salaries all together then. That's what they said" [Int 4].

Emphasising the magnitude of a principal's new responsibilities, another stated:

But it actually is a hell of a big job, looking after an 8 million⁵ budget and the 350 full time staff and a squad of non-teaching staff and a squad of other part time staff and being responsible to hordes of governors and so on, it's a hell of a job [Int 5].

Various ways of looking at issues allied to principals' pay were identified in the following responses:

I have said that at this point in time, when we are making people redundant, I fail to see how I⁶ can ask for an increase in salary. But I feel that nonetheless they should note this point and that now we're having this management reorganisation, that we should look at my salary in conjunction with that... [Int 8].

¹ The college governors' Finance and General Purpose Committee.

² Vice-principal.

³ The interviewee's emphasis.

⁴ Meaning : the discussion took place with the governors at this time.

⁵ Meaning: eight million pounds.

⁶ The interviewee's emphasis.

...and if you look at us, we pay more in superan¹ compared to people...² we don't get any packages of free medical services or cars, or...³ I know some principals have negotiated cars and that, but basically to me that all ought to be considered in an overall salary [Int 9].

Having said that I think the difficulties now with all this is you're running your own delegated budget, therefore whatever you give yourself is actually coming out of your budget. Secondly, I probably still have this, you may think, totally wrong; that I actually believe that I want to feel that the staff don't feel that the principal is totally out of line with everybody else, and some of my colleagues don't tell their staff about their salaries at all... I think the third thing, because of governor training - governors haven't necessarily had the training to understand what you should pay - I'm not dissatisfied at the minute, I'm managing⁴ [Int 11].

An APC commissioned report was mentioned by a number of interviewees, one noting:

I mean I know one principal who did very well because

¹ Superannuation : a system of contributions towards an occupational pension

² An unfinished phrase implying an advantage over : people in business, industry or commerce.

³ A pause followed by change in direction.

⁴ This deliberate understatement was said with a slight smile.

his chairman worked in a company that used Hay¹. My chairman's very sceptical about it and I can't use it.

So it's mixed. On balance it's been a help [Int 10].

Comparisons between colleges were few but one included the observations:

There are colleagues in another county, in much smaller colleges, who get paid more than I do and receive a car as well...² our range of work goes from, depending on your hierarchy, from people who can't speak to us, to people who are preparing to do PhDs. We control all prison education in the county.... I knew a letter had been sent to the Chair of Governors well over a year ago and which he'd kept quiet about, from the CAO who said I ought to be paid immediately, and that's a problem with our present Chair. He's the only problem I've got actually. I just think it needs resolving.

For example, if I was at another college, which doesn't have the breadth of work... in fact I would be receiving more there than I am here, and that strikes you as bananas. Well it strikes me as bananas... I mean I have a... I'm well off, so I'm not discussing that, but the Authority has a problem. Politicians have a problem with paying their officers money which they think is riches beyond compare... because a lot of our

¹ A team of consultants engaged by APC to investigate principals' remuneration following the 1988 Education Reform Act, drawing comparisons with other groups in industry and commerce.

² There was a slight touch of envy in this remark.

politicians who I have a tremendous amount of time for, are unemployed, or doing a job whilst they're trying to be (councillors) as well, getting minimum allowances, and they're running the show... and I understand perfectly why they have that problem...

Replying: "Right, thanks very much, I didn't intend that to be very personal", the author explained: "it's just a sort of scenario..."; which encouraged the interviewee to continue:

It's alright. All my students are told when I stand in front of them... you pay my wages, I tell them straight away; and I tell them what I earn and they all go: 'Oh my god' and I say 'so you'd better make sure that I deliver that amount of money to you'. So I've no problems with that [Int 12].

In another case initial reference to the principals' professional association survey led to other enlightening disclosures: "I gather APC¹ have done surveys on this... It's a question of you know, when you came into this business you were pleased to get the job and you never expected to be rich, you just wanted to have enough; so you never thought in terms of big salaries. But I must say when I sit down and think about it and when I meet all these captains of industry...² So although it doesn't compare with ICI it's quite a business. And then they say well of course your job is a doddle anyway because you get all those holidays. What

¹ Association of Principals of Colleges (For acronyms details see figure 7.1.102). See also figure 7.1.503 for further details of survey.

² This was said in a jocular but nevertheless denigratory manner.

is interesting is the way in which the staff attitude¹ towards the principals salary. There used to be a sort of pulling down. Union officers say to me we believe you should have a good salary, we're not worried about it... People argue, don't they, that if you don't have the salaries you won't attract people, but when you're recruiting from within the service then you're always fifteen years' behind aren't you? The principals of fifteen years' time are just coming in to the system - they're not coming in to be principals, they're coming in to be teachers. So the pool you're drawing out of is, by and large, people who after a certain age have got nowhere else to go if they want to improve their position; so crude market forces don't apply. So when they told me my new salary I said: but it still doesn't make me a rich man. It doesn't cause a great leap does it. OK, you can afford (a particular) kind of house but you certainly can't afford a yacht in the Bahamas. We're never going to get to that one are we? So we're always talking about another £5000 aren't we, not the big ones, and the perks of course that...²" [Int 13].

Governors' reluctance to listen to arguments about relativities with other institutional heads were graphically portrayed in the following interview:

My Governors don't want to hear stories of me getting £7,000 less than a nearby head, when my job is three times as complex as that. They say I am more than adequately paid and this person is disgustingly adequately paid... grossly overpaid, compared with what local industry managers of my responsibility would get... They perceive us as sort of school heads, plus a

¹ The word 'attitude' was used as a verb in this instance.

² A tailed off sentence implying : go with industrial executives' jobs.

bit. They don't realise that we carry the can¹ on everything: we're chief accountant, chief marketing officers, so on and so forth. But relative to sixth form colleges I think: no; and of course we're all intrigued given that we're going to be in the same sector. What is going to be the recommendation...² and I would look forward to a salary of what would it be, £45,000 or something like that, and I currently get £35,000 [Int 14].

4.4.6.4 Principals' feelings of personal elation/depression since ERA

Question **6.4 Are you personally more elated/depressed since ERA** is outlined in figure 7.1.489³.

4.4.6.4.1 Principals who felt they were more elated/satisfied since ERA

One cheerful response: "Oh I'm always elated, yes", was followed up with the question: "Do you think ERA has anything to do with that as an Act, as the freedoms that you talk about and so on?", which was answered in the affirmative: "Oh I think it probably does [Int 11]. On the other hand another, having responded: "Not depressed at all, more elated.", on being asked: "Why do you think this is? I mean, that's really the question, is it the freedom, is it the

¹ A colloquial term meaning: carry the responsibility.

² A completely rhetorical question, but subsequently followed by an anticipatory answer.

³ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

new job...?", replied: "I'm not sure it's to do with ERA again...¹ I'm not sure it's to do with it being a new job, I think it's to do with the job that I have created here (I mean, I speak personally), and seeing what it is this college has delivered [Int 12].

Some positive responses were brief and to the point:

Oh I hope you get the impression that I am enjoying myself, yes [Int 13].

Generally speaking yes, I would be elated or pleased at ERA, I think it's a good thing in general [Int 14].

In another instance the reply: "I suppose I'm elated. I'm not depressed.", was pursued with the postulate: "Or would you describe it any other way?", attracting the qualification: "Well I think I'm...² elated's a bit strong...³ I'm not depressed...⁴ [Int 15] Weighing the wording of the question carefully, others respectively replied:

There have been times of abject depression and there have been times of high elation. On the whole, if I've got to say one or the other, I personally am rather more elated than depressed. But that's because of the work in the college rather than ERA [Int 1].

I'm certainly not depressed about ERA. I feel I've got more freedom to perhaps move the college along in ways

¹ An argument used at various stages throughout the survey (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

² A pause, searching for a more apt phrase.

³ Hesitating, whilst considering an appropriate form of words to describe the personal reaction.

⁴ Adamantly re-emphasising in an avuncular manner one perceived fact.

that are needed [Int 2].

I don't know, I can't really answer that. I don't really suffer much from elation or depression. I'm certainly not depressed [Int 4].

I don't think the two words are necessarily ones that would apply to me anyway. I've always seen myself as a person who is positive about the situation I find myself in. Positive in the sense that problems and opportunities I tend to look at as starting points [Int 7].

And phlegmatically repeating this philosophy typical of many¹:

Not more depressed, I don't tend to get depressed. I tend to look at problems as: that's what we're here to solve [Int 10].

Others commented:

Am I more elated or depressed? I dunno, it depends on the mood I'm in. Most of the time I've retained my balance, I'm just about the same [Int 5].

Oh well it's up and down isn't it really. I certainly was quite depressed in the first year², wondering whether it was going to work and whether we were going to enrol the right numbers and whatever. I think it puts more pressure on you [Int 6].

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² Meaning : 1988/89, the first academic year of ERA changeover.

4.4.6.4.2 Principals who had felt more depressed/dissatisfied since ERA

Among those who tended to show a less positive attitude towards the changes in the climate of further education in the wake of the 1988 Education Reform Act was the following interviewee who responded:

The resource base has got to be more. So that's what's depressed me [Int 9].

In one case the choice of adjectives was again a problem: "I would say I'm neither elevated nor depressed." A possible solution to the dilemma was suggested: "Well it was probably a poor choice of words", which encouraged the following reaction: "I find it more satisfying than it was before." Inviting further comment, the author again prompted: "Yes?", drawing the additional illuminating remarks: "But I'm dissatisfied with the strategic planning process and I find myself in a no-man's land. I don't know whether I'm supposed to be falling in line with some sort of strategic plan, which I can't actually put my hand on, or whether I'm going all out competition. And on the one hand I don't know where I am in that process; and I think it's that that I find most dissatisfying, most unsatisfactory¹ [Int 3].

Describing the feeling of an unfinished situation one remarked:

Although I think the Education Reform Act is a good thing, it doesn't go far enough. You know, it's really, for example, what is the LEA's job and what is the Governors' job. The apron strings are partially cut, but not fully cut, and so there is all this nonsense

¹ The 'other hand' was left unexplained here, but see full transcript on attached disk for further details.

with Treasurers and Personnel¹. It's a step in the right direction.

Pursuing this point further the author asked: "Do you feel that the White Paper² is going to address these problems?", which, after a short pause for thought, received short shrift in the rejoinder:

No [Int 8].

4.4.6.4.3 Some general comments about principals' personal feelings since ERA

Most interviewees showed a keenness to support their views with descriptive analogies, one questioning the basic parameters of the question with the challenge: "You keep on making reference to ERA as though that's a driving force in everything that's happened. I think it's a lot more than that." Taking up this point the author acknowledged: "Yes, that's a very good point actually.", going on to ask: "In that sense, did ERA matter; apart from the actual concept of college government?", enticing the response: "Less than some people would credit it, I think...³ I think that the significant aspect of it certainly is the budgets. Now you'll say that: well that impinges on everything therefore, but I mean, change in the governing body and its responsibilities, that's clearly had an effect⁴ [Int 1].

¹ For further details about interactions with these local authority departments see chapters 4.4.4.12 and 4.4.4.13.

² 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991'

³ A pause whilst feeling a way through the concept of what motivated the college to change outside the effects of ERA.

⁴ This complex sentence, implicitly accepting the premise of ERA association, was not a misunderstanding of the effects of ERA on governing bodies. The

One response included an explanation of personal leadership:

...for example I've put the college's name on the international agenda and the national agenda in a way that without them¹ I couldn't have done. So those kinds of things I personally and professionally find very positive in my present situation [Int 7].

Thwarted expectations and opportunities were outlined in another instance:

Certain things about ERA which should have made me elated, in the sense that I think the college can decide more things without any interference from local education authorities, but overall I think that's been...² I can't explain it really...³ It's been counter productive really because we just haven't got enough money to go on doing all the things we're supposed to be doing. In many ways it's exciting curriculum wise, there's interesting initiatives, student centred learning, yes...?⁴ [Int 9]

Objecting to the term 'depressed', one principal jocularly stated:

I get irritated, my wife will tell you I often get irritated.

initial fundamental point was thought to have been conceded during the discourse.

¹ Referring to personal contacts mentioned previously (see full transcript on attached disk for further details).

² Struggling to come to terms with an elusive train of thought.

³ Finally picking up the theme.

⁴ A lot of enthusiasm was displayed here, petering out in an unfinished sentence.

Pressing this issue further the author asked: "Is that pressure of work do you think?", eliciting the reply:

A little bit, but a lot of the pressures...¹ I don't think the pressures have grown in that sense, not for me alone. I mean pressures like for example I had a head of department off for six months so I had to get another head of department because he hadn't got a good deputy. That's where the strain shows, it's things like that[Int 10].

Describing an entrepreneurial trait, a hallmark of many principals in further education², one disclosed:

I think I always had good ideas of what I would do if ever I came into the fore with this work and I think probably I would be very frustrated if I was still in the old system. I think I would. I know that there was a lot of security involved with that in some respects but there was all sorts of frustrations... I think it's made my job much more exciting but it don't half put me on the line really, as you know. I mean really³ on the line [Int 11].

The gist of this discussion was continued in the following revelation:

I mean, I now am the boss of an education establishment

¹ A pause for thought and a search for direction.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details. (See also chapter 2 of thesis for further examples).

³ The interviewee's emphasis.

which has a superb reputation in the county and the region... and that brings great self satisfaction to me. And a lot of that is because I am able to do what it is I¹, with constraints, wish to do. Now perhaps pre-ERA I might not have been able to do that... I think some people sort of say thank God I've got those b's off my back, but they actually don't understand, I think, in a deeper sense what that means. I think when they face up to the fact that they are going to have to provide a lot of services at cost, which the local authority provided, with their expertise...²

And there is no doubt that all the structure of the LEA, which is an educational ethos, will disappear; and it will become maybe accountants, solicitors who are helping you run the show. That might be very efficient but it isn't really what we are about [Int 12].

Acknowledging the fact that a more recent entry into the further education scene affected his view, an interviewee replied:

Well I of course came on stream just at the point of change so it's fairly inappropriate in my case, but I think I did believe and I do believe in pushing decisions to the point of delivery. It was fundamentally inappropriate to let people fifty miles away who don't know the local parish...³ [Int 14]

¹ The interviewee's emphasis.

² A reflective, deliberately didactic, pause.

Asking one interviewee who responded positively, the question: "If you feel happier about the situation, what is it that causes that?", brought the reminder: "I suppose it's what we said before, being...¹ perhaps getting a little bit in control of your own destiny, or the perceived² control in your own destiny." Encouraging this point further the author asked: "Do you feel the excitement³ of change comes into it?" This brought the sobering response: "No I don't think so. I don't find change particularly...⁴ At the moment there's too much change... If somebody comes in now and says I want to change something...⁵ I think most people are probably going to be upset rather than listen to what the change is about. You should really always listen, it's just got to the point where there is too much change for many staff to cope with [Int 15].

4.4.6.5 Principals' feelings about how their college will progress in the foreseeable future

Question **6.5 Do you think your college will expand/survive/decline during the next five years** drew the response outlined in Figure 7.1.490⁶.

³ An incomplete sentence implying 'make the decisions for the college.

¹ A pause to reflect on the ensuing choice of words.

² The interviewee's emphasis.

³ The author's emphasis.

⁴ An unfinished sentence implying : exciting, or perhaps attractive.

⁵ There was a 'knowing' look from the interviewee at this point, implying: I might be displeased, or angry.

⁶ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

4.4.6.5.1 Principals anticipating college expansion in the near future

Many who anticipated further expansion in their colleges were firm in their concisely expressed views:

I think we're in that¹, I think we'll expand [Int 3].

Expand, no problem [Int 11].

I think it will expand, yes very much so [Int 13].

One monosyllabic response: "Expand.", when queried: "Expand you think?", brought monosyllabic confirmation: "Yes" [Int 10].

Another, added caution to the reply:

I think the college will expand during the next five years, but not dramatically [Int 2].

4.4.6.5.2 Principals doubtful about their college's expansion in the near future

Some respondents demonstrated a degree of circumspection by opting for the middle ground: survival, in spite of previous discussions indicating potential for expansion²:

The college will certainly survive and I hope it will expand a bit. If it will survive and hold I'll be happy [Int 5].

I've no doubt that it will survive, I'm cautious about expansion, though I think it's capable of expansion, but I'm not sure that it's capable of significant

¹ Meaning: in that first category (of the posed question).

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

expansion without something else happening. New linkages¹. Yes? [Int 1]

Determination was the hallmark in many cases²:

Well we've got to survive haven't we? We'd be very negative to think otherwise [Int 6].

Another, casting doubt on opportunities for development, nevertheless emanated little fear of decline:

I certainly think we'll survive, I don't see this as a college that's under threat in that way. Expand, I'm not even sure what to expand [Int 7].

Recapitulating on an earlier discussion³ the author proffered the reminder: "In a way you've mentioned this, but do you think you are on a survival curve or a...?", which prompted the interjection: "Oh well, we've just started it"⁴ [Int 8].

Predicting problems with accommodating growth, one replied:

I can't see it expanding because we haven't got the room to expand and I don't see how we'll get the buildings...⁵ I think it will survive with difficulty [Int 9].

In one case, where massive expansion had already recently taken place⁶, the following was suggested:

I would say survive and consolidate [Int 14].

¹ Implying : cooperation with the polytechnic or perhaps some of the larger firms in the area.

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ See full transcript on attached disk and particularly chapters 4.4.4.2.2 and 4.4.5.3.2 of thesis for further details.

⁴ See chapter 4.4.6.5.3 for further details.

⁵ A thoughtful pause.

⁶ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

Financial considerations loomed large in one interviewee's guarded deliberation:

I think survive is the solid thing because the real issue will be the diminishing unit of resource, that's going to cause problems [Int 15].

One went further than most¹, suggesting a possible decline in college fortunes, however, showing no lack of hope or indeed will to survive:

I think it will decline. I hope I'm wrong and we'll try hard to make that wrong but I think with the demographic trends I think it's almost impossible not to. But we are trying hard with access courses and other things you know, it's getting more people in, and more hours in [Int 4].

4.4.6.5.3 Some general comments about principals' visions for their colleges

Additional comments included insights into varied aspects of college principals' forward thinking. Determination tinged with caution was a characteristic often detected during the discussions²:

Now anything other than that³ will be highly speculative. I don't doubt that this college can get on with its business and survive and probably get better at what it does [Int 1].

¹ Probably, on the spur of the moment, more honestly!

² See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

³ Meaning : links with the local polytechnic and local industry bringing a small expansion to the college (see chapter 4.4.6.5.2. for further information).

Speculating on the future, one responded: "Where it may expand perhaps is by some form of mergers." Prompted: "With?", replied: "Other colleges." Pressing the query further: "Other colleges?", made only limited progress: "Yes.", so the final question: "Do you think...¹ within the authority here or..?", focussed the direction of the concluding speculative point: "Yes, within the Authority" [Int 2].

Mildly objecting to expansion being used in the context of college aims, one responded:

I don't believe, necessarily, scale of operation is something we ought to be going for. I'm sure we'll survive and I hope we will thrive, I think...² It even rhymes with it..³! But I don't necessarily think expansion is the issue *at the moment*⁴ [Int 7].

Talking about the position of the college on a survival curve, another principal proceeded to describe difficult management problems and the possible effects they might have on the college: "We certainly weren't on it because it seemed to me the previous senior managers...⁵ were determined to run this college into the ground." Surprised by this forthright comment the author asked: "What, as an overtly expressed thing or just..?", which brought the murmured assent: "Mm.",

¹ A pause whilst deciding how best to break the monosyllabic cycle.

² A slight pause whilst ruminating on the poetic quality of the response.

³ This was said in a spirit of good humour, which characterised all of the interviews to a greater or lesser extent, then reverted to the more serious aspect of the question.

⁴ See earlier script for examples of other difficulties besetting the college (particularly chapter 4.4.4.6.1 of thesis).

⁵ There was a reluctance but nonetheless an obvious determination to impart emotionally demanding information at this point in the discussion.

continuing: "And the redundancies, I think they're welcomed because..."¹ Mm.

And one of them said: well I'm going in five years' time, well I'm only interested in keeping the place open 'till then, and that's when I'm betting it will be..."² Very helpful isn't it? when it's a senior member of staff" [Int 8].

Having stated that no expansion of the college could be foreseen, another interviewee continued with an exploration of a possibility and its implications:

Except, there's one caveat on that: The way it could be expanded would be to totally come away from the concept that a college must deliver within the physical environment of a building. And if it could get it's packaging right, and it's done a totally modular curriculum, it can deliver that curriculum over a wide area. To do that it would have to revolutionise it's staffing, it would have to reduce it's full time staff to a small core and have a lot of people on flexible contracts [Int 9].

In a situation where a college operated on a multi-site basis, the author's question: "Do you see the towns as different?" elicited the informative reply:

Yes they are, they're totally different in climate, in politics, the atmosphere and everything. We have to treat them differently there's quite a sense of..."³

That's why I'm going over to see the MP for (Town) at

¹ Noticing surprise in the author's reaction, the interviewee again murmured confirmation.

² The implication of this unfinished phrase was: 'closed'.

³ A brief hesitancy, searching for an appropriate explanation.

(Town) because he's offered to come here, he's very good, but I want to see him there and we can talk about some (Town) issues and get his advice¹" [Int 10].

One cautious response included the following illuminating remarks:

I believe we must prepare for conscious contraction and consolidation; and for instance, engineering is a case in point... I've got engineers, twenty or thirty of them, occupying space that could accommodate two-hundred. No industrial manager would tolerate that. You look what Woolworth have done. They've cleared out all the odds and sods and they've got four product lines now... and I think we've got to apply that sort of thinking... I think engineering can't survive in small colleges like this, they'll have to consolidate with other colleges. Motor vehicle's already gone... I have a niche in science, I've got an excellence beyond my size. I can be good at caring, secretarial and so on, and business and finance. And leisure, I'm very good at leisure and have a significance beyond my size [Int 14].

Perceiving a spectre of insufficient funds, another principal considered some possible consequences during the discussion: "I think what might happen is that if this college got out of kilter financially, then the management would get kicked out, I would go and somebody else would come in. Or alternatively we

¹ This principal was scheduled to meet with the local member of parliament, immediately following the interview.

might be bought out by another college who runs over¹, or something like that...

" Asking the interviewee to look at this from a different standpoint, the author queried: "From where you sit do you perceive other principals seeing threats in this?", attracting the resolute response: "Oh yes, definitely yes, and I would worry if I were in some other places." Pursuing this aspect the author suggested: "Where there are a number of colleges vying with each other?", attracting the confirmatory reply: "That's right. And we're seeing reorganisations in Manchester and Liverpool² and so on. I would think those are on the cards³. Whether or not they work I don't know" [Int 15].

4.4.7 Principals' comments on newly published proposals

The final set of four questions in this survey gave rise to the composite table 7.1.491⁴.

4.4.7.1 Principals' comments on Government proposals for the future of adult education⁵

Asked the first question: Can you comment generally on the following...⁶ **7.1 Adult Education & the Government's new proposals**, interviewees supplied

¹ Meaning : has higher levels of student numbers and subsequent funding.

² Widely reported in the educational press and the subject of discussions in principals' meetings at the time.

³ Meaning : that similar reorganisations could be expected in the locality of the college under discussion.

⁴ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

⁵ See Government White Paper 'Education & Training for the 21st Century....1991' Cm 1536 Volume I Chapter 9.9 and Vol II Chapters 3.1 to 3.6 (especially 3.6 which refers specifically to non-vocational courses).

answers which fell into the categories outlined in figure 7.1.491(1-4)¹, showing that over half felt some concern about the proposals. As one put it: "Yes I'm worried. 'Cos I think the new proposals do cast it into some sort of limbo... Because you're talking about adult non-vocational presumably, largely?²" The confirmation: "Yes.", elicited the further comment: "I think there has been a kind of inertia to change in adult education over many years and I've never been satisfied with that inertia" [Int 1].

Financial aspects of the service were referred to in the comment:

I'm very concerned that Adult non-voc³ may not be adequately funded and we're making representation to the DES⁴ on that particular issue [Int 3].

Explaining the local organisation one criticised the proposals:

I think they haven't understood really the situation. And in this county we've got a funny situation because there's the adult education service and some of it is in colleges and some of it isn't [Int 4].

In another case a principal deeply involved in the provision stated:

I was a bit apprehensive although I never worry too much. We've got a large adult education department so I was worried, but I think the recent announcements'll solve them [Int 10].

⁶ See chapter 7 figure 7.2.8 for further details.

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² Clarifying the distinction between vocational and non-vocational adult education.

³ Meaning: non-vocational adult education.

⁴ Department of Education and Science (for acronyms details see figure 7.1.102).

Thinking through details for an explanation, an unhappy initial reaction included:

I think that's going to change isn't it? And it's got to change really and I think Government's... I'm convinced they're going to change that, modify that, because I mean it was wrong wasn't it? We all know that really [Int 11].

Concerned about the LEA's possible reactions to the proposals another pondered:

I feel I'm blighted at the moment because I would like to plan on a long term basis to fully integrate that and gain the cost effectiveness and synergy. I feel I can't because the LEA might respond to the Government proposals and say we're going to take it back and run it from County Office here [Int 14].

4.4.7.2 Principals' comments on the Labour Party's proposals for tertiary colleges¹

Asked to comment on **7.2 Tertiary Colleges as a future for further education**, the chart in figure 7.1.491(5-8) shows over half the respondents supported the proposals:

I've always been a tertiary man in concept, yes. Simply on behalf of the best entitlement for youngsters and

¹ Published in the educational press at the time. Tertiary colleges were colleges which combined the sixth form academic work in an area with the vocational work of the local college of FE into one institution under FE regulations.

others. Sad that it's not happened for us in the past.

In the future ... I don't know is the answer to that

one. I don't know that it's the answer now [Int 1].

One principal outlined a case epitomising many areas of concern¹ which undermined cherished principles:

For me tertiary colleges are extremely welcome. I like the concept of tertiary college but only if all colleges in the region are tertiary colleges. The situation we have in this county at the moment is the worst of all scenarios. We've got a tertiary college alongside FE colleges, alongside sixth-form colleges, alongside 11-18 schools and alongside a city technology college. It is the worst of all possible scenarios and I couldn't defend an FE tertiary college in the middle of all that. We should all be tertiary, or none of us. So I find that disconcerting² [Int 3].

Other supportive comments included:

Tertiary Colleges... I think that is the only answer. I always have believed in it... It is absolute rubbish the two sectors to be doing vocational courses; I think well...³ the stupidity of it fails me, and then the examples I gave of market forces⁴ are not going to

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² There was a strength of feeling discerned in this response which was difficult to comprehend.

³ Words seemed to fail the interviewee for a brief moment at this point.

⁴ See earlier discussion in full transcript on attached disk.

improve it [Int 8].

I think it's the only way really. If you've got a comprehensive model pre-sixteen I think you should have continuity and take that through post-sixteen [Int 9].

Yes, I believe in the tertiary approach. I would scrap all sixth-forms and have tertiaries at 16, but I don't think we'll see that [Int 14].

However, there was not universal endorsement for the concept as the following responses illustrate:

Tertiary Colleges... I think the movement has slowed down and will continue to do so. I don't think it's going to accelerate personally. I think its day (has come and gone) Could even be closed.

Asked: "Even if party politics change nationally?", replied:

Yes. I do yes [Int 10].

Or, as another said simply:

I'm not a great fan of tertiary colleges [Int 13]

4.4.7.3 Principals' comments on Government proposals for sixth-form colleges¹

The question **7.3** about the transfer of **All sixth form colleges as part of FE under Government proposals**², which some 20% supported, met with a mixed reaction as shown in figure 7.1.491(9-12)³.

¹ See White Paper 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991' Cm 1536 Vol I Chapter 9.3 and Vol II Chapters 2.1 to 2.3 for further details.

I welcome the fact that sixth-form colleges will come within the Education Reform Act, within the White Paper. But I hope we might see some mergers in that process [Int 3].

Actually my personal view is that it's probably a good thing because I think a certain amount of prestige goes with it, a certain amount of pull I think and consequently I think they might up the image¹ of the FE sector a bit; because it gives it a bit of academic respectability, if you like, as viewed by the Government [Int 4].

A different approach was adopted by one interviewee, airing a local grievance:

Well yes I mean it's fascinating... there's a CPVE consortium in the City... and the kids come to FE for one day a week. The sixth form colleges have now started doing offerings...² and kids are going from schools to sixth form colleges for FE. Good fun isn't it?³ So...⁴ I'm going to be ever so cynical now. An awful lot of money's going in to bussing. The quality of what they're getting God and only knows, no money's

² See chapter 7 figure 7.2.8 for further details.

³ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

¹ The interviewee's emphasis - the word 'up' used as a verb.

² The word 'offerings' was laden with heavy sarcasm.

³ This kind of term was utilised quite frequently by this interviewee and invariably meant : was not really acceptable.

⁴ A thoughtful pause before proceeding with enlightening perceived reasons.

put into that [Int 8].

Debating some of the pros and cons a principal commented:

I mean a sixth form college used to be following academic courses I suppose you could say under ERA now and under new legislation it can go into vocational areas. But it's too small a unit to do that. It seems to me a very expensive way of doing it. I can't see why you've got to have one form of post 16 provision under one set of regulations and another section under yet another set of regulations. It's very divisive, and unnecessarily so [Int 9].

Seeing threats in the new proposals another deliberated:

Sixth-form Colleges, I mean... Again it depends how they implement the White Paper doesn't it? Because sixth-form colleges without doubt are going to start doing all sorts of things, they're going to become FE colleges there's no doubt about that. I mean to me that's going to be a very wasteful resource job because all sorts of blood'll get spilt then. I like to think it still won't affect me but perhaps I'm being naive there [Int 11].

Attempting to approach the problem from the point of view of the new institutions, one explained a personal reaction:

I see it as a mischievous amusement on the one part because I think we're apprehensive about it and will struggle a little. I think they will be in disparate

straits. But, the appointment of sharp managers, typically VPs from FE colleges, will be very attractive to governors of those establishments and that's what I'd do if I were a governor of a sixth-form college. I'd find the best entrepreneurial VP I could find and make sure they become very good FE/tertiary colleges and therefore we've probably got to look to some serious competition from them. That's why I think I've stolen the clothes and stolen a march on local colleges and schools, but they're all going to be shocked into action and they're going to start hitting me back soon. I've just got to be that bit better [Int 14].

And voicing the view of the majority¹ one stated simply:

I think there must be a post 16 continuum [Int 15].

4.4.7.4 Principals' comments on Government proposals for the careers service²

Principals seemed less well informed on the issue: **7.4 Proposals for the Careers Service: part of TECs, contracted ...**³ nevertheless there was considerable concern over a possible worsening of the perceived neutrality of the careers service, only 20% showing favour towards the White Paper

¹ See full transcript on attached disk for further details.

² See White Paper 'Education & Training for the 21st Century...1991' Cm 1536 Vol I Chapter 7 for further details.

³ See chapter 7 figure 7.2.8 for further details.

proposals as depicted in figure 7.1.491(13-16)¹.

Well I think the option is that it will be shared responsibility with TECS and Local Authorities. I don't know, it's...² I have some concern that it becomes fragmented at a time when it's just about struggling to get it's act together. How that will touch on the college, I think, is about the future...³ it might become less of a good service [Int 1].

Not all were completely satisfied with the current careers service:

Well I think it's nonsense. But I think our careers service is terrible anyway. I think something's got to be done about the careers service. But I don't think making it part of TECs is going to do anything [Int 4].

Well, I mean the careers service needs a lot of money putting into it, not least of which is to upgrade the staff in quality and salary. So I feel they've always been the poor relation. I think it's a very important part of the service⁴ [Int 10].

Others, however, felt considerable sympathy:

Ah, poor careers service. Well of course we look to the careers service to give the youngsters an objective view of what is available to them post-sixteen. But of

¹ See chapter 7 for details of figure.

² There was a sense here of the unfinished phrase meaning not very sensible.

³ This interestingly worded phrase, characteristic of its provider, meant: is as yet unknown.

⁴ Meaning: of the post-sixteen service.

course they're fighting, aren't they, against all the other things which the Authority know about but feel powerless about¹. So yes, I mean, I think the careers service needs to be developed to the hilt and we all need to use it and support it; and it shouldn't just be available for youngsters, it should be available for mature people as well [Int 8].

Their desirable neutrality was referred to in another case:

Well whatever happens to the careers service it's an integral part, for me, of counselling of school leavers. They've always maintained that, although they've always been employed by the Local Education Authority, they've maintained what I call a professionally neutral service and I think that's the important thing. I feel that they have to go where the strategic planning focuses. That's how I feel, so wherever it goes² I think they should be there in a way [Int 9].

Among the responses were some very strongly expressed supportive comments:

Well, you know, I think the careers service are wonderful... absolutely vital in my view. Whether in fact it performs that function exactly as it should... is another matter. If the TEC philosophy goes through and if you do get training credits and all this other

¹ This enigmatic comment almost certainly referred to the local schools' marketing their products to school-leavers.

² Referring to the proposed new organ of strategic planning.

sort of stuff, I mean, in this TEC they're talking about taking on the careers service. I think the careers service role is going to be totally enhanced and enlarged... It's going to be vital actually that we get the right sort of people in the careers service who actually view education and training in the broadest context and it worries me, if they become submerged in the TECs, that they're going to become a different orientation altogether. It frightens me to death actually [Int 11].

Others felt equally strongly that control should be left with the local authority:

I would very much regret the careers service being taken away from the Education Authority. It really is a high quality thing and I've always thought the careers service has been a servant of the people, not of the local authority. As a Careers Officer said to me many years' ago, my job is not to tell them to go to your college, and that's right...¹ And I think it would be a great pity if something like the TEC got hold of it and then started doing this wretched man power planning thing which drives out, which narrows down the option which is based probably on poor predictions and I think it would take out what I've always relied upon very heavily: the good sense of the British public² [Int 13].

¹ This comment was aggressively punctuated by this challenging interval.

I think it would be a very retrograde step to let the careers service leave local authority control. I think if they were put into TEC control they will become lackeys of the employer training, widget making, syndrome. At the moment the Government seems to have pulled back from that worst scenario and I think the impartiality and honest brokerage of the careers service is critical. And I'm concerned, actually, that half the careers service funding is going to be so contingent on training credits and making that work, that I think that will present a tremendous temptation to compromise that integrity and professionalism [Int 14].

The most important thing about the careers service is that they are independent. They have got to be independent and I wouldn't want them to act as an agent for TEC policies... I think they will be driven down and...¹ Well there is a belief in some quarters that you can use labour market information to predict provision and whereas you can in a very broad sense, you obviously wouldn't do something silly, like having to get rid of one element provision against another; I think you've got to balance that against the wishes and desires of young people, providing they've been

² This somewhat emotive exposition was something of a surprise from an otherwise pragmatically cool-headed individual.

¹ An exasperated, breath exhalingly punctuated, pause.

adequately informed. They aren't all going to be brain
surgeons or whatever, there are only so many jobs [Int 15].