UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

COLLEGE OPERATING SYSTEMS

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Faculty of Social Sciences

November 2000

University of Southampton

Abstract

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Education

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Operating systems play a key role in the effective and efficient management of a college of Further and Higher Education. Since the incorporation of colleges in 1993 financial constraints and increasing competition in the further education sector have emphasised the core-periphery model of organisation in colleges, with an increasing use of part-time and temporary staff that has increased the need for effective and efficient operating systems. This research examines the perceptions of staff below Senior Management Team level as to the efficacy of operating systems, and includes data collected from 24 respondents horizontally across a college of further and higher education and vertically from the hierarchy to achieve cross-case comparison within the study. Particular emphasis is placed on 'hearing the voice' of the staff and listening to their perceptions and personal experiences of interfacing with the college operating systems. The research is case study based using a semi-structured questionnaire to provide a framework for collecting interview data. Analysis has been completed through multi-method analysis using both quantitative and qualitative data to draw upon the strengths of both techniques. The thesis concludes that the effective and efficient operation of a college depends on the management philosophy that has developed within the organisation and its approach to devising, installing and monitoring operating systems. Colleges and other similar organisations may benefit from attention being paid to training staff in systems operation, improving the management of the systems and improving the leadership provided by the Senior Management Team within a supportive learning environment. The product of this investigation may be of interest to college managers, managers of other educational establishments and managers of public services generally.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor N. H. Foskett of the University of Southampton, for his guidance, forbearance and faith in me while I struggled with this investigation.

I would also like to express my thanks to the friends and colleagues who contributed their time, advice and good humour to help me bring to light their thoughts and feelings about an institution that does not always appreciate them.

Lastly I will thank my children, Christopher and Laura, for their love and support while I have worked on this thesis.

Chapter 1

1.1: Introduction.

Since incorporation on 1st April 1993 colleges in the Further Education (FE) sector have been responsible for their own management systems. The effectiveness of the systems and the management of colleges in general have been commented on by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), the body which both funds further education and provides the inspectorate responsible for monitoring the performance of colleges in the sector. The FEFC report for 1996 - 97, Circular 98/13 (page8) indicated that many teachers have taken on management duties within colleges but receive inadequate time to perform their teaching commitments and management duties to a satisfactory standard, and commented that 'more needs to be done to help teachers and middle managers to work efficiently.' Wright (1998) points out that managers in colleges recognise that management skills are an essential requirement but are reluctant to seek training for themselves, whilst Fergusson (1994:p95) comments that management training for head teachers and principals is a relatively recent innovation. The lack of time, skills and motivation to improve the management of colleges has occurred at a time when college management and teachers in general have become much more accountable. As Levacic (1997:p131) pointed out, college management has become more accountable for its actions in recent years and this could well indicate a need for effective management of colleges that understands its responsibilities to students, staff, the government and the wider community in which it operates to provide quality education services which are well supported by management processes and operational systems.

Cantor, Roberts and Pratley (1995:p101) highlight the changing character of the work in FE, which has shifted from a craft based emphasis to a service industry emphasis over a relatively short period of time. At the same time as the nature of the work has changed so the structure of college management has changed from collegiate to a managerial system (Enteman 1993, Pollitt 1990, Fergusson 1994) with a definite hierarchy of managers and managed. Kydd (1997:p114) comments on the conflicts that can arise between the traditional role of professional teachers of providing a service and the demands of managerial systems for the smooth and efficient running of the organisation.

There appear to be recurrent themes in the literature of the need for colleges to be efficient and effective in the delivery of educational services to the public. Day and Klein (1987:p27) add the term 'value for money' and give a definition of process efficiency as being value for money in the use of resources and programme effectiveness as a given action or investment achieving its intended result. The extent to which efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved with an under trained management who have insufficient time, given their other commitments, to manage is not clear from the literature, although it can be argued that properly organised and managed operating systems can assist the management and staff in achieving a high standard of delivery that satisfies the demands of the organisation, its clients and the wider community it serves.

1.2: The Problem.

The focus of this study is to what extent operational systems within a college of further and higher education are helping the institution achieve its strategic aims and objectives of delivering high quality education and training to its target community. This is in terms of being both efficient and effective and with due consideration for its responsibility to be accountable for the funds it receives from central government and to be accountable to the community in which it operates.

1.3: Aims of the study.

The problem the study investigated was the role of operational systems in helping the college achieve its strategic aims and objectives. Specifically the study sought to answer the following questions:

1) Are colleges achieving their strategic aims and objectives through addressing the right internal issues?

2) Are the operational systems working efficiently and helping the college achieve their strategic aims and objectives?

3) Do staff recognise the relative importance and contribution identified systems make to the success of the college?

4) Are the systems that are in place easy for the staff to use and are they facilitating them in delivering a service to their students?

5) What are the implications of the development and implementation of management systems in Further Education Colleges?

The study is important for three reasons. First, the FEFC has recognised that internal management systems have not been operating effectively (FEFC circular 98/13:p8) (Chief Inspectors Annual Report October 1999:p40), although management information systems have been installed to satisfy the FEFC responsibility for ensuring that colleges use the funds provided from central government in line with their guidelines. Internal management systems may have been neglected by senior management teams because the FEFC's own focus was on financial management systems rather than internal management and the FEFC has recognised that what is measured is important and is now taking more of an interest in ensuring that the whole college operates efficiently and effectively.

Second, the trend in FE is to downsize teaching staff (Seddon 1997) to the essential staff necessary to operate the courses and to use part-time and temporary staff in other teaching situations in an effort to increase flexibility of response to enrolment patterns (Hill 2000:p68). This has led to a flexible firm model of a core of permanent lecturers, hourly paid part-time lecturers and agency part-time lecturers (Hill 2000:p68). The use of part-time and temporary staff reduces the staff costs but means that support systems must be used that can be operated easily by people who might have a much reduced commitment to the college as well as less time on site. Part-time and temporary staff might see systems that are difficult to use as onerous and thus less likely to be used.

Thirdly, education in common with other public sector services has become more accountable to its users and the providers of funds, which is articulated through a discourse of accountability (Usher and Edwards 1994:p113). Efficient and effective operational systems assist the college's management to provide evidence of the accountability of the college to the government appointed inspectors. Systems that are not operating efficiently and effectively will not be used in the prescribed manner and could undermine the good work that is being done in other areas of the college's operations.

1.4: Rationale.
The product of this research will be of interest to managers in colleges who are devising operational systems for initial implementation or changing systems to make them more effective and efficient, and who want to gain staff commitment to the change.

Managers in other educational establishments such as schools and universities may also be interested by the findings as they operate in similar situations to a college, with academics who may be more interested in their students than in operational systems.

Managers in other public services with a large number of professional staff might also find the research of interest in helping them understand the processes at work in their own environments and how they might improve their own operating systems.

Academic staff may indicate that their only interest in management is in providing an effective and efficient service to their students and might not realise the importance of ensuring the service they provide needs the support of operational systems. If a system can be made better by involving its users in its design and maintenance then the service delivered by all of the college staff will be improved, which will ultimately assist the academic staff to achieve their aims of providing a good service. This research is aimed at improving the service provided, ultimately, to the students of the college and it is they who will benefit from a better understanding of the dynamics of operational management by the staff of the college.

The college staff may also benefit from an improved understanding of how the design and operation of systems impacts on the staff, and help managers to design systems that might be less stressful to their users.

1.5: Purpose of the Study.

The purpose of the study was to examine staff attitudes and experiences of using college operating systems on a day-to-day basis. The study looked at staff understanding of the term 'accountability' and what it meant to them to be accountable, the experience of using systems at the college and whether the systems contributed, in their perception, to the college's strategic aims and objectives. The study also looked at the amount of help that staff received in using college systems, the nature of that help, if any, and who gave such help. Attitudes to the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency were sought to see if there was a correlation between the staff's understanding and the definitions usually attached to public service organisations. Finally, staff attitudes to quality in the FE context were sought along with staff opinions about the proposal of the FEFC to link quality to funding and the effect this proposal might have on the college. The following objectives were examined by the study:

1) To examine whether there is a correlation between what staff see as systems that are important to the college and the level of importance the staff attach to those systems for themselves.

2) To examine whether staff have a conception of accountability and how it affects them in their day-to-day work.

3) To examine whether staff can discriminate between well-structured operating systems that help the college achieve its strategic aims and objectives and those systems that do not.

4) To examine whether staff can identify the type of help they receive in using operating systems and how that help can assist them to do their job better.

5) To examine whether college staff have a clear understanding of the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency.

6) To examine whether college staff understand quality systems and whether they understand the implications of linking quality to funding.

1.6: Background and context.

It appears that the starting point for management in many organisations is the setting out of a vision or mission for its future operations. Cole (1994) notes in the definition of strategy he proposes that strategic management is a process, directed by top management, to determine the fundamental aims or goals of the organisation, and to ensure a range of decisions which will allow for the achievement of those aims or goals in the long-term, whilst providing for adaptive responses in the shorter term (Cole 1994: p2).

This agenda or strategy may be seen as setting the direction of the organisation and dictating the behaviour of the management in its attempts to see its strategy fulfilled. However, as Chapman and Cowdell (1998) note, as public sector organisations have increasingly looked to management techniques as ways of increasing efficiency, great emphasis has been placed on

tools such as 'mission statements.' Unfortunately, many of these have shown a tendency to become bland, since they are often written as much with an eye to 'pleasing the public' and meeting the organisation's political requirements as they are for the practical benefit of their members. However, they do represent one, admittedly rather crude, attempt at establishing some sense of purpose (Chapman and Cowdell 1998:p23).

The use of a mission statement by a public body can be seen as a manifestation of how the language of business is becoming more common in the world of education, although the concept of profit may not be applicable to the educational environment. However college managements have realised that they must diversify the income stream to make colleges less dependent on the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), in many cases its main finance source, and they are seeking alternative income streams. In such circumstances the priorities of senior managers may be seen to have shifted away from the quality of their educational programmes to the development of secure financial and business systems (Cantor, Roberts and Pratley 1995: p109). Such a view may be considered rather harsh since it could be argued that only by securing a firm financial base can a college build on the quality of its courses. Also, college managers would have been responding to the changed environment in which they were operating, as changes in the funding system were introduced that had the effect of changing Further Education Colleges from an arm of local government into quasi-commercial self managing operations. The result of such changes, it was probably hoped by government, would improve the efficiency of the operations and improve quality as compared to that which existed under the LEAs (Local Education Authorities) (Levacic (1997:127).

Colleges, while using the language of business, are usually seen as striving to provide a cost effective and efficient service, which is within a budget set in agreement with the funding agencies and at a satisfactory level of quality. According to Chapman and Cowdell (1998:p173), these aims have required management skills, which, it was hoped by government, would reduce public sector costs. Johnson and Scholes (1984) also highlight that public services are usually competing for resources in the public sector, where the notion of competition is usually concerned with competition for resource inputs typically within a political arena. Many of the developments in management practices in the public sector, such as changes to internal markets, performance indicators, competitive tendering and so on, are attempts to

introduce elements of competition in order to encourage improvements in value for money (Johnson and Scholes 1984: p33).

It may be that the political control exercised by government over education means that colleges can never be truly competitive with other providers in the field and the cultural constraints exercised by teachers would also make true competition unacceptable since education is not usually concerned with making a profit. The very fact that public sector organisations operate on a non-profit basis may be seen as having fundamental implications. Since they are essentially altruistic, both the profit motive and the existence of a competitive market are traditionally unfamiliar to them. Historically, they have not been able to increase their revenue by increasing the level of their activities, as might be the case in a business organisation. They depend upon state funding, which usually takes the form of annual budget allocations. In the past, their nature and origins have tended to protect them from competition and this has had an important effect on traditions of organisational culture in the public sector. Anyone who has worked in a public sector organisation will appreciate that its culture is usually very different from that in any commercial organisation (Chapman and Cowdell 1998:p3).

The method employed by the government to introduce an element of business ethic to education was to release the colleges from local authority control incorporating them into self governing institutions with governing bodies responsible for their own operations, the assets, the staff and the management of their colleges (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p14).

Incorporation.

Many colleges pre -incorporation would have relied on their Local Education Authority (LEA) to provide centralised administration systems for personnel and payroll. Colleges, whilst not in active competition prior to incorporation, would have needed a small marketing function for managing the customer interface. Post incorporation the new 'public service orientation' stressed the importance of the user and 'consumer responsiveness' (Chapman and Cowdell 1998:p174). The new funding agency for the further education sector, the Further Education Funding Council, had been issuing briefings to college managers since 1992 on how to create a strategic plan and how to structure the college with departments for Personnel, Marketing, Finance and the all-important Management Information System, but many of the managers themselves lacked the practical skills to actually undertake the role demanded of them as "the

demands of accountability created their own emphasis on professional management" (Chapman and Cowdell 1998:p174). An example of the problems faced by college management can be gauged from the turnover in college Principals, which has been substantial with only one third of Principals who were in post in 1993 still in post (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p23).

It may be that the FEFC capitalised on the lack of management knowledge by college managers to make sure that their own needs for information were catered for before the needs of the college for adequate management systems was dealt with. A less harsh point of view might be that there was no precedent for the incorporation of the colleges and it was impossible to foresee the outcomes that ensued.

1.7: Definition of Terms.

Key, Major and Minor Operating Systems.
For the purposes of this study, the operating systems used in the College have been separated into three categories identified as key, major and minor systems to indicate the relative importance they have to the college.

Key Systems.
A Key system is one that carries a direct financial penalty from the FEFC for non-compliance with its requirements. An example of this would be where a register is not kept for a course for which funding units are being claimed and which as a result the auditor cannot trace. In such a situation monies will not be forthcoming from the FEFC unless some other proof that the course existed can be furnished.

Major Systems.
A Major system is a system that has a financial penalty not exacted by the FEFC but rather by the business environment. For example, if course fees are not claimed from the students the college would find a large financial deficiency in the budget.

Minor Systems.
A Minor system is an internal system that if not operated properly will affect the efficient operation of the college and could carry a penalty, which might not have an impact for some time. An example of a Minor system could be the grievance procedure where there is no

apparent financial penalty for its inefficiencies but it might cause de-motivation to the aggrieved person if the case was not dealt with quickly, which itself may have a secondary financial effect by encouraging that person to take sick leave or in some way interfere with their work.

Key and the Major operating systems may be seen as the most important to the College in that they have a measurable financial penalty for non-performance. However, the minor systems are those that College staff come into contact with most frequently and if they are not operating efficiently they may cause dissatisfaction with the college management.

1.8: Limitations.

The study has been limited by several circumstances that were outside the researcher's control. The first is that the participants were volunteers and as such could be biased by their intention to put their opinions on the subject of the study into print. The opinions and experiences of those willing to participate may not be as representative as might be hoped and might be termed an incidental sample of subjects who are willing to participate and co-operate, which is a factor that may limit the study's findings in their generalisability. The difficulties faced by a researcher who is also a participant are discussed in Chapter 3 paragraph 6.3, which also considers the problems arising from bias and how they can be avoided.

The data collection was carried out over a relatively short period of time and may not reflect current viewpoints of the respondents. These static descriptions are not necessarily indicative of opinions that the respondents may hold in the future.

The questionnaire was developed for the purpose of gathering data on a specific set of topics and as such might not have elicited enough data about cause and effect relationships. The intention of gathering respondent narratives was to use the questionnaire as a framework that would guide the discussion but permit enough latitude for developing themes and issues as the discussion progressed. On occasion this led to a deviation away from the planned intention, but this was seen as acceptable if the deviation provided an insight into the working of the college's systems and collective thought patterns.

The study gathered data from a cross-section of the college that it was felt by the researcher reflected the composition of the college staff. The number selected from each school or unit had

to be small to ensure coverage of all sections of the staff which could have led to an important interviewee being overlooked. Another sample frame might have provided a different set of results that had a higher generalisability to other college environments.

Finally, the study is limited to one college and therefore cannot be considered generalisable to other colleges.

1.9: Delimitations.

The study involved interviewing twenty-four staff, members across the college and vertically within the hierarchy of the college to gather a cross section of opinions and experiences from the staff.

Second, the age group of the respondents has been kept to that of the staff composition at the college who could be seen as a sub group within the college. A different college with a different age profile and staff experience profile would not necessarily find the study applicable to their circumstances.

Thirdly, the college is set within a certain geographic area and the results may not have applicability to another geographic area.

1.10: Overview.

As has been previously indicated, the purpose of this study was to examine staff attitudes to operational systems within a college. The second chapter deals with a review and critical analysis of the relevant literature on this subject. The methods and procedures of the study will be presented in chapter three and the analysis of the data will be made in chapter four. The final chapter is concerned with the summary findings, discussion, implications and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

2.1: Introduction to the Review of Selected Literature.

There has been, to date, very little investigation into the experiences, perceptions and feelings of Further Education employees with respect to their employers and the changes that have occurred in Further Education since incorporation in 1993 (Hill 2000:p68). The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent operational systems within a college of further and higher education are helping that institution achieve its strategic aims and objectives to deliver high quality education and training. This chapter deals with the review and analysis of studies and writings relevant to this topic. The literature review has been divided into themes that consider aspects and issues of college management that have been derived from comments by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and from comments made by staff who interact on a daily basis with the college operational systems.

2.2: The source of the themes.

College operational management systems have been criticised by the FEFC in their Report of the Quality Assessment Committee for 1996 - 97 (FEFC Circular 98/13). This report highlighted the importance of management skills to the efficient operation of colleges in the following way:

> College restructuring and the delegation of management responsibilities to a wider range
> of staff have resulted in more teachers becoming involved in college management and
> taking on administration duties. Often time allowances made for management tasks are
> small, and insufficient support is available to support administrative work. The committee
> is concerned that more needs to be done to help teachers and other middle managers to
> work efficiently. This issue should be addressed by senior college managers and those
> responsible for prioritising staff development.
>
> FEFC (Circular 98/13:p8)

The FEFC appear to be acknowledging that management systems in Further Education colleges may not be adequate for the job and that the senior management might need to provide

satisfactory support systems and management training that will help the middle managers and lecturers do their jobs more effectively and efficiently.

The FEFC have also commented on the inefficiencies of management information systems in tracking students through their time at the colleges:

> The need to improve management information systems has been a continuing issue for most colleges. Systems for submitting student records for funding purposes are frequently...underdeveloped. Too often, central records differ from those held in departments. Inadequately detailed monitoring means that senior managers and governors remain unaware of weaknesses in student retention, the achievement of qualifications and destinations of students. Consequently, their ability to focus on improving quality is limited.
>
> FEFC (Circular 98/13:p8)

This comment, whilst focused on management information systems, seems to be indicating the inadequacies of the management systems again with its emphasis on the fact that senior managers and governors are unaware of major weaknesses in the delivery of quality education and training.

Informal discussions with staff and other educational professionals helped to form the thematic approach this investigation has taken. The questions asked by staff and colleagues tended to be rhetorical but seemed to have a pattern that asked: Why am I using this system? What is the system meant to achieve? When must it be done by? How do I do what is required? Why does the system not work properly? Who is responsible for the system? The comments cited above from the FEFC and the informal discussions with college staff seemed to be congruent with a situation that could be investigated.

This apparent cavilling about management operating systems, voiced by college staff in informal and unstructured discussions and more formally by the FEFC in their reports, set out the initial investigation into the operation of college operation systems and is what gave rise to the themes of:

1. Accountability in colleges and a consideration of fiscal accountability and academic accountability.

2. Operational effectiveness and efficiency and the link to achieving strategic aims and objectives.

3. The role of operational systems within a college and how a systems approach can facilitate the efficient operation of the college.

4. The role of the Further Education Funding Council in college management operations.

5. College culture and the new FE environment and how the culture of colleges is changing to meet the challenges of the future.

6. Quality issues and their links to the themes above.

Mullins (1985:p593) comments that management control involves planning and organising work functions and guiding and regulating the activities of the workforce. Control provides a check on the way that work is done and its effectiveness and efficiency. Control also provides a means of monitoring the success or failure of the operations of the organisation. Mullins comments further that the whole purpose of management control is the improvement of both individual and organisational performance. The themes above may be seen as being part of the whole system that is trying to achieve a college's strategic aims and objectives and are, therefore, related to each other, to individual performance and to organisational performance as indicated in the diagram below.

Fig 1.

Achieving Strategic Aims and Objectives

Individual
Performance

Organisational
Performance

College Operating Systems

Accountability

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Role of Operating Systems

Role of Funding

Organisational Culture

Quality issues
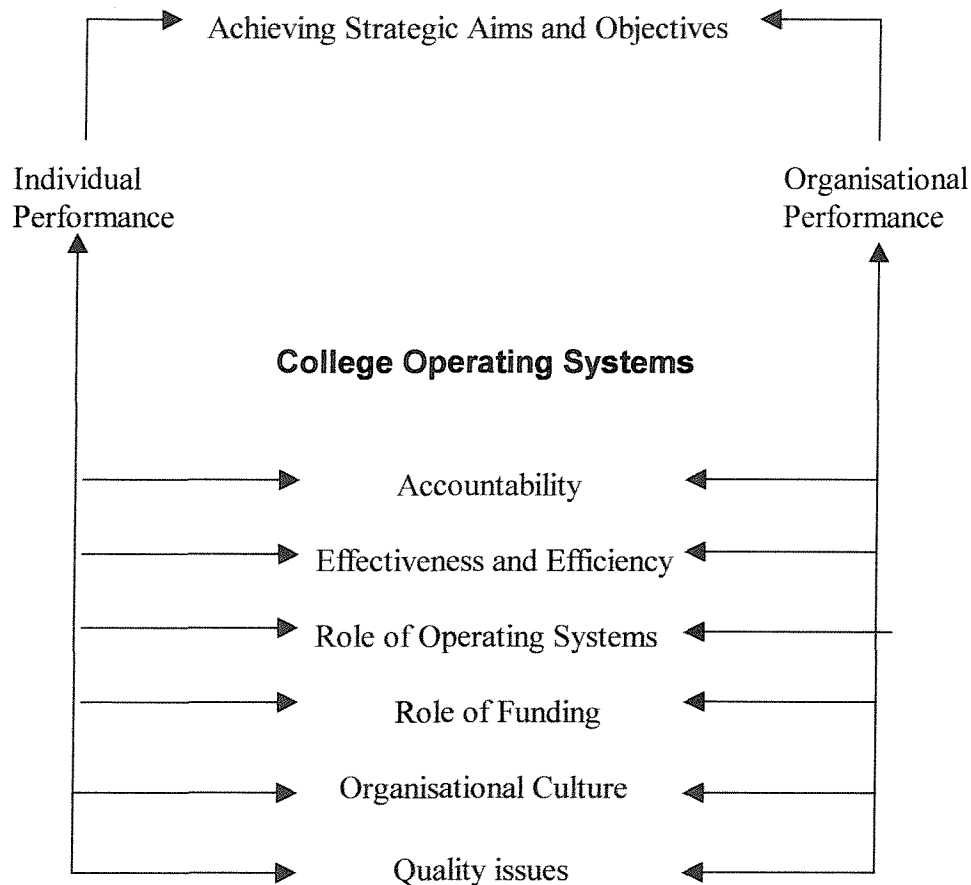
After: Mullins (1985:p593)

Silverman (1970) points out that to understand the pattern of interaction within one system it is necessary to pay attention to the other systems to which it relates, and that nothing may be understood without firstly comprehending the whole of which the system is a part (Silverman 1970: p32). To try to comprehend the whole of the education system may be too much to expect and Silverman further counsels that the level of a study should be specified and all other levels taken as given (Silverman 1970: p32). Accordingly, this study looks at the level of the college operational systems and the college staff's perception of how well they operate. The investigation of the themes outlined above comprises a review of the literature, and conclusions will be drawn from the discussion, which, in turn, helped shape the research question. The themes are set out in the same order as the list above so the first theme to be examined will be that of accountability in college.

2.3: Theme 1: Accountability in Colleges.

2.3.1: Introduction

Accountability arises where there is a need for an accounting for the authority and power delegated to a subordinate as a person or as a body. It suggests "stewardship and audit; exercise of responsibility; reporting of performance; answering for behaviour, decisions and actions; being open to inspection and judgement; subject to sanctions and rewards"(Hinton and Wilson 1993:p123). The word "accountability" has been described as a "chameleon, slippery and ambiguous term" (Hinton and Wilson 1993:p123), and a "complex phenomenon which operates in different ways in different circumstances" (Lawton and Rose 1991:p17). This section will start by defining accountability; it will then consider educational, market based and professional accountability. Accountability in colleges will be examined as well as consideration given to the experiences of another country where, it seems, a similar situation to that of the UK exists. Finally, the section will close with a brief summary of the foregoing discussion.

2.3.2: Accountability Management.

Accountability management, a technique borrowed from General Motors (Zifcak 1994:p12), involved the designation of discrete units in government departments whose outputs could be measured against costs and other criteria and whose performance could effectively be assessed. Where measures of achievement can be defined in quantitative or financial terms, and where individuals can be held responsible for output and cost, accountable units could be established. Once established, such units may be held responsible for the achievement of a clearly specified programme of objectives that relate to the strategic aims of the organisation. The departments responsible for achieving the objectives are made accountable by 'critical scrutiny' of their performance (Zifcak 1994:p13).

Gray (1983p29 - 31) considers accountability in the context of a principal - agent relationship where agents are normally required to account for their actions to their principal. The difficulty in identifying who is the "principal" to whom the agent must account is considered by Hinton and Wilson (1993) as confirming the complexity and obscurity of the term "accountability":

...a headteacher is the agent of the governors for the management and running of the school, of parents for the education and care of their children, of the local authority for the

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resources used and of the Department for Education for delivering the National Curriculum. The relationships become tangled and accountability in a single, simple manner is impossible.

<div align="right">Hinton and Wilson (1993:p123)</div>

The DfEE document 'Guidance on Good Governance' describes the personal accountability of governors and points out that holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office (DfEE 1998). The view that the holders of public office must be transparent in their personal dealings whilst in office is underlined in the FEFC Guide to Clerks to Corporations of Colleges in this way:

> The principle of public accountability is an important one at a time when there is increasing concern at the exercise of powers and responsibilities by non-elected bodies. Sometimes, governing bodies will need to keep some financial, property and personal issues confidential. They should however be cautious in the extent to which they decide that their business should be confidential.

<div align="right">FEFC (1994:p53, March)</div>

The FEFC advice on accountability of members of a college corporation points out that the people involved with the college are open to public scrutiny and need to be aware that they can have their affairs investigated by the general public. According to Hinton and Wilson (1993:p125) in the context of public sector management, those with delegated authority are answerable for their actions to the people whilst Day and Klein (1987:p229) suggest that those with delegated authority have a revocable mandate from the public to operate on their behalf. In the case of members' authorities the secretary of state would be responsible for revoking the mandate.

All of this suggests that giving one definition of "accountability" may not be possible due to its several shades of meaning and connotations. Patton (1992) summarises the difficulties in defining the term "accountability":

Sometimes the term implies only a literal accounting/reporting; at other times it also implies explanation or justification of the actions or other phenomena being reported. Some authors infer from the use of the term accountability the existence of a variety of sanctions/rewards; others do not. Sometimes the term implies a direct hierarchical relationship based on a contractual relationship between the accountor and the accountee for specific actions; at other times (especially in the case of public accountability and accountability to one's peers), the "who", the "what", and the "when" of the accountability relationship are not so obvious.

<div style="text-align: right">Patton (1992:p166)</div>

2.3.3: Educational Accountability.

The Education Reform Act (1988) gave governing bodies some freedom in how it spent the money it received from the Local Education Authority (LEA), whilst the Further and Higher Education Act (1992), and the creation of the FEFC with its statutory requirement to monitor the efficient and effective use of the funds it provides to colleges, meant that sophisticated accounting systems and management information systems had to be installed if the governing body was to discharge its 'major financial responsibility' (FEFC 1994:p62).

The direction of the changes in education is indicative of the increasing emphasis placed on the accountability of the education service, including the accountability of teachers, by society, which requires levels of inspection, the publication of comparative performance data and oversight by the FEFC (Levacic 1997:p131). The FEFC has a remit to promote accountability and value for money and to provide a direct incentive to colleges to expand the participation by relating an element of the recurrent funding to actual students enrolments (FEFC, 1992:32). Educational accountability can be contrasted with managerial accountability, which can be said to embrace notions of stewardship, audit and performance assessment (Hinton and Wilson 1993:p127). Day and Klein (1987:p27) highlight the 'value for money' concepts of management accountability where fiscal accountability is about ensuring that money has been spent as agreed and according to the rules. Process efficiency accountability is making sure that a given course of action has been carried out and that value for money has been achieved in the use of resources. Programme effectiveness accountability is concerned with ensuring that a given course of action or investment of resources has achieved its intended result.

The accountability promoted by the FEFC could be seen as being concerned, primarily, with accounting for the use of financial resources provided by the central government, as the governing body is responsible for ensuring that funds from the council are used in accordance with the terms of the Act (Further and Higher Education Act 1992). The governing body is also responsible for meeting the conditions attached to any grant income received from, or any contracts entered into with, other bodies (FEFC 1994:62).

Nothing is said about the provision of educational courses other than that colleges have the primary responsibility for quality control and for ensuring that they comply with the standards of the validating and examining bodies (FEFC 1994:p58), although the FEFC is responsible for the inspection of colleges and for providing independent assessments of the quality of teaching and learning in the colleges and of the standards being achieved by students (FEFC 1994:p58).

It could be said that the government is using the concept of accountability to regulate education and exert political control over its strategic direction through a "formalization of systems of accountability" (Kydd 1997:p113). Of itself fiscal accountability may not be viewed as wrong, although the requirements of the FEFC seem to be so time-consuming that college managers are obsessed with providing data and returns to them rather than spending time managing the college effectively, as Cuttance (1997) points out:

> Bureaucratic centralised systems fall back on the process of checking whether administrative instructions have been followed, rather than assessing how well educational outcomes have been met. A centralised system necessarily operates by rules, set procedures and statute in order to reduce the number of problematic decisions that officials at the centre have to take. In the case of the education system these rules are of major as well as minor scale and they militate against the overall responsiveness of the system.
>
> Cuttance (1997:p 14 - 15)

The seemingly demanding nature of the FEFC may be the reason why it appears so little attention has been paid to internal management structures and processes and what has prompted the comments on college management failings by FEFC inspectors as noted above. Another

factor could be the poor quality of the appointed members of the Corporation who make up the governing body of FE colleges. When colleges were incorporated in 1993 they ceased to be accountable to the elected representatives at local or county level. Lord Nolan, reported in the Times Educational Supplement (May 24 1996), spelled out the basic principle that bodies paid for out of public money should be accountable to the community they serve and are transparent in their dealings. Other writers have made adverse comments about the accountability of FE management at corporation level to local representatives of the population. This is especially true where democratic control over schools (and colleges) is vested in governors rather than local politicians, and governors are dependent on heads' advice. The heads' power to create policies post hoc through the exercise of financial control is greater (Fergusson (1994:p 101).

2.3.4: Market Based Accountability.

The rise of consumerism in public services where consumers' rights can be seen as replacing the 'vested interests' of the political system could be seen as failing to provide an effective mechanism for the exercise of accountability (Ferlie et al 1996:p211). The foundation of the market-based model is that by making services directly accountable to their clients the influence of distorting intermediaries will be removed. Ironically, improved accountability to the consumers of public sector services may in fact lead to less accountability to the public (Hinton and Wilson 1993:p139) where, for instance, democratically elected representatives are replaced as schools governors by appointees of the Secretary of State for Education.

The Government sought to find out the current thinking on the governance and accountability of college corporations in 1998 from those involved in the Further Education sector. The FEFC's response (July 1998) carried this sentence:

> It is essential that, in implementing the proposals, the government emphasise that college governing bodies are corporate entities, that their members owe collective responsibility towards the corporation and that their primary duty, as members, is to the future of the college.

<div align="right">FEFC (July 1997:p3)</div>

This comment appears to consider the local community to be of secondary importance in the life of the college, and that the corporation does not owe a duty to the local community.

At the same time as this rise in consumer power has taken place there has been an explosion of audit systems that provide a new form of accountability (Ferlie et al 1996:p212), which have displaced traditional forms of control such as professional dialogue and appears to have called into question the professionalism of the individual teacher as will be discussed below.

2.3.5: Professional accountability.

Professional accountability can be viewed as the accountability one professional owes to another professional, although there is a degree of ambiguity in the meaning of accountability as Poulson (1996) reported:

> In particular there was a difference between teachers who saw accountability as self regulation - responsibility to themselves as professionals, to their colleagues or professional associates, to pupils and indirectly to parents and society at large - and those who saw accountability as a pre-determined external phenomenon in the form of contractual obligation, inspection, testing and other regulatory mechanisms.
>
> Poulson (1996: p584)

The climate of education has changed with greater standardization across all levels of education and teachers may now find themselves being called upon to account for their actions to management, students, parents, the press and all manner of groups who consider that they have some stake in the educational process. For teachers this means that where once they were able to exercise considerable professional autonomy over the selection of knowledge and the ways it would be taught, their activities in the classroom are now more tightly controlled. This leaves teachers with less room for exercising both professional autonomy and professional authority. Standardization of the curriculum and increased measurement of its outcomes ensures that teachers deliver the curriculum effectively and efficiently (Kydd (1997: p 115). This appears to be a development that governments have encouraged so as to establish a discursive consensus that constructs teachers and schools as being in need of external regulation (Poulson 1996:p585). A situation that applies to schools, colleges and universities as well.

Evidence of the accountability requirements of the educationalist is an increased use of documentation to prove that the teacher is being open and transparent in his or her methods. The FEFC in its inspection evidence indicators cites documentation as being indicative of a quality provision (Circular 96/12:p20) (Circular 97/12:p22). The claimed benefits through documented accountability mechanism include: freedom of information, improved communications with colleagues, students, parents and inspectors and transparency to government and validating bodies such as EDEXCEL and RSA. The disadvantages include a loss of flexibility to alter the teaching programme and a loss of autonomy in making decisions based on the students' abilities (Kydd 1997:p117). However, Poulson (1996) identifies that documentation does provide a record of what is going on and provides auditors with evidence of quality assurance procedures that at a pragmatic level, offer a formalised account of work, which might be offered when and if individuals or departments are called upon to give an account of their polices and practices and which is modelled on procedures used in business (Poulson 1996:p589)

It may be that a more open and accountable system of documentation might provide a support to academics and proof that they are carrying out their job correctly and in line with college and awarding bodies' requirements, which can be useful in warding off criticism.

2.3.6: Accountability in Colleges.

The current state of accountability in colleges, and in education generally, would appear to be one of freedom of information within a coercive framework of a statutory curriculum and the financial monitoring of the FEFC. Peters, writing about accountability in the university sector in New Zealand, gives a set of accountability measures for universities, which might be seen as having relevance to the English FE sector:

1. A set of contractual relationships between: a) the government on the one hand and the Chief Executives of the Ministry of Education and other educational agencies on the other. b) Post Compulsory Education & Training providers (councils and boards) and their Chief Executives.

2. Charters setting out intended outcomes and performance measures.

3. Audits of performance in accordance with charters.

<div align="right">Peters (1998: p610)</div>

Peters goes on to enlarge on these three measures by describing the main instruments of accountability as a statement of goals (a charter); a statement that translates these goals to measurable objectives (a corporate plan); the ability to manage effectively (which requires the ownership and control of assets); and a variety of reporting mechanisms (Peters 1998: p610).

It would appear that at a strategic level these instruments are sound common sense but it is easy to see that they are robust enough to be applied at all levels of an organisation with a little imaginative adaptation. Peters describes the main accountability mechanisms as:

- clarity of objectives,
- freedom to manage,
- incentives and sanctions,
- adequate information flows,
- effective assessment with a bias for judgements and comparisons.

<div align="right">Peters (1998:p610)</div>

Gray (1983) provides another method of determining accountability in a given situation:

    i) the general form of the principal - agent relationship or contract;

    ii) the action to which that contract relates;

    iii) the information relating to those actions which will satisfy the principals' (sic) needs of accountability;

    iv) the channel(s) through which accountability will be discharged.

<div align="right">Gray (1983:p29-31)</div>

Whilst this analysis may help to provide precision to the definition of accountability it also suggests why accountability can be an obscure and complex subject. Accountabilities may become tangled as the 'upwards' accountability to management conflicts with sideways accountability to professional colleagues and 'downwards' accountability to students and staff.

Cuttance makes a point about accountability that can be seen as being its main raison d'etre where accountability systems need to be established in a way which maximises their contribution to the development of the organisation (Cuttance 1997:p16).

2.3.7: Summary.

It would seem that if an accountability system is to be of value to the organisation it should promote the development of the organisation and help it achieve its aims and objectives rather than be a restraint. To what degree the staff of the college understand accountability and have a congruent viewpoint to that of the senior management team will be explored through the research question.

As might be seen from this discussion on accountability, a major responsibility of college management is to prove that they have used the financial resources supplied by central government effectively and efficiently in providing educational services. The next section will consider the linked concepts of effectiveness and efficiency and the how they might be viewed in a public sector setting.

2.4: Theme 2: Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency.

2.4.1: Introduction.

This theme will examine the relationship between effectiveness and efficiency and will give consideration to the link that these two concepts might have in achieving a strategic outcome in an educational setting. Chapman and Cowdell (1998) describe a tension that appears to exist for public sector organisations between being effective and being efficient:

> Public sector organisations always face a complex problem. They have a responsibility to ensure that they are economically effective and perform efficiently, which could be mutually exclusive, while they are under close scrutiny from a number of different directions...successful organisations focus on effectiveness rather than efficiency if they really wish to achieve client satisfaction in their operations; such organisations prioritise the more effective procedure rather than the more efficient ones
>
> Chapman and Cowdell (1998:p146)

This section will start by identifying two possible definitions of the terms effectiveness and efficiency. It will then explore the difference between efficiency and economy before considering the distinction between strategy and operational efficiency. Finally the theme will draw the points together in a summary.

2.4.2: Effectiveness Defined.

There would appear to be at least two definitions of what constitutes being effective. The first is offered by Porter (1996), Coe and Taylor Fitz-Gibbons (1998), and Johnson and Scholes (1986) who give definitions that emphasise the 'value added' aspects of being effective. Coe and Taylor Fitz-Gibbons (1998), indicate how this view would apply in an educational setting where 'Value added' in educational terms – so-called 'effectiveness'- usually means that part of pupils' performance which cannot be accounted for by their intake characteristics: in other words, a statistical residual can be measured and evaluated (Coe and Taylor Fitz-Gibbons 1998: p424).

The statistical residual model of value added and academic effectiveness appears to rely heavily on adequate control variables being used, which may be possible in a commercial business situation, but might prove difficult in an educational setting given that there can be a wide

variability in students' intake characteristics such as qualifications, family background, etc, which may be better or worse than the average for the country as a whole.

Naylor (1996), Hofer and Schendel (1986), Levacic (1997) and Bennet (1997) offer a second definition of effectiveness. This interpretation appears to support achievement of stated objectives as the measure of effectiveness. Levacic (1997) identifies the view taken by public sector management and accounting where 'effectiveness' can be defined as the extent to which an organisation's actual output matched its desired output (Levacic 1997:p129). Bennett (1997) puts it more succinctly as: Effectiveness compares your intentions with what you actually achieved (Bennett (1997:p68).

Both Levacic's and Bennett's views of effectiveness would appear to be quite different from that of Porter, Coe and Taylor Fitz-Gibbons, and Johnson and Scholes since it is not about value added but rather conformance to outcomes identified as being the 'right things' by the organisation's decision makers. Ouston (1997) gives another way of viewing these apparent alternatives where the main contrast is between relative effectiveness and absolute effectiveness (Ouston (1997:p78). Ouston appears to be saying that the value added interpretation of effectiveness is a relative measure where success is compared relative to the starting point, whilst effectiveness compared to a desired outcome is an absolute measure.

Operational effectiveness seems to be seeking to make sure things are done correctly such as using the right technology for production, using the most suitable resources to complete jobs and limiting the wasteful use of resources. Operational effectiveness appears to be an essential requirement for an organisation as it concerns the management processes, the quality of employee motivation and the management of scarce resources. These might be considered important issues for an organisation striving to achieve superior performance in operational effectiveness, and the organisation needs to pay attention to the management processes through which this can be achieved, as noted by Glover (1997) when he quoted from Ofsted:

Ofsted (1995) suggests in paragraph 6.3 of the revised Framework that effectiveness is promoted through careful financial planning, effective use of resources, and efficient

financial control and administration. None of these is possible without clear aims and the existence of a system which supports development towards the achievement of these aims.

Glover (1997:p139).

2.4.3: Efficiency Defined.

Efficiency, similar to effectiveness, would appear to have two definitions that can be applied to it. The first, identified by Cole, is: "Doing things right" Cole (1994:p9). An interpretation of this definition might be to view efficiency as the efficient execution of a task or operation in conformance with its specification. Such a definition would seem to match Crosby's (1989) view of quality as conformance to requirements and where the quality performance standard is zero defects, not acceptable quality level (Crosby 1989:p50).

The task of deciding on the requirements of the system being operated so that the staff can conform to its standard is very important. Unclear or undefined outcomes do not provide for clear delegation of responsibility. Individuals and groups can only be properly held accountable for achieving well-defined outcomes (Cuttance 1997:p14).

The first definition for efficiency, which is based on conformance to specification should be compared to what appears to be the second definition of efficiency propounded by Levacic (1997) and also Bennett (1997), and which matches that of public sector management and accountancy by the interpretation that efficiency is assessed by comparing outputs to inputs (Levacic 1997:p129). This measurement of the difference between the input values of a resource and the output value would appear to conform to the view of efficiency where efficiency is achieved when a given quantity of output is produced at minimum cost (Levacic 1997:p133).

It might be considered interesting that Levacic seems to give a definition of efficiency, i.e., comparison of input to output, that bears a resemblance to the definition offered by Porter (1996) et al for effectiveness as the value added model. It might also be considered that Ouston's comments on relative and absolute measures of effectiveness have an application to efficiency as well.

Levacic's opinion appears to be financially based and concerned with providing a service at a minimum cost. It should perhaps be remembered that colleges are subject to close public inspection and are expected to be accountable for the money they receive from the government. Since incorporation in 1993, Further Education colleges have been subject to an increasing accountability through inspection, publication of comparative performance data and oversight by the Further Education Funding Council (Levacic 1997:p131).

Levacic (1997) points out that it is necessary to use some form of measure to judge whether efficiency exists:

> Efficiency is always judged relative to a standard. If production is cost efficient then it is not possible to reduce the cost per unit produced by decreasing the amount of one unit and replacing it by more of some other unit of input.
>
> Levacic (1997:p131)

Rosen (1995) identifies that efficiency is concerned with the internal management of the organisation (Rosen 1995: p46), and seems to suggest, in common with Levacic (1997) and Bennett (1997), that efficiency is about how well inputs are converted into outputs therefore the organisation needs to consider carefully how to organise its inputs in order to be efficient.

2.4.4: Efficiency and Economy compared.

Bennett (1997) makes the point that efficiency is not the same as economy since economy is concerned with reducing the amount of resources being used - the input - without regard to the consequences. Efficiency goes one step further, by relating the actual inputs to the actual outcomes and it requires some means of measuring both (Bennett 1997:p68). The 'consequences' that Bennett refers to here would seem to accord to the situation where the lowest cost criterion is applied to all resources and where the most economical organisation is that which can obtain its inputs at the least cost. If this is the only criterion to be considered, the most successful examples may not necessarily be the ones in which to live or work (Performance Measurement and Evaluation 1993: Unit 1.12).

It may be that inexperienced managers would not see the distinction being drawn here and assume that efficiency equals economy when deciding on the level of resources needed to complete a task, and subsequently risk under resourcing what could be an important activity. However economy is seldom considered to be a dominant criterion either by a business or by a public sector operation as it only measures inputs. However, it does become prominent and newsworthy when cuts in income threaten the performance of statutory functions (Performance Measurement and Evaluation (1993: Unit 1.12).

It would appear that an organisation that is only seeking economy in operations risks undermining its ability to meet its stakeholder requirements for a satisfactory service.

2.4.5: Strategy and Operational Efficiency.

Strategy and operational efficiency are different, for their prime accountabilities are quite distinct; their goals, concerns and their actual outcomes are not the same, but some of their concerns do overlap. Strategy is concerned with the long-term direction of the organisation and the means to achieve the desired outcome, whereas operational efficiency is concerned with the optimum use of resources and the achievement of agreed targets. Cole puts it in this way:

The concerns of strategy are *effectiveness* (i.e. ensuring that the organisation is doing the right thing); the concerns of operations are *efficiency* (i.e. doing things right).

Cole (1994:9)

There might well be areas of common concern such as marketing, resourcing, financial targets and management information; however, at the operational level, the main thrust will be realising the strategic aims through the management of the resources of the organisation. Cole (1994) draws the distinction between the functions as top management being responsible for strategic management whereas operational management is primarily the responsibility of senior and middle management (Cole 1994:p9).

Cole (1994) identifies an overlapping area between strategy and operations, which acts as a bridging point between decisions about strategy made by senior management, and their implementation throughout the operational units of the organisation. Cole (1994) regards this overlap as an important interface where managers can clarify the intentions of the strategic managers and find ways to operationalise the plans. The bridging allows senior line and functional managers to discuss and plan their priorities with their middle management colleagues, whilst clarifying issues and eventually gaining approval for operational plans to be put into effect (Cole 1994:p10). Cole's basic premise that senior management is responsible for operations would appear to confirm that it is their responsibility to make sure that the operational systems are suitable for their intended purpose.

Government control of colleges.

Colleges may not have the same degree of freedom from government intervention as an independent business when deciding on strategy. Effectiveness and its link to meta-level strategy can be seen through the way that government controls the flow of funds to colleges. Government targets for achieving certain levels of education influence the level of funding and, in effect, drive the college management to adopt the government's strategic aims as their own and thus stimulate greater institutional responsiveness to the external environment because the flow of resources is linked to 'stakeholders' reactions to perceived organisational performance (Levacic *et al* 1997:p132).

It may be that by controlling funds in this way the government can ensure that national issues such as poor language and numerical skills are seen as relevant to colleges and important enough to be added to strategic plans so that they will be addressed at a local level around the country.

Effective but inefficient?

A research project conducted by the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) identifies that there is confusion in education over the concept of effectiveness. The researchers reportedly found a lack of clarity between concepts of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness in the FE sector (FE). The researchers also posed the question, "can a college which has excellent examination and assessment performance, but which is also financially 'at risk', be described as effective?" (Brownlow 1998).

This confusion could be due to the need to separate the fiscal effectiveness and the academic effectiveness of the college. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), in its Guide for College Governors (FEFC May 1994: Paragraph 11.25: page 62), points out the governors' responsibility for securing efficient, economical and effective use of all of the college's resources. This fiscal cost-effectiveness is quite separate from academic effectiveness although it could be argued that fiscal effectiveness underpins the academic effectiveness by providing a firm base for building strong academic success for a college.

2.4.6: Summary.

Effectiveness, then, may be seen as identifying the things that matter most to the success of the organisation and doing them with efficiency. Efficiency appears to be getting the things that have been identified as being effective done with the required amount of energy or input. Using this schema, effectiveness always precedes efficiency; however, in practice managers would seek to balance efficiency and effectiveness and there is always a trade-off between different goals, as well as between the issues of effectiveness and efficiency (Bennett (1997) in Kydd, Crawford and Riches 1997:p68).

Thus it may be presumed that the things that matter most to the college will be identified by the senior management team and set as the aims and objectives to be achieved through the agreed strategy, and are those things which they have determined will make the college effective. The research question will examine this presumption as viewed from the perspective of the staff, and consider whether the staff believe that the operational systems installed by senior management are aiding the college and its staff in achieving its aims and objectives.

2.5: Theme 3: Operating Systems.

2.5.1: Introduction

A college can be seen as a system that takes inputs in the form of staff, equipment, buildings and money, converts those resources through a structuring process and provides outputs in the form of trained and educated students. Viewed as a system, the college is a purposeful entity producing outputs, which it exchanges with stakeholders in its external environment in return for resources and support and so is dependent on its environment (Levacic 1997:p128). This theme will examine exactly what might be called a system, the concept of systems thinking, how a system is devised, their advantages and disadvantages. What might be required from a system is considered, and how the role of leadership might be considered crucial to operating systems successfully.

2.5.2: What is a system?

There is some dispute over exactly how to describe a system. Handy (1976) draws an analogy between operational systems and the human body where, as with a body, the systems of an organisation overlap and inter-link the parts, the structure and the members. They are of a logical order from the structure of the component pieces, defined by their purpose, and concerned with flows or processes through the structure. "They are in fact 'systems' - it remains the best, if the vaguest, word, meaning at its broadest only an interdependent set of elements" (Handy 1976: p336).

Handy, who was probably drawing on the work of the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy and is generally credited with developing the outline of the General Systems Theory, finds it difficult to improve on the word system perhaps because it is a word that describes modes of operation that can be from the highest level in an organisation to the meanest of jobs within that organisation. Mullins (1985) has similar difficulties when trying to give a definition of the word 'system' and turns instead to a description of its function using an open systems model where the business organisation takes in resources such as people, finance, raw materials and information from its environment; transforms or converts these; and returns them to the environment in various forms of outputs such as goods produced, services provided, completed processes or procedures in order to achieve certain goals such as profit, market standing, level of sales or consumer satisfaction (Mullins 1985: p80).

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Stacy gives a definition of a system that is circular claiming that they are systems because they consist of a number of component subsystems that are interrelated and interdependent on each other (Stacy 1993: p277). Stacy, it would seem, sees a paradox in that a system is a system because it is part of a system, which is not a particularly useful observation but does point to the confusion that exists over identifying what actually constitutes a system. Watson and Mayon - White (1986) give a simple definition of a system as an assembly of components connected together in an organised way. The components are affected by being in the system and the behaviour of the system is changed if they leave it. The organised assembly has been defined as being of particular interest (Watson & Mayon 1986: p1 - 3) to an observer who might be seeking to understand it better, improve it or, perhaps, destroy it.

It would appear that the difficulty in giving a definition of a system as illustrated by Stacy above would seem to be one of its strengths in that it has a universal application and there is little room for ambiguity. Virtually anything can be defined as a system by drawing a boundary whose approach is a flexible one and open to a wide variety of interpretation (Morgan 1996:p387)

It may be that the flexibility in defining a system, as noted by Morgan, is a weakness since it can be postulated that people will be disinclined to question the basis of a system or its purpose due to the inexactitude of the definition of what a system should be.

2.5.3: Systems thinking.

Systems thinking is based on the General Systems Theory which is a contingency approach to systems that states that there is no one optimum state for a system. As Mullins put it "the structure of the organisation and its 'success' are dependent, that is contingent upon, the nature of tasks with which it is designed and the nature of environmental influences" Mullins (1985: p57). The effect of environmental forces on the systems appears to be important in shaping the nature of the system (Silverman 1970: p32), so a competitive environment would call for a different system from that of a more benign environment, and different organisational forms can be associated to different technology, for instance (Silverman 1970:p 36). However, not all theorists in organisational systems would agree that environmental factors exert such a strong influence over organisations. Silverman (1970: p37) points out that organisations do not react to

their environment but their members do. People act in terms of their own interpretation of changes in the environmental factors that exist around the organisation, and attach different meanings to what has occurred. The result is that every organisation, through its people, will produce a slightly different reaction to changes in the environment and hence add variability to their responses and those of the organisation. This viewpoint does appear to fit with general systems theory as the first point made in the following list indicates that there is recognition of the relationship that exists between the members of the organisation and the environment in which they operate both within and without the organisation.

Stacy (1993) summarises General Systems Theory as:

- an organisation is an open system, a set of interconnected parts (individuals, informal groups, formal groups such as departments and business units) in turn interacting with other organisations and individuals outside it.

- Interconnecting means that a system imports energy and information from outside itself, transforms that energy and information in some way, and then exports the transformed result back to other systems outside of itself.

- An organisation imports across a boundary separating it from other systems, transforms the imports within its boundary, and exports back across the boundary.

- The boundary separates a system from its environment but also links it to its environment. As relationships across the boundary are always changing the environment is always changing.

- The boundary therefore exercises a regulatory function: on the one hand it protects the system from fluctuations in the environment and on the other it relays messages and prompts changes within the boundary so that the system adapts to its environment.

- It is the role of leadership to manage the boundary, to regulate so that the system is protected and changes adaptively.

- Successful management keeps an organisation adapted to its changing environment through a process of negative feedback producing stable equilibrium.

- Adaptation to the environment determines the stable equilibrium balance between differentiation and integration, between maintenance control systems and change,

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required for success. Organisational paradoxes are thus solved in a unique way determined by the environment.

● Success is therefore a state of stability, consistency and harmony.

Stacy (1993: p281)

The important points about the General Systems Theory are that there is interdependence, interaction and interconnection both between the parts of an organisation and other organisations and it might be said, with and between members of the organisation and its supra environment. Those boundaries between parts of an organisation, between organisations and between its environments are important. The management of the boundaries is important both in terms of people and leadership, and the roles of people within and across boundaries are significant. There could be said to be an implied acceptance within the General Systems theory of an agreement between the members of the organisation on what constitutes its aims and objectives. There also appears to be a further implication that the members of the organisation share a common intention to achieve its goals. One could ask is this a realistic aspiration for the organisation?

Cole (1996: p43) describes how the thinking behind Goal Theory is that motivation is driven primarily by the goals that individuals set for themselves where the goal itself provides the driving force. Cole (1996: p43) continues that where individuals set specific rather than vague goals they perform better, and feedback on performance further enhances motivation. Other factors might include the degree of goal-commitment by the individual and goal-efficacy or the perception that one has the ability to achieve the goal. Goal commitment may be enhanced when set by the individual who then has goal-ownership and the goals are made public. A method sometimes used by organisations to achieve so-called goal congruence between the management imperatives goals and those of the staff members is Management By Objectives (MBO).

A major aspect of MBO is the intention that the process should attempt to harmonise individual and organisational goals to achieve the goals set by the organisation for itself. MBO can be seen as a pragmatic approach to systems that attempts to establish congruencies or alignments between different systems and eliminate potential dysfunctions (Morgan 1996: p42). The setting of goals to be achieved by the organisation has to be moderated by an understanding of

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the limits that need to be placed on behaviour (Morgan 1996: p98), although systems thinking may be seen as encouraging managers to see the wider implications of setting objectives that could encourage behaviour that falls outside what might be considered acceptable to society. Silverman (1970: p122) cautions that observation depends on the spectacles being used and that the difficulties of an organisation may well be a polite name for the difficulties of those in positions of power.

Hill (2000) comments that employees judge themselves in terms of the values of an organisation and come to want what managers want them to aspire to, designed into the organisation and disseminated via its cultural values (Hill 2000:p69). An educational establishment seeking a high level of congruence between its own and its employees' goals should perhaps consider the changed employment conditions that teachers and lecturers find themselves in. Expecting goal congruence from staff may be considered unrealistic (Morrison 1998: p44), given the rise of short-term contracts, part time working and the use of temporary staff (Hill 2000:p68) who may work for more than one employer in the same day. The belief amongst managers that what is good for the organisation is good for the employees may be considered arrogant when there is an appreciable tension between the individual needs of the employee and those of the organisation (Silverman 1970: p76). Given the developments in the employment situation perhaps the best that employers may expect is for staff to demonstrate commitment and loyalty to the college whilst in their employment, transferring their commitment and loyalty to their next employer as they move on. Such a shift from sharing the goals of the SMT to demonstrating commitment to the organisation focuses on gaining mutual commitment to organisational success (Cole 1996: p383) and places the emphasis on human resource management. However, Hill (2000) reports from his research that the college corporation manifested in both the governing body and the SMT, and the FEFC, are perceived as having limited trust and confidence in their core teaching staff of full-time lecturers (Hill 2000:p74), although in return the lecturers reported an equally low level of trust in them. In such a situation the lecturers can, apparently, draw succour from knowing that they carry the support of the students, parents, employers, and examining bodies and, to a limited extent, the Training and Enterprise Councils (Hill 2000:p74).

The drawing of a system defines its boundaries and focuses attention on the transactions across the boundary which is of some relevance to colleges where the "managing of educational institutions is being moved away from managing the curriculum towards managing tasks and

systems", Kydd (1997:p116). Where there are no transactions across the boundary the system is termed a closed system. Synthetic systems are open systems where transactions happen between the environment and the system. The concentration of attention on the boundary between systems makes individual managers concentrate on the boundary and how it can be managed effectively. Three methods for devising operational systems will be examined next so that they can be placed in context.

2.5.4: Devising an operating system.

The devising of operating systems may appear deceptively simple but much depends on how the system is constructed. Standards and controls that are too restrictive may not only generate user resistance but also stifle user innovation. If the controls are too weak, the organisation may encounter serious problems with keeping the system's integrity and connectivity to other systems (Laudon and Laudon 1996: p370). Although there are many different methods of building systems and processes (Laudon and Laudon 1996: p370), only three will be examined here and these are systems lifecycle, prototyping and out sourcing.

The first systems development model to be examined is the systems lifecycle model, which Laudon and Laudon (1996) have described as a six step sequential process as follows:

Systems Lifecycle Model

Table 2.1

Step 1	Problem definition	This first step determines the problem and decides whether a new system is needed. It could be seen as setting out the structure of the requirements in terms of what needs to be done.
Step 2	Systems study	The second step analyses the alternative methods that could be used to solve the problem defined in the first step.
Step 3	Design	The design phase sets out the logical and physical design specifications for the solution.
Step 4	Programming	Setting up the system according to the design specification.
Step 5	Installation of the	Putting the system into operation. This stage will

	system	include training for the users of the system.
Step 6	Post implementation	Using and evaluating the system. This stage of the life cycle will include auditing the operation of the system and receiving feedback from its users so that modifications can be made if necessary.

<div align="right">Adapted from Laudon and Laudon (1996: p371 – 372).</div>

Advantages and disadvantages of the systems lifecycle approach.

The systems lifecycle approach has been called costly, time consuming and inflexible (Laudon and Laudon 1996: p372), because it requires a great deal of documentation to make it operate. If it needs to be revised then the documentation must also be revised which does not encourage the operators of the system to explore and discover new and novel solutions to the problems they face. The complexity of a system or process may inhibit the adaption of the system purely because of its complexity and the difficulties the operators would face from changing the process to meet the users' requirements (Silverman 1970: p30). Where the systems lifecycle approach may be useful is in highly structured systems that are stable, well defined to a predetermined specification and under the tight control of the management (Laudon and Laudon 1996: page 372). An alternative method of devising a system is prototyping and this will be described below.

Prototyping

This method of building a system is rapid and inexpensive for users to evaluate by interacting with the model (Laudon and Laudon 1996: p372 – 373). The interaction may be seen as having a learning element as the users obtain a better idea of their requirements through the interaction with the prototype system. The prototype can be seen as a preliminary model of a working system that, once fully evaluated, may be introduced permanently.

Prototyping

Table 2.2

Step 1	Identify the users' basic requirements.	The designer or person writing the system will carry out preliminary research that captures the users' basic requirements.
Step 2	Develop an initial prototype.	The systems designer creates a working prototype quickly and introduces it to the users.
Step 3	Use the prototype.	The users are encouraged to use the prototype to determine how well the system meets their needs and to make suggestions on how the prototype should be adapted.
Step 4	Review and enhance the prototype.	The system designer notes the changes requested by the user and refines the prototype. The cycle iterates through steps 3 and 4 until the refined prototype is acceptable.
Step 5	Installation of the system	Putting the system into operation. This stage may include training for the users of the system.

Adapted from Laudon and Laudon (1996: p373 – 374).

Advantages and disadvantages of prototyping.

Prototyping may be seen as most useful where there is some uncertainty about the requirements of a system and the users find it difficult to articulate what they want it to provide. Users of the system might try it out first and then respond to what is provided with further information as to their specific needs. The process of iteration, returning again and again to make improvements to the system, can be seen as encouraging end user involvement throughout the development cycle culminating in a better system that provides a superior fit to the users' requirements. However, the process of iteration would appear to make prototyping unsuitable for large systems that might need to be broken down into smaller packages so that they are more manageable. Also, rapid prototyping could miss important details in the user requirements because enough time was not allowed to identify all of the elements. Lastly, the repeated iterations do not necessarily ensure the system will meet fully the users' requirements where they are still unable to define their requirements precisely. Successful prototyping requires

management and mechanisms for defining user expectations, assigning resources, signalling problems and measuring process (Laudon and Laudon 1996: p374).

It can probably be appreciated that both of the preceding methods of devising systems require a period of time to introduce the finished product to the organisation and have it operating effectively and efficiently. The third method of introducing systems to the organisation might be seen as providing a more rapid solution.

Outsourcing systems.

The third method of introducing systems into an organisation is to outsource the process. This can take two forms. The first is that the organisation buys in a commercial system from a supplier and operates it independently of the supplier after some initial training of staff. A system such as payroll might be seen as a prime candidate for such a system where the organisation can buy in the required process, manual or computerised, and have its own staff operate it. Alternatively, the organisation could buy in the services of another business, which will provide and operate the system on their behalf. Payroll again provides an example of this method where organisations could buy in the service of a specialist payroll firm to handle the process from checking time sheets to sending the payment instructions to the bank.

Advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing systems.

The first advantage is that the system can be introduced quickly to replace the existing system. In the case of a full system replacement the overhead cost of employees could be removed, as could any problems of managing the section. Where only the operating system is replaced the system may be able to be introduced quickly without directly employing expensive systems designers, analysts and training staff as the vendor of the system might provide these. Where the replacement system is well established in the market place and extensively used by other organisations, cost savings may be realised through the swift introduction of the system. The disadvantages of using outsourced systems are the loss of control over the system's functions due to accepting someone else's interpretation of your organisation's needs. The organisation may find itself dependent on technical help from the vendors of the system which they may have to pay considerable sums annually to receive.

The outsourcing of systems has become a quite common practice for organisations as it does provide a relatively quick and cost effective solution to systems problems and users' needs (Laudon and Laudon 1996: p384). How might one assess how well or poorly a system is functioning? Silverman (1970: p90) provides this suggestion: "acknowledging that every system has multiple functions and exists within an environment which provides unpredictable inputs, a system's effectiveness can be defined as its capacity to survive, adapt and maintain itself and grow".

2.5.5: What do users want from a system?

Perhaps a pertinent question to ask at this point is what do users of a system want from it? In general terms the following list might provide an answer to this question:

Top management want:

- Attainment of the strategic objectives;
- Systems that contribute to that attainment;
- Flexible systems that can handle major organisational developments and changes easily;
- No major problems or trouble from the system;
- Costs and timescales met;
- Reliability of the systems;
- Good productivity from the people who use and operate the systems.

The users of the system want:

- Systems to help them perform their roles well;
- Systems that help them do their jobs;
- Reliability from the systems;
- Flexibility in the systems to allow for unusual situations and occurrences.

<div align="right">Adapted from Information and IT for Managers (1989) Open University.</div>

It is probable that although these lists appear mutually exclusive they do overlap rather more than is apparent here. This would be especially true where the managers of the organisation have developed a good level of goal congruence between the staff and themselves so the concerns of the management are the concerns of the staff.

In contrast, Morrison (1998) provides a list of the expectations of systems from a quality aspect:

- Excellence;

- Conformance to specification or standards;

- Fitness for purpose;

- Effectiveness in achieving institutional goals;

- Meeting the users' stated or implied needs and specifications;

- Being highly reliable;

- Improving over time and with experience removing weaknesses and failures;

- Meeting critical success factors;

- High user satisfaction;

- Providing effective support for staff;

- Providing a communication channel;

- Using resources effectively and efficiently;

- Meeting minimum standards of acceptability;

- Adaptable to changing circumstances;

- Durable.

<div align="center">Adapted from Morrisson (1998: p73)</div>

Although apparently comprehensive this list does appear to have a missing element, that of the support of the top management of the organisation, since without that it might be questioned whether a system could ever be accepted or acceptable within the organisation. The role of the leader of the organisation may be seen as being of the highest importance to how the organisation operates its systems, and this aspect of systems operation will be examined below.

2.5.6: Leadership

The role of the leader or leaders in an organisation is usually seen as being extremely important to how it operates, as in the current drive towards school improvement and school effectiveness, where effective leadership is seen as a critical element (Morrison 1998: p205). Leadership may be seen as the possession of essential competencies, skills and expertise that are seen to provide the leader with the ability to guide the organisation towards a desired goal. Leaders are not necessarily the Principal or Chief Executive as they can be found in many different parts of the organisation (Morrison 1998:p205).

Leadership can be said to concern: vision, strategy, creating direction and transforming the organisation. Clarke (1994) identified the abilities of a leader as including:

- Identifying and maintaining the special character of the organisation;
- Symbolizing clearly to the outside world exactly what the company is and what it stands for;
- Setting challenging but manageable standards of performance;
- Motivating employees;
- Being a positive role model for the rest of the organisation.

Clarke (1994:p43)

The list above can be contrasted with managing which is concerned with the effective implementation of the vision, ways of ensuring the vision happens in practice, organisational and operational matters, creating the systems and means of ensuring the organisation is run effectively and efficiently to achieve its purpose and strategies (Morrison 1998:p206). However, the role of leader and manager are not either/or roles; they overlap especially for senior managers where they have considerable input into policy and strategy formation (Morrison 1998:p206). Senior managers must have a clear vision of the future and the personal strength to challenge existing practices and norms. They must be able to win over the critical mass of the workforce and indeed other managers (Burns 1996:p231).

2.5.7: Summary.

It may be seen as equally important to identify why a system may or may not be effective and efficient so that in the broader context useful insights can be identified that will provide a guide to setting up systems that will operate effectively and efficiently in an educational setting. The research question seeks to identify whether the systems that are in place in the college facilitate the staff in delivering a service to their students. As noted above the role of the FEFC in the operation of colleges may be seen as integral to the reason for certain systems to be established and this role will be examined in the next section.

2.6: Theme 4: The Role of the Further Education Funding Council.

2.6.1: Introduction.

The Further Education Funding Council for England (FEFC) is the body set up by the government to channel funding to Further Education and oversee its use. This short section of the literature review will consider the role of the FEFC as the main funding agent for Further Education. It will begin with a consideration of the purpose of the FEFC and then move on to consider the role it plays in monitoring the activities of colleges.

2.6.2: The purpose of the FEFC.

In its Circular 92/01 "Preparing for Incorporation" the FEFC gave its purpose as "overseeing accounting guidelines and financial monitoring of returns" (page 8). This was later enlarged upon in Circular 93/12 (page2) as:

The principal functions of the Council...are:

* to secure sufficient facilities for education for full time students aged 16 - 18...and adequate further education facilities for all other students...ensuring in so doing that the Council has regard for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

* to secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in colleges within the sector.

The principal method by which the Council will fulfil these functions is through the distribution of the funds allocated to it by Parliament and by attaching conditions to the use of these funds. Of primary importance in this respect are the funding agreements which the Council will make with individual colleges and the financial memorandum governing the the relationship between the Council and colleges.

The same Circular includes reference to the Council's aims (page 3):

Since its formation in July 1992, the Council's three main priorities have been:

* to put in place procedures through which colleges can account for the funds allocated to them;

* to establish a method for allocating recurrent and capital funds in 1993 – 94;

* to bring forward for consultation a range of methods for allocating funds in subsequent years.

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Paragraph 13 of Circular 93/12 sets out its longer-term role in strategic language as five aims:

- to secure throughout England sufficient and adequate facilities for further education to meet the needs of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the communities in which they live;

- to contribute to the development of a world class work-force as envisaged in the National Education Training Targets;

- to promote improvements in the quality of further education;

- to promote access to further education by people who do not participate in education and training but who could benefit from it;

- to ensure that the potential of the sector and its financial needs are properly represented at national level.

From these references it can be seen that the primary role of the FEFC is to provide funds and to monitor its use in the colleges to which it supplies those funds. The Council implements its policies through an advisory role, a developmental role and a regulatory role, the purpose being to ensure that colleges comply with the political control set out by the government.

The FEFC requires colleges to make certain returns to it as part of its monitoring process and control systems. For instance, colleges must file a strategic plan, file returns on achievements of those plans, undergo the audits and, periodically, undergo inspection. Although FEFC does require these returns the Council has no wish to intrude into areas which are properly the responsibility of colleges themselves; internal management processes are left up to the college to decide upon (Circular 92/18:p3)

Shorter, writing in the Oxford Review of Education, gives a flavour of the impact that the FEFC had on the work of a Sixth Form Principal:

One clear danger was that 'you had no time to plan - you're reactive, all the time'. The burden of dealing with FEFC circulars and paperwork fell on relatively few shoulders and

one principal certainly several times thought of telephoning Coventry (home of FEFC) to ask: 'Do you want me to run the college or reply to your circulars? I just can't do both.'

<div align="right">Shorter (1994: p468)</div>

Circular 96/12 (Page 2) gives guidance on colleges' internal audit services, which should be to: "review, appraise and report on the adequacy, reliability and effectiveness of the systems and controls established by college management." This would appear to be advice that was desperately needed by some college managers.

2.6.3: Inspection.

Early inspections by the FEFC followed the traditional pattern of a team of inspectors coming into the college, auditing the college's work and providing a report. January 1996 saw a proposal for a new system being made in a Circular 96/12. This Circular set out proposals for a revised framework of self-assessment to replace the direct inspection which had been used up to then. The Circular set out the focus of the inspection, provided some indicative sources of evidence and called for responses by college management.

The interesting thing about the proposed inspection criteria was its scope that included the internal management of the college, which had not been its direct concern according to Circular 92/18 as noted above.

The self- assessment system for colleges was implemented from September 1997 as set out in Circular 97/22. The procedure in brief is:

- a self- assessment audit is carried out by the college;

- a report is drawn up by the college and its performance is given grades by the college. The report is sent to FEFC;

- an audit is carried out by FEFC inspectors to agree the grades awarded to itself by the college;

- two further documents are then published:

1) an inspection report with a summary statement of auditors opinions, and

2) a report detailing audit findings including recommendations;

- a follow up a visit by inspectors to check on the college's progress in fulfilling its action plan.

Colleges undertaking self-assessment in 1998 faced a live audit in 1999.

From its original intention when set up in 1992 of being concerned with the strategic direction that further education was to take, the FEFC seems to have become embroiled in the minutiae of college management. This broadening of the FEFC's role may have been influenced by the inspection reports of 1995- 96 and 1996- 97 that recognised that in some cases college management lacked the technical management skills required for the job. The inspection report Circular 97/20(Page 7) notes:

In the current climate, funding and other financial considerations come to the fore. Principals and senior managers appointed as educators quickly have to learn the skills and language of accountants, sometimes at the expense of their management of the curriculum. Some have found this pace of change too great and those still in post are having to work hard to achieve a proper balance between the educational and entrepreneurial elements of their role... Many heads of department have heavy teaching loads, which make it difficult for them to carry out all their management duties effectively. With the increasing delegation of budgets, there is a pressing need for the middle managers to receive financial management training.

The report for 1996- 97, Circular 98/13 (Page 8) makes another point:

College restructuring and the delegation of management responsibilities to a wider range of staff have resulted in more teachers becoming involved in college management and taking on administrative duties. Often, time allowances made for management task are small and insufficient support is available to support administrative work. The committee is concerned that more needs to be done to help teachers and other middle managers to work efficiently.

The Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) in their newsletter 'Inform' identifies the development of management standards in FE as being a high priority. The college managers' ambivalence towards management skills can be seen from their reluctance to undertake

management training. A large scale FEDA survey of managers in FE during 1997 found that, although the national management standards matched up reasonably well to managers' perceptions of their job roles, a significant number (34%) were resistant to achieving a management qualification themselves (Wright 1998).

It may be that many managers' in FE regard 'sitting next to Nelly' as satisfactory training for running multimillion-pound organisations despite the evidence that the FEFC have uncovered of poor management skills and FEDA's discovery that a significant number of managers are reluctant to seek training to improve their performance. The apparent reluctance of college managers to update their skills suggests a certain hypocrisy when, as teachers, they have told students of the importance of keeping up to date with current practice.

2.6.4: Summary.

The changes that have occurred in the funding of Further Education may be seen as having their basis in a changing operating environment that has been evolving for some considerable time, some might suggest twenty years. The changes experienced by FE since incorporation in 1993 had been experienced by other sectors of public service such as the health service, and have their roots in the two concepts of managerialism and consumerism. These two concepts and other cultural aspects of the college establishment will be explored in the next theme.

2.7: Theme 5: College culture and the new environment.

2.7.1: Introduction.

Chapman and Cowdell (1998) state that: "the history of an Organisation is a central part of its culture - the body of beliefs, assumptions, ideas which inform the behaviours of its members" (Chapman and Cowdell 1998:p23). This theme will consider the changing culture of a college since the incorporation of colleges on 1st April 1993 and the pressures, both external and internal, that are shaping the adaptations of management practices which themselves are dependent on the culture of the organisation as identified by Kydd (1997: p1). The changes that have been made to the culture of further education colleges may be seen to have occurred at a time of transformation in the traditional student base of education and training.

2.7.2: The student base.

The traditional role of FE Colleges was technical education in craft or vocational jobs such as building, engineering and business studies as identified by Ainley and Bailey (1997:p1 - 7). The clientele for colleges was and is largely post compulsory education students. FE is not part of mainstream education, as Ainley and Bailey (1997) put it:

> FE is therefore still described negatively as neither schooling on the one hand nor higher education on the other; or - still more dismissively and inaccurately - as non-academic, being concerned solely with vocational training rather than general education.
>
> Ainley & Bailey (1997: p3/4)

Whilst it may be true to say that FE has been more concerned with vocational training in the past, the sector has changed over time and reflects the current national economic environment. Traditionally, the work of the Further Education Colleges has consisted of their vocational training courses, which range over a large number of subject areas from agriculture and art and design through business studies, engineering, and hotel and catering and health and community studies, to mathematics and computer studies. The popularity of these subject areas varies from time to time in relation to a number of factors, including the sex of the students and job opportunities (Cantor, Roberts and Pratley 1995:p75-76).

The recession of 1989 - 1993 saw building industry work lost and colleges close their construction courses due to a lack of students; and the character of the work in many colleges

was changing quickly, in response to industrial and demographic shifts: for example, some departments like business and general education were growing fast, while others like building construction and mining were declining steeply (Cantor, Roberts and Pratley 1995:p101).

Engineering suffered a similar down turn as manufacturing capacity was lost and colleges closed the engineering courses they offered, whilst at the same time service industry jobs increased and students who might have gone into building or engineering trades may now be studying business studies, computing and travel, tourism and leisure courses; although, many students still undertake programmes in engineering or construction despite predictions of the virtual collapse of these industries (Cantor, Roberts and Pratley 1995:p76).

The increased competition for students has forced colleges to be innovative in creating courses that are attractive to students and which offer the possibility of finding a job in the future and to counter the "sudden decline in part-time job-related education", (Cantor, Roberts and Pratley 1995:p104). It may be that the competition from school Sixth Forms, universities and training organisations has cut deeply into the traditional college student base whilst reduced numbers of students due to demographic changes have forced colleges to fight harder for an ever diminishing group of students. The competition forces some large colleges to attempt to take over colleges and sixth form colleges considered too small to survive in the new competitive environment (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p37).

Changes to the funding of FE have meant that colleges have had to retain students and help them achieve their qualifications otherwise the college loses funding. The changes to funding have also had the effect of shifting the emphasis of education from collaboration amongst colleges to competition almost overnight (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p23). The transformation of climate was actively encouraged by the government which has sought to increase consumer power in education by "widening consumer choice" (Fergusson (1994:p96), and a move to a "client culture" Wilson (1993:p42), where the organisation sees its first concern as serving client interests and needs. The changing emphasis of educational management to a commercial and enterprising ethos may be seen as requiring a number of attitudinal, strategic and cultural changes.

2.7.3: Managing the college.

Ainley and Bailey (1997) have given an outline of the responsibilities that college management, at corporation level, now have under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. When Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges ceased to be the responsibility of Local Education Authorities, newly constituted governing bodies, or 'Corporations', became responsible for the assets, the staff and management of their colleges. These bodies are empowered not only to provide education and training but to supply goods and services, acquire and dispose of land and property, enter into commercial contracts and to borrow and invest, as long as this is seen as being 'incidental' to the provision of further education (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p14).

This revolution in the operating environment through incorporation forced changes to management practices and working relationships throughout the college, with new people brought in to operate the functions previously done by the Local Education Authority. If expertise in the new functions such as accountancy, marketing and information systems, that had previously been undertaken by the Education Department at County Hall, could not be found within the College, outsiders were brought in to enhance the new importance of the registry, systems management and marketing (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p41).

Changes to the management structure from a multi-tiered hierarchy to a flattened structure made up of fewer but bigger steps, whilst at the same time the move to a nucleus of managers, has tended to alienate the management from the lecturing staff. Claims were made that the new approach to management and steps to modify internal structures would exploit individuals' strengths in management and create a more professional corps of specialist managers. However, this tends to cut the new management core off from their workforce (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p51).

The shift to a professional management cadre with management skills has been recognised by the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) who reported in autumn 1994 that there was an observable shift in attitudes towards a greater use of sophisticated management systems (Cantor, Roberts and Pratley 1995:p103). Such a development may not be seen as undesirable given that many head teachers and principals have had little or no management training (Fergusson 1994:p95).

The culture changes that have occurred in education, and in other public service organisations, have been described as "managerialism" (Wilson, 1993:p50), which can be seen as the importation of private sector concepts and techniques into the public sector. Kydd (1997) describes the emergence of a professional management cadre in education as managerialism with both a political philosophy and a set of systems and practices designed for the management of public services. Hicks and Gullett (1981:p153) describe managerial philosophy as the orientation of the senior management towards how they carry out their managerial tasks, while Popkin and Stroll (1969:p1-2) identify philosophy as a belief system that guides the individual in his or her behaviour. As a 'movement' it is concerned with the promotion of markets as an organisational tool for the running of public services. Kydd describes managerialism as a specific set of models of efficient organisational functioning and of techniques through which such smooth functioning can be achieved, although the emphasis managerialism places on management and systems of management might conflict with the traditional role of professional teachers and notions of providing a service (Kydd 1997:p114).

2.7.4: Managerialism defined.

Enteman (1993) uses a series of questions and answers to help define managerialism in a general sense:

Table 2.3

Question:	Answer:
What is the fundamental nature of society?	Managerialism asserts that society is made up of numerous sub-units. They may be variously labelled groups, organisations, corporations or associations. Managerialism specifically denies that the fundamental nature of society has an overarching essence. If society is conceived of as a nation, that nation would not be made up of individuals but composed of numerous groups.
How are social decisions made?	Managerialism asserts that social decisions are made as a result of the interaction of the units identified as constituting the fundamental reality of society. The units do not interact...the managements of the units interact...it is in the interaction of the managements that decisions are made.
How is the society related to its individual (human) members? How does social choice arise out of individual preferences?	Individuals attempt to have an impact on social choice through their individual membership in groups. The groups have their impact through management. An individual is best advised to work for a remedy (to an issue) through group representation.
What is the role of government in managerialism?	The government is a part of the management process. The management of different groups will attempt to influence the direction of government action. Their success or failure will depend on their ability to pursue their case and upon their ability to blunt the case of competitors.

What are the legal and moral limits on the range of decisions which can be made by the managerial process?	There are no inherent legal limits. What legal limits there are do exist as a result of the transaction process and, thus are susceptible to change by that process. The transaction process itself has no moral limits. Individual managements may make self-imposed limits...(or) adopt positive moral goals.
What is the nature of these units and the limitations on them?	The social units ...may be large or small, rich or poor, well managed or poorly managed...local, national, international or supranational. They may represent interests that are legal or illegal.
What role does the management fulfil?	It manages the organisation internally and externally...(it) may have its own goals and objectives. Typically, management has some effective discretion in regard of the decisions it can take.
What is the justification for managerialism?	There is no justification such as those found in capitalism, socialism and democracy. It evolved in the face of the breakdown of those other ideologies and in the vacuum created by the fact that intellectuals have not constructed an alternative ideology which might have some moral justification. Managerialism is an ideology created by managers...it is an ideology for managers.

Enteman (1993:p190-193)

Enteman sees managerialism as circumventing the democratic structure of society and stresses the use of 'groups' to act on behalf of the individual in interactions with government and large organisations. The individual who suffers some injustice must find a group of people who have suffered some similar injustice to represent him or her in making a case that can be addressed by the party causing the injustice. Enteman states that the emphasis on managers negotiating with managers makes dealing with such cases relatively easy for management since any settlement will be negotiated through intermediaries, although the intermediaries themselves may have a managerialist viewpoint and a separate agenda to be satisfied which may, ultimately, not coincide entirely with the wishes of the aggrieved. Enteman sees this need to act through a group as a disadvantage and as undermining democratic rights. However, it could be argued that what the individual loses in democratic rights is more than made up for in the support that like minded people can give when dealing with managements and governments who have the financial strength to subvert democratic rights to their own ends. It might be that by involving a larger group of people the chance that democratic rights will be lost is reduced since the very fact that the group knows about the case ensures that it cannot be ignored, although the individual may have to accept a less than optimum outcome to the dispute.

Fergusson (1994) provides a list of the defining features of managerialism as they apply to the educational context:

1. the reconstruction and partial circumvention of a number of democratic processes in the control of education;

2. centralisation of key aspects of policy determination, coupled with devolution (or perhaps, more accurately distribution) of more marginal decision making;

3. concomitant substantial reductions in the powers of managers in some spheres and increases in others;

4. a dismantling of the power bases held in the name of professionalism, or specialist or elite knowledge;

5. subordination of the exercise of professional judgement to judgements made by reference to predetermined and/or publicly available criteria;

6. managers assume a pivotal role in the determination as well as implementation of those aspects of policy which are dealt with at local level;

7. substantial changes in the social relations between managers and those whose work they manage; and between managers and service users.

Fergusson (1994:p95)

Fergusson is also emphasising the loss of democratic control that managerialism seems to require for its operation, although Enteman takes that view that this state of affairs has its roots in the 'vacuum' that the breakdown in democracy, socialism and capitalism has caused (Enteman 1993:p190-1930). Both Enteman and Fergusson seem to take the view that managerialism has reduced the rights of the individual in society, but it could be argued that the individual, when confronted by large organisations and government departments, had little power or hope of recourse when acting alone and is subject to the 'tyranny of the majority' (Mill 1859). One aspect of what might be seen as worrying is the use of communication mediums by managerialists to 'blunt', as Enteman puts it, the case put forward by sections of the community when they feel that their rights are being overlooked.

Fergusson (1994) states that the power base of the professional in education has been dismantled and that there have been changes in the social relationship between the parties involved in providing education and those who can be seen as the consumers of educational services. To achieve the consumerist agenda that governments have followed it might be that there must be some loss of power by one section of the community so that another section can

acquire some power. The reduction in the autonomy of educational professionals and the loss of power by the education establishment might be seen as a balancing of the influence over the direction of educational policy by those elected by the electorate acting on their behalf and negotiating for a better educational environment for the country as a whole.

Education as a Business.

The view that education has changed from a public service to quasi-business apparently has its roots in managerialism. One of the characteristics of managerialism has been its adoption of the discourse of some idealized notion of business; education is considered as some kind of commodity purchased by consumers (Kydd 1997:p114). Kydd (1997) describes managerialism as a 'movement' with a political philosophy and defined systems for managing public services. As a 'movement' it is concerned with the promotion of markets as an organizational tool for the running of public services, and its rhetoric is much concerned with effectiveness and efficiency, particularly in terms of resource management. It is not simply a set of broad assumptions about the unique potentials and rights of management. It is also a much more specific set of models of efficient organizational functioning and of techniques through which such smooth functioning can be achieved (Kydd 1997:p116-7).

The role of the manager.

The role of the education manager is changing from being a senior teacher with additional responsibilities for administration to that of the manager with wider powers (Fergusson 1994:p94). In essence, the headteacher is ceasing to be a senior peer embedded within a professional group who has taken on additional responsibilities including a significant administrative function, and is becoming a distinctive and key actor in an essentially managerialist system, in which the pursuit of objectives and methods which are increasingly centrally determined is the responsibility of managers who must account for their achievement and ensure the compliance of teaching staff (Fergusson 1994:p94).

At the same time as headteachers and principals are changing, from senior colleagues to managers so the role of the professional teacher is changing with the other major arm of reform concerned with the redirection of producer activity to bring about a rise of effective consumer power at minimum public cost (Fergusson 1994:p96). This has a number of complex and inter-related facets. They can be summarised as the erosion of professional autonomy, increased

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public accountability, increased centralised control over the content of teaching, and major challenges to claims to monopolies of competence over a number of aspects of teaching and of education more generally. In particular, the exclusive claims of teachers and other education professionals to determine the content of the curriculum and assess the attainments of pupils have been challenged through the imposition of the National Curriculum and testing (Fergusson 1994:p96-97).

The loss of teacher autonomy and professional status is not isolated to the UK. Seddon (1997) writing in the Australian Journal of Education indicates that the process of de-professionalisation of teaching and the introduction of accountability structures is happening elsewhere and can be linked to the move to competency based training as defined by agencies outside education. Where once teachers and educational institutions took responsibility for the students they taught and the quality of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment they practised, there is growing pressure for these activities to be made transparent to monitoring and planning by external agencies. Seddon describes how teachers' classroom and curriculum autonomy has been compromised by moves towards national curriculum, by the development of industry standards and competency-based, Neo-Taylorism, training. This growing regulation of knowledge and skills has been compounded by broader epistemological debates, which have rendered teachers' claims to a specialist knowledge base increasingly compromised (Seddon 1997).

These changes described above may well find a resonance in the experiences in UK schools, colleges and universities where similar issues have been under debate since the enactment of the Further and Higher Education Act 1988 and the subsequent Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Fergusson (1994) identified the reasons behind the changes in education introduced by the Conservative Government as being the creation of competitive markets in service provision, the establishment of the power and rights of consumers, the subordination and curtailment of producer power and producer interests, the pursuit of efficiency and cost cutting in the quest for reduced public expenditure, the promotion of excellence over equity, and the encouragement of diversity in the widening interests of consumer choice (Fergusson 1994:p96).

These reforms may have increased the choice available to the consumers at school level but there has been a cost to the producers of education in the loss of autonomy and professionalism in their role in the education of the nation, which may have been a government goal as noted by Fergusson (1997):

The reform concerns the redirection of producer activity to bring about this rise of effective consumer power at minimum public cost. (This) can be summarised as the erosion of professional autonomy, increased public accountability, increased centralised control over the content of teaching and major challenges to monopolies of competence over a number of aspects of teaching and of education more generally.

<div align="right">Fergusson (1994:p96)</div>

The loss of teacher/lecturer power described by Fergusson (1994:p96-97) has been counter balanced by the increase in power of schools management who have new tools to use in the form of management processes. The relative weak management lines between heads and classroom teachers, premised on the rights of professional autonomy, have been strengthened by the introduction of systems of appraisal and performance related pay. Changed procedures of promotion and reward for good performance through an incentive scheme have taken exclusive rewards away from professionals by vesting responsibility for promotion with governors (Fergusson 1994:p97).

Fergusson (1994) claims that the increase in consumer power and the reduction in producer power that the government reforms have brought about have relied on managerialism to see them enacted:

Managerialism is essential to the realisation of both these aspects of reform...it became essential that each school have a head who could not merely manage the implementation of reforms...but who could take on the full spirit of reform and envisage her school as a distinctive and separate institution striving for excellence and ready to grow...if necessary in competition with and at the expense of neighbouring schools. This required a degree of autonomy to fashion the school in response to parents' preferences, which would in turn need powers to shape events way beyond the power of management and the right to manage which is a defining characteristic of managerialism.

<div align="right">Fergusson (1993:p97)</div>

Fergusson (1994) is indicating the wide powers that a head teacher/principal has as a manager as opposed to those of being a senior colleague with administrative responsibilities. Head Teachers and Principals have acquired both power and responsibility to oversee the content of

teachers' work, to scrutinize its outcomes as measured by tests, truancy rates and leavers' destinations, to appraise performance, and to account for all these to governors, as well as exerting a powerful influence over promotion, over the professional formation of future generations of teachers and over who inspects their schools (Fergusson 1994:p97).

The powers of the head teacher appear to be extensive and Fergusson (1994) warns that the promotion of a management base to achieve the reforms intended by the government may lead to future problems with management. In both cases, empowering the consumer and controlling the producer, managerialism appears initially to be the means to the achievement of the reform but in both cases managerialism begins to acquire the status of an end in itself. The powers become so potentially extensive as to give them a life of their own, independent of the reforms which gave rise to them. Like many quasi-autocratic powers in senior management, managerialism breeds a need for its own continuous expansion to ensure effective pursuit of the centrally prescribed mission (Fergusson 1993:p98).

Fergusson (1994) noted the power of the head teacher/principal in controlling the finances of the school or college independently of local democratic intervention:

> The exercise of even the most unassailable autocratic powers of management resulting from extensive control of finances is not in itself managerialist. What makes it so here is that financial control provides not only a means of disposal of polices determined elsewhere, it partly provides the means of determining the polices themselves. To the extent that democratic controls over schools are vested in governors and governors are dependent on heads' advice, the heads' powers to create polices post hoc through the exercise of financial control is greater...the extent of heads' administrative powers is the nature of their relationship with governors...what is difficult to tease out is the extent to which devolved powers have accrued in practice to the head and to the governors respectively.
>
> Fergusson (1994:p101-102)

The loss of democratic control in this instance is the same as noted by Enteman (1993) which itself would appear to be another feature of managerialism in that it presents a lethal challenge

to democracy, because it discounts that importance of the individual in general and, more specifically, discounts the importance of voting in regard to social choice (Enteman 1993:p159)

Enteman (1993) is expressing a view that might give cause for concern to those who are stakeholders in the education industry and who feel that it is too important to be outside of public and political control. It would appear that the philosophy of managerialist management of education is concentrating a great deal of power in people who have limited accountability to the community they serve.

2.7.5: Employment in FE.

The changes bought about by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 have been far reaching in terms of the structure of employment in the FE sector. Maguire & Ball (1994:p5-16) argue that a hierarchical employee/employer relationship has developed in education along with the terminology of capitalists' commodity production that sees education as a commodity that is consumed by students. It would seem colleges have embraced this terminology with its Fordist philosophy of mass education just as British society began moving towards a postfordist state. In educational terms the mass education possible during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s appears to have evolved to a requirement for a more personal form of structure to meet individual needs. This was, perhaps, the result of several factors including governmental policy on competition within education (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p23), and the coincidence of the falling birth rate. The answer to this by college management has been to seek to restructure college employees to try to achieve more flexibility and to cut the cost of the workforce. McKenzie, Mitchell and Oliver (1995) identified the direction many college management teams are taking:

> The solution lies in identifying a core group of employees who, representing an investment by the organisation, enjoy job security, opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge, and fringe benefits, all of which cease to be available to a larger peripheral group of rank and file workers.
>
> McKenzie, Mitchell and Oliver (1995)

To increase flexibility, college management has turned to one or other of the temporary staff agencies that have been established since incorporation. These agencies provide teaching staff at varying rates of pay at relatively short notice. This means that for main grade lecturers, an

increasing workload is shared with a growing army of part-timers, hired from a growing number of independent teacher and lecturer agencies. These temporary employees' hours can be reduced or expanded as fluctuating demand dictates and often without any security of employment (Ainley and Bailey 1997:p25), adding to a level of insecurity in employment where all employees are "citizens of the age of transience" (Toffler 1970:p43). The transience that Toffler refers to affects the way employees experience reality, their sense of commitment and their ability or inability to cope with change. The newness and complexity in the educational environment strains the employee's ability to adapt placing intolerable strains on them (Toffler 1970:p44).

Usher and Edwards (1994) identify that the role of the teacher and lecturer has changed from being an educator with specialist knowledge and the ability to deliver education to a deliverer of a neo-Taylorist, pre-defined curriculum in a pre-defined manner and under close inspection by other bodies:

> ...teachers and lecturers have their professional status and autonomy redefined. They become repositioned as technicians, deliverers of a curriculum - e.g. NVQS, national curriculum targets - established elsewhere. In this process, teachers and lecturers become increasingly subject to surveillance by processes of appraisal and professional development through which they are monitored and monitor themselves in relation to their own effectiveness, the attributes of which are constructed as neutral norms, masking the effects of power from their operation. Ironically, then teachers themselves become subject to the very discipline to which they subject learners.
>
> Usher and Edwards (1994:p113)

The very concept of being an educational professional has been placed under threat by the introduction of managerial processes, which appear to be 'reasonable' but may be seen as systems that control the teacher:

> The notion of being an educational 'professional' is therefore redefined with notions of 'autonomy' and 'the right to be critical' replaced by 'disinterestedness' and 'accountability'- 'teachers are trapped into taking responsibility for their own 'disciplining' through schemes of self-appraisal, school improvement and institutional development. Indeed,

teachers are urged to believe that their commitment to such processes will make them more professional.

Usher and Edwards (1994:p113)

Usher and Edwards (1997) seem to be describing a similar situation to that experienced by Seddon (1997) in Australia where the role of the educator is also being questioned:

Teachers' classroom and curriculum autonomy has been compromised by moves towards national curriculum, by the development of industry standards and competency-based training, and by wider information technology applications in education. This growing regulation of knowledge and skills has been compounded by broader epistemological debates, especially debates about the contribution of the disciplines, which have rendered teachers' claims to a specialist knowledge base increasingly compromised. Centrally prescribed curriculum and assessment, together with the availability of computers, has enhanced the demand on teachers to undertake administrative and clerical tasks.

Seddon (1997)

The changes in teachers' roles described above have been made possible by the changes in focus, noted by Fergusson (1994) above, to a consumer orientation in education and the reduction in producer power (Seddon 1997). Changes in industrial relations underpin these changing definitions of what counts as a 'good teacher' by situating and shaping teachers' day-to-day practice in a new framework of incentives, rewards, responsibilities and sanctions. These changes also redefine the rights of teachers and their unions to participate in the determination of the conditions and character of the education industry and its core business, educational work. Teachers' participation in educational decision making is being reduced as managerial prerogative is strenuously reasserted (Seddon 1997).

The role of managerialism in the disempowerment of the teacher and the empowerment of the head or principal is to separate the role of manager and the managed so that the control systems that have been introduced can be applied dispassionately to the teaching staff and so reshape the social and power relations of the teacher/lecturer and the Head/Principal (Fergusson 1994:p104). The rental of temporary employees for temporary needs is like the rental of physical objects, spreading all through education (Toffler 1970:p104).

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It may be that the result of the changes in teaching practice that have occurred and are still happening and the redefinition of the role of the head teacher/principal will alter the essential nature of a teacher/lecturer to that of one who will not be independent of thought and action:

New teachers' capacities to act autonomously, work independently and, most of all, to mount well-grounded challenges to managerial diktat are likely to diminish, and their sense of membership of and solidarity with a larger body to be diluted.

Fergusson (1994:p107)

The casualization of teaching (Fergusson 1993:p107) may also have the effect of making the workforce more malleable to the will of the government and management by making the cost of replacing full-time staff a lot less because no job can be seen as truly being permanent (Toffler 1970:p100). The use of low-qualified teaching assistants is a temptation to governors eking out tight budgets and evaluating the potential of salary savings to technicize, routinize and mechanize teaching processes, especially in those subjects in which qualified staff is scarce and expensive, and teaching has to be entrusted to teachers of other subjects (Fergusson 1994:p107). In avoiding commitment to fixed forms and functions, we build for short term use or, alternatively, attempt to make the product itself adaptable (Toffler 1970:p53).

The teacher/lecturer who does not comply with the changes brought about by the managerialist philosophy and who takes an independent viewpoint may find it hard to work with and within the new educational reality where those who question it are seen as antagonistic to the welfare and progress of the organisation (Wilson 1993:p55). Usher and Edwards (1994) comment on the different view points that employers and employees may have:

The view that workers and employers might have different interests is marginalized as discourses of human resource management incorporate and unify management and workforce into a team able to 'compete against the best', the ever-present other - with the threat that not to accept this position is to act irrationally and inefficiently and hence to make oneself unemployable.

Usher and Edwards (1994:p115)

The movement towards regulation of the teaching profession may well be undermining the traditional values that defined what a teacher is and what a teacher represents. The intensification of management controls is replacing the wisdom, experience and self-monitoring of the practitioner, and leading to the devaluing of capacities which are hard to define but which make a difference between experienced and novice teachers, what is clear is that the rise of managerialism calls into question the role of the autonomous professional and the rights of teachers to make decisions about what is taught and how it is taught. The debate is framed not in intellectual terms about what it means to be an educated person but in the economic language of industrial management (Kydd 1997:p116-7).

2.7.6: Summary.

It may well be that the role of the professional teacher will continue to evolve into that of the professional trainer in the future where the delivery of education is so closely prescribed that there is little or no deviation allowed from the set pattern of delivery and assessment by the trainer. It could be that to call such a situation 'education', in its liberal sense, is stretching the definition beyond its recognised limits. Further, it may be that the education system in the UK for the new millennium will be a centralised system with control by government through governance, management and prescription of the content of education. What can probably be said with some degree of certainty is that managerialism is "one of the major challenges facing teachers as we move towards the next century" (Kydd 1997:p117).

2.8) Theme 6: Quality Systems in Further Education.

2.8.1) Introduction.

Quality can be seen as an important issue for colleges especially since incorporation in 1993. The culture of teaching has traditionally emphasised competence rather than excellence, isolation rather than observation, and has eschewed administration as an unnecessary encumbrance to the job (Eraut 1997: p37). Since incorporation there has been a cultural change that has focused on continuous quality improvement and meeting the needs, requirements and expectations of the learners and their sponsors which can be measured by the use of quality standards (FEU 1997: p40). In other words a much more robust and rigorous definition of quality has been introduced based on a quality assurance model and requiring a significant shift in attitudes, values and behaviour (FEU 1997: p40). Attempts to improve quality raise questions about the aims of society, the purpose of education and the nature of participation (Riley 1997: p27).

This section of the literature review will begin with a description of the inspection system under the FEFC, and will consider the impact of the changes to the measurement of quality provision in FE. The role of self-assessment will be described and staff perceptions of quality will be considered, as will their objections to some of the administration requirements of the quality systems. The requirements of other agencies for the operation of quality systems will be discussed, and how these requirements link to lesson observation. The section will conclude with a brief reflection on the possibility of linking quality to funding.

2.8.2) The inspection system.

At the time of incorporation in 1993 Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) were the body charged with monitoring the quality of college provision. Quite early on in its existence the FEFC decided to introduce its own inspectorate that would aim to inspect all colleges on a four year cycle. The FEFC consultation document 'Assessing Achievement' (FEFC April 1993) set out the proposed system as:

- Level 1 - An inspector is assigned to the college.
- Level 2 - A team of inspectors with specialist knowledge in curriculum areas are assigned to a college to inspect the provision.

• Level 3 - The inspection will be repeated every four years.

Assessing Achievement set out the requirements for the inspection preparation as:

• up to date prospectuses,

• college charters,

• development plans, and

• strategic plans.

Many considered the inspection system as overly bureaucratic, requiring qualitative judgements and too demanding, so a system of self-assessment was introduced in September 1997. This system gave colleges responsibility for monitoring their own standards (Ainley and Bailey 1997: p23).

2.8.3) Self-assessment.

The self-assessment scheme for colleges, introduced in September 1997, gives the college responsibility for grading all aspects of its activities, including teaching, and preparing an action plan for improvements. The grading ranges from excellent 1 (many strengths and few weaknesses) to poor 5 (many weaknesses and few strengths). The results of the sector-wide inspection is used to 'inform the funding decisions', as well as highlighting and encouraging good practice and identifying strengths and weaknesses. The Funding Council when deciding on the future funding for a particular college takes the self-awarded grades that are confirmed by an inspection team into account. For example, a curriculum area that receives a four or five grade in the inspection will not be allocated additional students, or rather 'units', until it has been re-inspected and provides evidence that the identified weaknesses have been corrected (Ainley and Bailey 1997:23).

The quality systems introduced by colleges have been based on a quality assurance model that seeks to establish systems that ensure quality is built into the course provision. At one stage colleges sought certification under British Standards Institute 5750. BS5750 is designed to ensure that a product conforms to its predetermined standard format and that the standard is consistently met so that there are few if any customer complaints. Few colleges managed to

achieve BS5750 accreditation, one of the problems being the difficulty in defining what exactly the product is. One can argue that the product is the course of study although it would not be wrong to say that the product is the student since whilst the nature of educational quality may be contested there is little argument that quality improvement should focus on learning and teaching, and creating a framework within which these activities can take place most effectively (Preedy, Glatter and Levacic 1997: p2).

Cantor, Roberts and Pratley (1995:p107) describe how Sandwell College in the West Midlands defined its product as the improvement in student achievement as the result of being on a course. Sandwell did achieve BSI certification but found that the maintenance of the certification through auditing and review was very time consuming. Many colleges adopting BS5750 have applied it to only a narrow range of college activities such as short courses.

The definition of what constitutes a product is difficult and Sandwell's definition may be considered flawed in the light of FEFC inspection criteria. For instance, whilst the improvement in student achievement may be a valid educational standard, the FEFC's own focus is on achievement of a full qualification. In this respect a student could achieve added value or an improvement over the student's level of attainment at entry to the college, but if that does not include a qualification then the student has not achieved a successful outcome according to FEFC rules.

By focusing on the course provision, which would be the process rather than the product, it is possible to operate a quality assurance programme that would seek to eliminate poor products. However, and as mentioned above, any system that involves people is an open system and subject to error. A quality system that focuses on the course as the product will be evidenced through paper based examples of the process which, while in themselves not a quality product, show evidence of planning, monitoring and review that leads to feedback for reflection on the provision and action plans for improvement in the future.

2.8.4) The administration of quality.

Quality assurance systems attempt to assure quality through the introduction of appropriate processes for the management and monitoring of operations (Preedy *et al* 1997: p14). The process of work should be integrated with the necessary mechanisms for assuring quality at

each stage of the process. Plans indicating clear outcomes, the means by which they are to be achieved, review and audit systems are the basic components of a quality assurance approach. There should also be a meta level quality assurance system to oversee the operations of the lower levels in the organisation. It is important that the monitoring system be simple and provides frequent feedback on operations (Preedy *et al* 1997: p14). The effective management of quality systems is stressed by the FEFC and it has provided guidance through various circulars and inspectors reports (FEFC 93/14) (FEFC 95/October) (FEFC 99/October). Also, the Further Education Unit (FEU) has produced advice and guidance (FEU 1997: pp. 38 - 51) that stresses the importance of strategic and operational planning. The FEU has identified that training for senior managers in quality matters is essential and that it is crucial that there is genuine senior management commitment to quality improvement if the venture is to be successful (FEU 1997: p. 41).

Quality assurance systems and processes impose administration duties on teaching staff that might be seen as onerous by those required to operate them and possibly not contributing to the "quality" of the learner's experience. Quality is not a universal concept and what represents quality to one person will not to another, and this is evident in education (Riley 1997: p29). However, the consumer/learner may not consider the requirement to show evidence that course and lesson planning and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the learning by the teacher has taken place as unreasonable. Teachers may well argue that course planning does take place and that it is the requirements of the quality assurance documentation that adds unreasonably to their workload. However, this assertion that planning does take place may be seen to undermine the teacher's argument since if the plans already exist then there is no appreciable increase to their workload.

It is clear from the literature that a major argument against the present quality assurance system is that it does not make an allowance for the added value measurement of students. Documentation and processes can evidence that systems are in place and operated according to a policy but that does not guarantee that what the student receives is a "quality" experience. Fundamental to this point is the belief that the organisation and delivery of education services is more than the creation of a product for consumption (Riley 1997: p36). It is this point that may be the real objection by teaching staff to paper based quality systems since it is their ability as teachers to educate students that is seemingly not being measured.

2.8.5) Managing quality systems.

The effective management of quality systems requires well-developed statements of outcomes, clear responsibility structures and quality assurance systems designed to assess progress in meeting these outcomes (Preedy *et al* 1997: p14). Changes to the organisations culture will also be necessary so that professional differences over what constitutes quality do not create barriers to service provision (Riley 1997: p28). The quality systems being operated by colleges may have been dictated by the FEFC that has set the required standard to satisfy their requirements to comply with their charter. In the event, it is possible to see that the rules that have been imposed are of such a major scale that the overall responsiveness of the system has been compromised (Preedy *et al* 1997: p15). The rules devised by the FEFC require a multitude of forms and bureaucratic arrangements that take time to produce, update and understand (Preedy *et al* 1997: p15). So much so that teaching staff may feel that their role as teachers is secondary to that of being an administrator. Further to this, as rules become burdensome so staff begin to look for ways around the rules rather than setting out to comply with them (Preedy *et al* 1997: p14). Unclear or undefined systems do not provide for clear delegation of responsibility. Individual managers and staff members can only be held accountable for achieving well-defined outcomes. In the absence of clear objectives the operation of quality systems becomes vague and unenforceable (Preedy *et al* 1997: p14).

2.8.6) Other validating bodies.

Colleges are not only subject to quality assessment by FEFC. The validating bodies for the courses the college offers also check the quality of the provision. Edexcel (formally the Business and Technology Education Council and University of London Examinations and Assessment Council, merged in 1996) describes quality in these terms:

At its simplest, we…want to make sure that BTEC qualifications certify levels of achievement that everyone accepts and recognises. That means measuring the 'outcomes' of education, and it is certainly one of the ingredients in BTEC's recipe for quality. To achieve the outcomes we measure, students go through many experiences and use many resources. Those experiences and resources also affect quality. So when we talk about quality, we do not just mean outcomes. We also mean what students go through to get a qualification.

BTEC (1994: p3)

Edexcel appear to be taking a holistic view of quality that recognises that the whole experience of the educational programme has an effect on the student's performance. This definition of quality addresses one of the fundamental problems of talking about quality in education; that of measuring the quality of the teacher. It may be possible in a quality assurance programme to have all of the elements that should ensure that quality is built in and evidenced through various systems and products. The one element that is not so easy to evaluate is the quality of the educator and his or her delivery of education.

When dealing with well qualified, motivated students a poor teacher may still get good results. If the students are not so well qualified and motivated the results may be poor as well but the teacher will simply point out that the students were 'not up to it'. However, FEFC has attempted to address this problem through their quality criteria by requiring that college lecturers are observed and graded according to their teaching ability as displayed in classroom teaching. It can be imagined that this requirement would be met with some trepidation by lecturers but it was noted in the FEFC Circular Report of the Quality Assessment Committee for 1996/97: "The great majority of teaching observed by inspectors is satisfactory or better" (FEFC Circular 98/13: p6). The inspectors also noted that those teachers who aspire to and achieve the highest standards should be widely recognised as leaders in their profession (FEFC Circular 98/13: p6).

Later FEFC reports have criticised lesson observation and the grades that colleges have awarded themselves under self-assessment when it is not uncommon for colleges to have a grade profile where the proportion of grade 1 and 2s is more than 10 per cent higher than the national average of grades awarded by inspectors (McGavin 1999: p1).

McGavin (1999) adds, "it is clear that there is a need for more training and practice in lesson observation" (McGavin 1999:p1). The apparent contradiction in these two view points could be explained by the lack of experience in the exercise of observing lecturers at work in the class room at the time of the first comment in 1998. Over a period of time the experience of the FEFC inspectors has probably broadened and they can see that what was acceptable at the beginning of the self assessment period is no longer acceptable in the light of further knowledge and experience.

Quality is a central issue for further education, with the Secretary of State for Education indicating that he would wish to see the Council doing more to promote good practice and that there should be a concerted drive to raise standards and levels of achievement (FEFC Circular 98/21: p3).

It might be expected that the quality of education provision will continue to be an important issue for the FE sector and we might expect to see funding linked to an assessment of the quality of that provision. The consultation document FEFC 98/21 has made proposals to link additional funding to colleges achieving good inspection grades or provide 'freestanding' funds not linked to the funding methodology for those colleges needing improvement. The responses from colleges to FEFC (Circular 98/37) pointed out that there was an inconsistency in these alternatives that seemed to reward poor performance. The FEFC has decided to look at this question in more detail although the FEFC clearly have the intention to make more of the funding link to achieving good inspection grades and judging from past experience they will manage this in the future.

2.8.7) Summary.

As colleges seek to improve participation, retention and achievement rates in what has become an increasingly competitive environment quality and the proof that it is being planned, reviewed and achieved is likely to have increasing significance in influencing learners' choice of institution (FEU 1997: p51). There are, however, contradictions in what is meant by quality in the FE context. Is quality the documents or artefacts of the teaching process or is it, as many teachers might argue, the outcome of the process: the student? In the event that funding is linked to achieving quality outcomes it seems pertinent to ask staff what, in their view, will be the effect. These issues will be examined through the research question and research findings.

2.9: Summary of Literature Analysis.

Chapter 2 has presented selected literature that examined the role of operational systems in colleges. To facilitate the presentation the chapter was arranged into five sections. The first section dealt with the theme of accountability in colleges, which indicate that the concept of accountability cannot be clearly defined, and is capable of multiple meanings. The analysis concluded that for an accountability system to be of value to an organisation it should promote the development of the organisation and help it achieve its aims and objectives.

The analysis of operational effectiveness and efficiency showed that these terms were capable of different interpretations, with the public service interpretation of effectiveness emphasising the setting of targets and efficiency as being about how well inputs are converted into outputs requiring that the organisation considers carefully how to organise its inputs in order to be efficient.

The role of operational systems within a college and how a systems approach can facilitate the efficient operation of the college was the third theme to be examined, and it was concluded that the managing of educational institutions is in the process of moving away from managing the curriculum towards managing tasks and systems.

The Further Education Funding Council plays a key role in college management operations by providing funding for educational course provision and by requiring that certain information on the use of those funds be recorded. The FEFC has the power to impose financial penalties for non-compliance with its requirements. The FEFC also carries out inspections to ensure that colleges are complying with quality standards that include management, and yet the management hierarchy of colleges appears to be poorly equipped in terms of skills and experience to cope with many of the demands expected of it.

College culture and the new FE environment and how the culture of colleges is changing to meet the challenges of the future was examined in theme five, where the changing nature of public service was considered and the cultural changes that had occurred in education in particular. The government-inspired shift to a consumerist approach in education and the development of managerialism has shifted the role of the head teacher or principal from that of being a professional colleague with administrative duties to one of the chief executive of the

organisation. The degree of accountability required by the consumer of educational services has seemingly led to the autonomy of the educator being lost and the introduction of auditable processes that provide a clear path being developed under the guise of quality systems.

The last theme to be examined was that of quality in the FE context and how it has become, possibly, the single most important issue for colleges in the light of proposals to link funding to quality provision. Quality is not a shared concept and it is quite clear that there is a tension between what the FEFC and government consider to be quality, the documentation, plans and processes, and what teachers regard as quality, the added value they bring to the student. This distinction can be seen to be unhelpful where the college management do not integrate the quality systems into the normal working processes of the teacher, making use of those actions that are carried out in their every day activities. Quality systems that are seen as imposed from above create barriers to compliance that can be very hard to overcome and ultimately benefit no one.

The literature provides support for the thesis of this study that operating systems are important to the effective and efficient management of the College, especially if it is to achieve its strategic aims and objectives in a changing environment. The area that appears to have been overlooked by the researchers and writers is the role of the college staff below management levels and their experiences in operating college systems that have been imposed by the senior management team.

2.10: The research question.

The discussion above leads to the substantive question that is the focus of this study:

1) Do the Senior Management Team and the college staff, share the same understanding of the importance of certain operating systems to the college?

This research question can be further deconstructed to make the following questions:

1.1)   Do the staff recognise the critical importance of systems to the success of the college?

1.2)   Are the systems easy for the staff to use, and operating efficiently?

Links to the objectives of the research.

The main research question and its deconstructed parts will be used by the researcher to achieve the overall objectives of the study (see Chapter 1.3) of clarifying whether college operating systems are helping the college that forms the case of the study, and by implication other colleges to achieve their strategic aims and objectives in the following ways.

Question 1 is linked to objectives 1,2 and 5 and seeks to identify the level of understanding, shared or not, of both the Senior College Management and other staff below that level as to the efficacy of operating systems.

Question 1.1 is linked to objectives 3 and 5 in asking whether college staffs recognise the importance of operating systems, the need for them and the implications that derive from their implementation.

Question 1.2 is linked to objectives 2 and 4 by seeking to understand whether the college staff are being "well served" by the operating systems and, by implication, whether the college is also benefiting from them.

It is hoped that the answers to the questions above will provide fundamental insights into how the college and other similar institutions can improve their performance in providing services to their students and other clients.

The next chapter will consider the methods and procedures that will be used to investigate and test these questions within a college of Further Education in the South of England.

3: Methods and Procedures.

3.1: Introduction.

The last chapter examined the literature that surrounds the underlying issues that underpin this investigation into the role of operational systems in a college of Further Education. It concluded with the statement of the research question that is represented here:

- Do the Senior Management Team and the college staff, share the same understanding of the importance of certain operating systems to the college?
- Do the staff recognise the critical importance of systems to the success of the college?
- Are the systems easy for the staff to use, and operating both effectively and efficiently?

This chapter presents the methods and procedures that will be used in the study. For the purpose of presentation, the chapter has been divided into six sections: Method, Description of the subjects, Design of the Study, Description of the Research Instrumentation, Description of the Procedure and Treatment of the Data.

3.2.1: Method.

The method chosen for the research was a case study approach and the technique an identified 'purposive sample' (Cohen and Manion 1980:p89) that could give useful information on the phenomena of systems operation.

Case study methods have been described as 'best suited' for the educational context where the interpretive, subjective dimensions of educational phenomena can be explored (Cohen and Manion 1980:p106). The case study method is a qualitative method of research that focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings that are based in real life contexts (Miles and Huberman 1994:p10). This can be seen as providing confidence in the collected data because it is collected locally to the phenomena being investigated and embedded in its context. Further, it may be seen that the possibilities for understanding latent, underlying or non-obvious issues is strong. The justification for using case studies is that it is possible to probe deeply and to analyse intensely the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the college with

a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which the college belongs (Cohen and Manion 1980:p106).

Within the case study method chosen to pursue the investigation it was decided to use a purposive sample. Cohen and Manion (1980:p88) consider such a sample adequate if non-representative where the findings are not going to be generalised too far beyond the case in question. Miles and Huberman (1994) offer this advice about sampling:

> Sampling in qualitative research involves two actions...First you need to set boundaries: to define aspects of your case(s) that you can study within the limits of your time and means that connect directly to your research questions. Second, at the same time, you need to create a frame to help you uncover, confirm, or qualify the basic processes or constructs that under gird your study.
>
> Miles and Huberman (1994: p27)

Miles and Huberman (1994: p28) go on to point out that the most useful generalizations from qualitative studies are analytic and not sample to populations. The importance of these observations is that where the research is a case study the available universe of subjects is reduced so the number of samples will be limited. The sample frame will need to be representative of the body of people who can provide information but the sample may be focused down to a narrow investigation that can provide a deep understanding of the underlying issues. However, because the case is set in its context it may not be generalisable to other situations so the analysis of the underlying issues is most important. In this way generalisation from one case to the next is on the basis of underlying theory and not on the basis of a larger universe.

The research being a case study based on one college of further education the sampling of staff was aided by actively looking for critical cases that helped inductive, theory-building analysis to develop. It was necessary to include some salient informants in the sample who could smooth the research process by introducing the researcher to other staff who could contribute useful information to the pool of data. It was decided early on in the pre-data collection phase to include staff from all levels in the hierarchy, from the Senior Management Team to the Caretaking staff, so that conflicting viewpoints could be compared. The focus of the interviews

was 'how do people make sense of their surroundings?' Using this focus it is, perhaps, easier to see how each individual contributor is an individual case study. It could be concluded that the individual cases that make up the larger case study are each unique but they all contribute to the whole. An example is the Technical Support Staff member who was surprised that he would be considered a suitable subject for the study but it was his contrasting perspective on the operations of the college that made him a good subject. Miles and Huberman (1994) make this point as well:

> ...if one case researcher observes only administrators and another only teachers, the comparability of the two cases is minimal...Cross case comparison is impossible if researchers operate in radically different settings, use no coherent sampling frame, or, worst of all, if they focus on different processes.
>
> Miles and Huberman (1994:p33)

The aim of using contributors from all levels in the hierarchy was precisely to overcome the narrow focus of the study and ensure a 'de-centring' (Miles and Huberman 1994:p34) from a particular way of viewing the other respondents' contributions. Using the same criteria as above the sample was taken across the college so that the ten schools that comprise the curriculum delivery system could be represented in the data. See 3.2 Description of the subjects for a list of the schools.

Critics of the case study will often cite it as being subjective, biased, impressionistic, idiosyncratic and lacking in precise quantifiable measures that are the hallmark of survey research and experimentation (Cohen and Manion 1980:p110). To help counter these criticisms the sample was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

It might be thought that qualitative and quantitative analyses are not compatible but as Miles and Huberman (1994:p40) point out, both words and numbers are needed if we are to understand the world. Quantification can be seen not as an end in itself, but rather as a means of making available techniques that add power and sensitivity to individual judgement when one attempts to detect and describe patterning in a set of observations (Miles and Huberman 1994:p41). Taking this view point it is perfectly reasonable to use both qualitative and

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quantitative analysis techniques as they are inextricably linked not only at the level of specific data sets but also at the levels of study and design. In a deeper sense, as Salomon (1991: p10-18) points out, the issue is not quantitative-qualitative at all, but whether we are taking an analytic approach to understanding a few controlled variables or a systemic approach to understanding the interaction of variables in a complex environment. Given that this investigation is about the way that systems work in a complex college environment, the reader might see this approach as particularly pertinent.

Miles and Huberman (1991:p41), quoting from several sources, provides the following list of reasons for using a mix of quantitative-qualitative analysis:

- To enable triangulation
- To elaborate analysis and provide richer detail
- To initiate new lines of thinking through attention to surprises or paradoxes
- To expand the scope and breadth of a study by using different methods for different components
- To overcome the abstraction inherent in quantitative studies
- To identify deviant cases or outliers
- To collect background data
- To help avoid elite bias (talking only to high-status respondents)
- To help cast new light on qualitative findings

To summarize, during the design phase qualitative data can help develop the quantitative instrumentation. During the data collection phase they help by making access and collection easier. During the analysis phase they can help by validating, interpreting, clarifying and illustrating quantitative findings as well as strengthening and revising theory (Miles and Huberman 1994:p41). The aim is to strengthen each method by using intrinsic qualities of the other (Madey 1978:p7), and as Jick (1979:p602-611) comments, qualitative methods can be the glue that cements the interpretation of multi-method results.

The use of a quantitative-qualitative technique does not prevent difficulties in the collection of data; as the next section will illustrate, the richness of the data may be seen as adding to the to the problems.

3.2.2: Problems during the data collection phase.

The main problems faced during the data collection phase of the research were time based. As a working researcher it was difficult to find time to meet with the subjects of the study at convenient times to tape the interviews. The interviewees, in general, were willing to help with the research although, as mentioned above in the context of the Technical Support Staff member, not all were as willing as others. I might have to spend some time reassuring the staff member that they did have something of value to say; this was especially true of the non-teaching staff. There did appear to be a little resentment from staff who were not interviewed such as managers or other staff who thought that they had something to say but generally I received a lot of willing help.

The research instrument was piloted before the main data collection phase began and I thought it was effective in guiding the interviewee into the areas that I was interested in exploring. However, it became apparent about half way through the data collection that the questions on effectiveness and efficiency were causing problems because staff could not easily distinguish between the two. The result was that I continued to use the questions but modified the direction to explore the apparent lack of understanding that exists amongst the staff for this topic. Such a change is quite in keeping with qualitative studies where the continuous refocusing and redrawing of study parameters (Miles and Huberman 1994:p30) will occur.

The only other problem that arose was to do with the richness of the data and how to make sense of it all. To this end the pre-coding of the questions helped in setting the parameters of the study and being explicit about the processes helped me avoid distractions.

The following section of this chapter will set out a description of the subjects and the Schools upon which the study is based.

3.3: Description of the Subjects.

The subjects of the study were 24 adults, 13 Females and 11 male, who are employed by the college as academic, administrative and technical staff across the college. The college employs a total of 419 people in the following roles: Direct Learning Contact 221, Support Staff 45, and

Other Support Staff 153. The sample represents 6% of the full time equivalent employees. The college has ten Schools that, broadly, follow the FEFC classifications for curriculum areas indicated in the Chief Inspector's Report for 1994 - 95 (FEFC October 1995: page 31) as: Art, Design and Media, Business and Professional Studies, Hospitality, Travel and Leisure, Health, Beauty and Community Studies, Continuing Education and Teacher Training, Construction and Engineering, Construction Crafts, Services and Design, Information, Electronic and Vehicle Technology, General Education, and Adult Education. In addition, respondents were sourced from the Personnel Department, Administration and Marketing, and Central Resources.

The sample was both horizontal across the college and vertical, taking comments from the Principal, teaching staff, administrative staff, technicians and Caretaking and Maintenance staff. The respondents had been employed by the college for a minimum of 10 months to a maximum of 21 years. They had been in their current posts from between 2 months and 15 years.

The Administrative staffs are managed by the Administration Manager and offer administrative support to the academic staff and the Senior Management Team.

The Technical Support Staff (TSS) provide technical support for the academic staff through the day-to-day management of audio/visual equipment. The TSS is responsible for ordering small items of equipment and consumables such as audio and videotapes for students and staff use.

Sample frame.
The sample frame was based on the college telephone directory that is a list all of the permanent staff employed by the college, their location and their telephone numbers. The directory does not include temporary staff. After taking out four key informants (see below) the rest of the sample was drawn at random from the people listed in the directory dependent on their school but regardless of their status. The disregarding of status was intentional and aimed to gather evidence from a wide selection of staff, and followed the advice by Miles and Huberman (1994: p27) that sampling both vertically and horizontally puts flesh on the bones of the general constructs and their relationships. Where a person selected in the first pass through the process declined the request for an interview the next person below that person in the directory was asked to participate. This process continued until two people from each school had been identified and had agreed to participate in the study.

Four key informants were identified who, it was felt by the researcher, could represent a group of people from the Senior Management Team and the support units in the college. These were: The Principal, the Head Librarian, the Staff Development Officer and a member of the caretaking and maintenance staff who is also a member of the Academic Board. These participants were considered "salient" informants (Miles and Huberman 1994: p28) who could represent the views of discrete groups of people within the college.

3.4: Design of the Study.

The research comprised a case study based on a college of further and higher education located in Southern England. The college is approximately 30 miles from London in a prosperous Home Counties town. The college has worked to meet the challenges of the changes to FE funding through cutting its workforce, restructuring and seeking alternative income sources. The student base is approximately 17,365 of which 2749 are full-time enrolments and the rest are part-time or off-site. The turnover of the college is £15.5 million and is currently in deficit by £1.5 million. The college views itself as a community college and aims to provide services to the local community as well as a broader regional service.

3.4.1: Operational Systems.

Operational systems used in the college are concerned with key systems that are the Individual Student Record, Registers and Quality and other major systems that cover important processes that can be seen as being not so critical as the key systems. The major systems are admissions, staff timetabling, budgets and fee income and recovery systems. However, these are not the only systems in the college. There are systems to cover other academic matters such as personal tutoring, marketing and organising contact with corporate clients; Personnel systems, such as discipline, recruitment and counselling; Accounting systems such as purchasing, paying invoices and payroll. An investigation into an organisation could begin with a collection of all the systems and subsystems that exist; their description evaluation and modification in an effort to be totally exhaustive of every possible outcome. However that is not the purpose of this investigation. The systems mentioned above as key and major systems can be seen as the most important systems that operate in a college and their effective and efficient operation, it could

be assumed, should be the direct concern of the senior management team. Further, this is essentially a qualitative investigation that is looking at a situation in its context and in depth (Miles and Huberman 1994:p27) making it purposive rather than random and working with a bounded group of people.

The key systems can be viewed as the most critical because they are linked to the funding methodology for colleges and if they do not operate properly the college will be penalised by the Further Education Funding Council. The major systems are also linked in some way to funding and are concerned with getting students into the college, providing staff and equipment and collecting fees. The major systems are meant to be examples of the other systems that are found in a college and not necessarily exhaustive.

The research is concerned with the experience of the college staff and their interaction with the key and major operating systems. This means that the bulk of the data is qualitative by nature and gives a voice to those people who operate the systems. The data was collected in the course of a semi-structured interview lasting up to 45 minutes conducted with a cross section of the college staff through a semi-structured, researcher-conducted questionnaire described in the next section.

3.5: Description of the Research Instrumentation.

The research instrumentation comprised a researcher designed semi-structured questionnaire as a model to focus on the subject of the interview (see appendix 1). The questionnaire has two parts. Part 1 (questions 1a - 1c) collected perceptions data for quantitative analysis through descriptive statistics and correlation. The aim of this section was to assess whether the interviewees have the same perception of the importance of certain operating systems to the college as that identified by the college Senior Management Team (SMT). To assess this a panel of senior managers was asked to identify the operating systems they considered to be important to the college, to decide whether these systems are Key or Major, and then to rank the systems on their importance to the college. Analysis of part 1 offered insight to the respondents' comments in part 2 (questions 2 - 7), which makes up the substantive part of the data collection instrument. Part 2 of the questionnaire/interview collected narratives from the staff members and it is this element of the data collection that, it was anticipated, would provide

valuable and interesting insights into the operation of systems at the college. Cohen and Manion (1985) describe narratives as:

> ...personal records of the events we experience in our day-to-day lives...that serve to explain our past, present and future oriented actions.

<div align="right">Cohen and Manion (1980: p206)</div>

Cortazzi (1993) and Cohen and Manion (1980) see the social setting as being very important especially when evaluating the narrative as this provides the crux of the evaluation. Care was taken in deciding which method of data collection would yield the best results for this type of data. Given that personal narratives were sought, interviews appeared to provide the most favourable method of data collection and the procedure followed to collect that data is described below.

3.6: Description of the Procedure.

3.6.1: Taping the interviews.

All of the interviews were tape-recorded with participant approval. It was recognised that taping the interviews can lessen the candour of the interviewee but as Zifcak (1994:p200) points out it is very difficult to conduct an effective interview while at the same time writing down responses. The tape-recording of interviews allows reflection on the interviewee's responses at a later time and for the interview to be revisited to gather nuances of the responses.

Interviews were conducted on the basis that remarks were quotable but not attributable to the interviewee. In the interest of confidentiality I have not added descriptions of the contributor of the quotes that are used which could identify individuals unless it aids the understanding of the context of the quote. The interviewee had the right to add or remove remarks from the transcript, if desired, and could refuse the right to use the interview if not happy with the magnitude of the comments given. This assurance proved sufficient for permission to use the data to be given by the interviewee in all cases. The interviews appear to have been frank and honest and the tape recorder proved to be uninhibiting.

A general interview approach was adopted following a pre-structured format that did allow scope to pursue lines of inquiry as they presented themselves. Although I followed a pre-set question structure the approach was conversational and interactive in style so as to put the interviewee at ease. In summary the format was as follows:

1) Initial approach: This allowed me to briefly set out the purpose of my study and to assess the willingness of the member of staff to participate. I could also set out the conditions in respect of confidentiality and rights over the product of the interview.

2) Issue the outline questions: I allowed a gap of up to a week between the initial agreement by the staff member to an interview and the actual interview to give the member of staff time to reflect on the questions and to complete the table of rankings at the beginning of the questionnaire (see appendix 1). During this time the interviewee could decide to withdraw from the interview if desired.

3) The interview: The interviewee was once again apprised of the conditions attached to the interview concerning confidentiality and given the opportunity to withdraw. Next, I took the interviewee through the sections of the questionnaire starting with the table of rankings to assess the level of difficulty encountered in this task. Then I worked through the questions to establish the interviewee's opinions on the key issues facing the operations of systems in the college. A key part of this questioning involved ascertaining how the interviewee felt about the systems and his or her interaction with them. As interesting points appeared in the interview these were followed up with supplementary questions that expanded on the interviewee's initial response and aided clarity.

4) Conclusion to the interview: Having completed the set sequence, the interviewee was invited to provide additional observations or comments, which he or she felt might be relevant. This general discussion often yielded useful insights into other aspects of the systems operations.

5) Preparing the transcript: After typing the transcript it was sent to the interviewee, with a thank you note (appendix 2), for the purpose of authenticating the narrative and triangulation using respondent validation (McCormick and James (1983) in Cohen and Manion (1980:p241)).

None of the respondents felt it necessary to refuse me the use of their narratives.

3.6.2: Piloting the Questionnaire.

The questionnaire was tested on three people prior to being used for the main data collection phase of the study. The following issues came out of the pilot and were addressed:

Language:

The meanings of the words used in the questionnaire did cause some confusion to the test respondents so a simplified phraseology was employed. This problem was also overcome through the questionnaire being administered by the researcher who could, if necessary, interpret the question for the respondent.

Question order:

The piloted test indicated that the last two questions on quality were better ordered if inverted to enquire about quality systems and the awareness of the respondent of the various alternative systems. By changing the question order the respondent appeared to be prompted to expect a further question on quality that asked for a deeper analysis of the situation.

No other problems were apparent at the testing phase of the questionnaire and the study proceeded.

3.6.3: Bias

From the point of view of the ethnographer, the researcher in this type of situation is a participant observer and as such can be subject to bias in the interview process. Cohen and Manion (1980: p282) suggest that bias can occur:

- where the interviewer sees the respondent in her own image;
- the interviewer seeks answers to support preconceived notions;
- misconceptions on the part of the interviewer as to what the respondent is saying;
- misunderstandings by the respondent as to what is being asked;
- race, religion, social class and age can also be potent sources of bias.

To these should be added hierarchical standing within organisations where a manager conducting interviews might be given the answers the respondent thinks he or she wants to hear or that might help him or her in their job aspirations.

Cohen and Manion offer the following as a means of reducing bias:

- Careful formulation of the questions so that the meaning is clear.

- Through training of the interviewer so that possible problems are known.

- Probability sampling of respondents.

- Matching interviewer characteristics with those of the interview sample.

Cohen and Manion (1980: p282).

3.6.4: Authenticating the Narrative.

This is also known as triangulation and is the practice of seeking confirmation of the data from more than one source. Cohen and Manion (1980) offer this caution about over reliance on one method of data collection:

Exclusive reliance on one method...may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality she is investigating. She needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artefacts of one specific method of collection. And this confidence can only be achieved as far as normative research is concerned when different methods of data collection yield substantially the same results.

Cohen and Manion (1980:p233)

Cohen and Manion are advocating the use of different data collection methods that look at the same problem but from different angles. In the case of the collection of narratives there is a built-in subjectivity to the data that can be overcome by the use of observational data that is collected when a transcript of the narrative is presented to the subject for verification. Such observational data can provide a comparison to the original narrative that will confirm or not confirm the accuracy of the narrative and this method, also known as Respondent Validation, was adopted to validate the narratives collected from the informants for this case study. McCormick and James (1983) describe the method as follows:

There is no absolute guarantee that a number of data sources that purport to provide evidence concerning the same construct in fact do so... In view of the apparently subjective nature of much qualitative interpretation, validation is achieved when others, particularly the subjects of the research, recognise its authenticity. One way of doing this

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is for the researcher to write out his/her analysis for the subjects of the research in terms that they will understand, and then record their reactions to it. This is known as respondent validation.

McCormick and James (1983) in Cohen and Manion (1980:p241)

Respondent validation proved to be a satisfactory method of validating the data with any changes to the transcript recorded directly on to the transcript by the respondent. Another benefit from using this form of triangulation in qualitative data research seems to be the opportunity it provides to both parties to reflect on the interview, and for the respondent, the chance for further scrutiny and comment. Once the respondent had agreed the transcript, the data was analysed in the method described in the next section.

3.7: Treatment of the Data.

3.7.1: Form of the data.

The data collection was in two forms, quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data collected from the respondents was summarized to determine the staff's assessment of whether systems are key or major. The method for achieving this was to take a simple majority. Thus for the Internal Verification system there were 17 responses recorded as key and 5 as major. 2 respondents did not consider the system as relevant to them. The system was recorded as a key system because that was the majority view. The equivalent principle was applied to the staff ranking of systems on the scale of 1 = very important to 5 = not very important. A summary of the result can be found in Chapter 4, table 1. The same procedure was used to summarise the responses from the expert panel of the SMT. Once the statistical data had been summarized it was correlated to the SMT's assessment of the operating systems using 0.05 as a minimum acceptable level of significance.

No distinction has been made between the responses to the questionnaire from academic staff and those from support staff. This was a deliberate strategy since it could be argued that all of the staff are concerned with the operation of the college and have a view that deserves to be expressed. The experiences of the support staff, although different from those of the academic staff, may be seen as no less valid to the operation of the college and may provide a different yet useful angle on a situation that affects the academics. Further, such a distinction may be

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considered dismissive of the experiences and opinions of the support staff. Miles and Huberman (1994: p27) make the point that understanding relationships in their setting reveals facets to be studied in other relationships. This is a viewpoint that seems pertinent to this situation since the purpose of this study is to analyse and interpret the experiences of all staff in the college. Miles and Huberman (1994: p34) also point out that it is important to talk to people who are not central to the phenomenon but are neighbours to it to get contrasting and comparative information. The exclusion or somehow different treatment of the narratives of the support staff might be seen as undermining this aim and, ultimately, the conclusions of the study.

3.7.2: Processing the quantitative data.

To process the quantitative data SPSS, a statistical computer software package, was used. SPSS is a dedicated statistical processing package that is widely used in industry and education. The software offers a variety of statistical techniques including basic descriptive statistics and more advanced methods such as correlation and hypothesis testing using students t-test.

The quantitative data was of two types. The first, whether a system could be classified as a Key or Major system, was nominal data, which is where numbers are used as labels (Samouel *et al* 1996:3.8). This data was coded using binary dummy variables Key = 1 and Major = 0. The second data type was ordinal (Samouel *et al* 1996:3.8) that measured the ranking the respondent felt that a system had as "importance to the college" and "importance the system had to their job". This ranking was made on a five point Likert scale with "1" being very important and "5" being not very important.

The quantitative data was entered into the SPSS spreadsheet with the prescribed systems on the 'Y' axis numbered 1 – 14 and the respondents' results on the 'X' axis. The SMT's results represented the benchmark data (BMK) for correlation purposes; individual respondents are the variable data (Var) as this example shows:

Table 3.1

Example of how data is entered into SPSS.

BMK	Var1	Var2	Var3
2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
2.00	2.00	2.00	4.00
4.00	2.00	2.00	4.00
1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00
1.00	2.00	1.00	2.00
2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
3.00	1.00	3.00	3.00
1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
2.00	1.00	3.00	5.00
1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00
2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
3.00	2.00	1.00	5.00
2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00

The output from the package is, essentially, a pivot table that sums the columns or rows as required for the function being used as this example of the calculation of the frequency of staff choices of Individual Student Record as either a Key or Major system:

Table 3.2

Example of the output from SPSS.

ISR

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	6	25	28.6	28.6
	1	15	62.5	71.4	100
	Total	21	87.5	100	
Missing	system	3	12.5		
Total		24	100		

0 = Major, 1 = Key.

SPSS is a computer programme that facilitated the processing of the raw qualitative data. Another software programme, NVIVO, was employed to process the qualitative data and is described below.

3.7.3: Processing the qualitative data.

Transforming the taped interviews into typed transcripts, which were then loaded into 'NVIVO' qualitative data analysis software, processed the qualitative data. NVIVO is essentially a database programme that allows you to store text data, code the text and recall it in a grouped format for analysis by the researcher. The transcripts were coded using pre-devised codes that followed the order of the questions in the questionnaire as advised by Miles and Huberman (1994:p58). Once grouped a process of sequential analysis was applied as described by Miles and Huberman (1994):

- Step 1. Underline key terms in the text.

- Step 2. Restate key phrases remaining as descriptive and literal as possible.

- Step 3. Reduce the phrases to create clusters.

- Step 4. Reduce the clusters and attach labels.

- Step 5. Generalise the phrases.

- Step 6. Generate mini-theories.

- Step 7. Integrating theories into an explanatory framework.

Miles and Huberman (1994:p87-88)

The NVIVO software used in the processing phase is useful for data handling although the raw data must be transformed into a text format that can be handled by the computer. Pre-coding the questionnaire so that it is easier to transcribe facilitates this process. Once formatted and entered into the programme the data can be moved about, recoded or deleted as required. The researcher is still an essential part of the process because the software cannot perform the higher analysis from which theory is created.

3.8: Summary.

This chapter has reviewed the methods and procedures employed in this study, looking at a description of the subjects, the design of the study, a description of the research instrumentation, a description of the procedure and the treatment of the data. The next chapter will summarise and analyse the collected data and draw conclusions from the data.

Chapter 4

4.1: Data results

As was stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this case study is to examine the relationship between the Senior Management Team's evaluation of what they consider to be the important college systems and to compare that opinion to the college staff's evaluation of those systems. The research question being: Do the Senior Management Team and the college staff share the same understanding of the importance of certain operating systems to the college? Also to answer the questions: Do the staff recognise the critical importance of certain systems to the success of the college? Also, are the systems easy for the staff to use and operating both effectively and efficiently?

The study sampled the views of 24 college employees representing 6% of the total workforce using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions to seek out the answers.

The following chapter is the analysis of the data that was collected and is divided into two main parts. The first part is an analysis of the quantitative data and the second is an analysis of the qualitative data. Both of these parts are further subdivided, in the first part into the 6 null-hypotheses relating to the degree of correlation between the management and staff view points of the importance of operating systems.

The second part examines the qualitative data, supplied through the analysis of staff transcripts, on the operation of college operating systems and how staff perceive them.

The analysis begins with an examination of the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire, questions 1a to 1c. This is compared to the expert panel of Senior Management Team executives' estimate of the systems that are either Key or Major and the rankings they gave them.

4.2: Part 1: The quantitative data.

4.2.1: Preliminary work.

The first step in the analysis of the quantitative data was to summarize the Senior
Management Team's estimate of the importance of the operating systems to the college
and compare that to the college staff's estimate. The SMT's evaluation was agreed as a
team opinion that could be compared to the staff's opinion without further manipulation
needed. The staff's view had to be calculated from the rankings they made in the
questionnaires. The table below indicates the raw data from which the final rankings were
made:

Table 4.1: Raw data used for ranking as Key or Major system.

System	Key	Major	No Response	Key/Major Ranking
Academic Timetables	14	8	2	Key
Annual Leave Booking	18	5	1	Key
Appraisal	11	13	0	Major
Budgets	22	2	0	Key
Fee Income and Recovery	18	5	1	Key
Grievance	7	16	1	Major
Individual Student Record	15	6	3	Key
Internal Verification	17	5	2	Key
Ordering Goods	8	15	1	Major
Quality Monitoring (Internal)	14	10	0	Key
Registers	15	8	1	Key
Room Booking	11	12	1	Major
Staff Development Applications	8	16	0	Major
Staff Recruitment	20	3	1	Key

The ranking of the system could only be as a discrete variable so a simple majority made
the decision. It can be seen that not all of the systems were a clear decision, for instance,

while Internal Verification was considered as strongly Key, Appraisal is a closer decision. However, it is not possible to have shades of a discrete variable so following the established rule Appraisal is recorded as a Major system. The same principle was applied to the staff rankings of 'importance to the college' and 'importance to the job', the tables for which can be found in appendix 3.

The following table shows the SMT's opinion of whether a system is a Key or Major system to the college and the system's ranking against a scale of 1= High to 5 = Low. On the same table, the staff's evaluation of whether a system is Key or Major and their evaluation of the importance of the systems to both the college and to their own jobs.

Table 4.2 SMT's Evaluation of Key and Major Systems

System	SMT Key/Major	SMT Ranking	Staff Key/Major	Staff - importance to college	Staff- importance to job
Academic Timetables	MAJOR	1	KEY	1	1
Annual Leave Booking	MAJOR	3	MAJOR	2	5
Appraisal	MAJOR	2	MAJOR	2	3
Budgets	KEY	1	KEY	1	1
Fee Income and Recovery	KEY	1	KEY	1	3
Grievance	MAJOR	4	MAJOR	2	2
Individual Student Record	KEY	1	KEY	1	1
Internal Verification	MAJOR	2	KEY	1	1
Ordering Goods	MAJOR	2	MAJOR	3	3
Quality Monitoring (Internal)	KEY	2	KEY	1	1
Registers	KEY	2	KEY	1	1
Room Booking	MAJOR	2	MAJOR	1	2
Staff Development Applications	MAJOR	3	MAJOR	3	3
Staff Recruitment	KEY	1	KEY	1	1

Once the data had been summarized it could be used to assess the degree of correlation that exists between the SMT's view and that of the staff who actually operate the systems. Cohen and Manion (1980:p139) give a standard for judging the degree of correlation for educational research that sets out the following interpretations:

Table 4.3 Measures of Correlation

Correlations from – to	Strength of relationship	Significance level. P = ?	Usefulness
0.20 - .035	Slight	None	None
0.35 – 0.65	Moderate	0.01	Can be used with multiple correlation
0.65 – 0.85	Strong	0.01 – 0.05	Group predictions possible
0.85 and over	High	0.01 – 0.05	Very useful but rare in education research

Adapted from Cohen and Manion (1980:p139)

The next section deals with the measurement of the correlation between the sets of data and will use the descriptors above in evaluating the degree of correlation.

4.3: Correlation between SMT benchmark for key and major systems and staff assessment of key and major systems.

The null-hypothesis for this table is that there is no significant correlation between the SMT's estimation of Key and Major operating systems and the staff's estimate of Key and Major systems.

Table 4.4

		SMT Key and Major Benchmark	STAFF Key & Major
SMT Key and Major Benchmark	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
	N	14	14
STAFF Key and Major	Correlation Coefficient	.750**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
	N	14	14

- ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

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The correlation is strong and significant at the .01 level so the null-hypothesis is rejected and it can be said that there is a significant correlation between the SMT and Staff estimates of the Key and Major college operating systems.

4.4: Correlation between management's evaluation of key and major systems and staff ranking of importance to the college.

The second hypothesis to be tested was whether there is a correlation between the Senior Management Team's (SMT) assessment of the importance of the college operating systems and that of the college staff.

Table 4.5

		SMT Key and Major benchmark	Staff Importance To College
SMT Key and Major Benchmark	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.631*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.016
	N	14	14
Staff importance to college	Correlation Coefficient	-.631*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.
	N	14	14

⊕ Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation indicates that there is a moderately strong correlation between the management's estimation of the operating systems' importance and the evaluation made by the college staff, and is significant at the .05 level. This correlation confirms that the college management and the staff do share an understanding of the relative importance of the operating systems to the college and the null-hypothesis is rejected.

4.5: Correlation between SMT key and major benchmark and staff's estimation of their importance to their job.

The null-hypothesis for this correlation is that there is no correlation between the SMT's estimate of the importance of the key and major operating system and that of the staff's estimate of their importance to their own jobs.

Table 4.6

		SMT Key and Major benchmark	Staff importance to job
SMT Key and Major benchmark	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.443
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.113
	N	14	14
Staff importance to job	Correlation Coefficient	-.443	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.113	.
	N	14	14

This table indicates that there is a moderate correlation between the management's benchmark for key and major operating systems and those assigned by the respondents. The level of significance can only be claimed at above .1 level of significance so the null-hypothesis is retained. The retention of the null-hypothesis indicates that the staff consider the importance of the operating systems to be weaker to their everyday tasks than to the college as a whole (see above).

4.6: Correlation between management and staff rankings of the systems.

The hypothesis for this table is that there is no significant correlation between the SMT's ranking of the systems and the staff's ranking of importance of the systems to the college.

Table 4.7

		SMT Rank Benchmark	Staff importance to college
SMT Rank Benchmark	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.694**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.006
	N	14	14
Staff importance to college	Correlation Coefficient	.694**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.
	N	14	14

⊚ ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

This correlation indicates that there is a moderately strong correlation between the SMT's ranking of systems and the staff's ranking of the systems. The correlation is significant at the .01 level and the null-hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis, that the staff and SMT do have a shared understanding of the importance of the college operating systems, is accepted.

4.7: Correlation between the SMT's ranking of the systems and the staff's ranking of the systems.

This hypothesis states that is there is no significant correlation between the SMT's ranking of the systems and the staff's ranking of the system's importance to their jobs.

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Table 4.8

		SMT Rank Benchmark	Staff importance to job
SMT Rank Benchmark	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.442
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.114
	N	14	14
Staff importance to job	Correlation Coefficient	.442	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.114	.
	N	14	14

The correlation indicates that there is a moderate correlation but the significance level at .114 is outside the acceptable range so the null-hypothesis is retained. It appears that the staff reject the notion that the operating systems are important to their jobs.

4.8: Correlation between the staff's estimation of the importance of the operating systems to the college and to their jobs.

The null hypothesis for this test is that there is no significant correlation between the staff's assessment of the importance of the operating systems to the college and the assessment of the importance of the systems to their jobs.

Table 4.9

		Staff importance to college	Staff importance to job
Staff importance to college	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.766**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
	N	14	14
Staff importance to job	Correlation Coefficient	.766**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	14	14

● ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

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The correlation indicates that there is a strong and significant correlation between the staff's estimate of the importance of the operating systems to the college and their importance to their job. The staff ranking of the importance of the systems to the college and their own ranking of the importance of the systems to their own jobs is closer than to the SMT's ranking of the system's importance.

The next section in this chapter will examine the qualitative data and consider the evidence it provides.

Part 2: The qualitative data.

4.9: The questionnaire.

The qualitative data part of the questionnaire was divided up into five sections to gather the staff's opinions on the difficulties they had in completing the questions, the role of accountability in their jobs, operation of college operational systems, the standard of help they get to operate the systems, the staff's interpretation of effectiveness and efficiency of the systems and the role of quality in the college.

4.10: Difficulties in completing questions 1a – 1c.

The first responses from staff were concerned with the difficulties they might have had in completing the table for key and major systems and ranking the systems. The responses to this question identified the difficulties that some staff had due to their lack of knowledge of the systems. Typical of the responses was:

> It is difficult for me to make any comment. Some of the questions that I was asked
> and that I picked out as being important to me such as Internal Verification and
> Budget, I became aware that there were key things I wasn't aware of and although
> these things were important to me personally I don't have a lot of personal
> knowledge as to how these things are done college-wide.

Another typical response and one that highlighted the staff members pre-occupation with other aspects of their working life was:

> I had some trouble partly because I am not familiar with some of them (systems). For instance Fee Income and Recovery is not a matter I have given very much thought to not because I don't think it's important but because I have enough in my own field with out worrying about budgets and all that…one focuses on what you've got to do and other things other people do and are responsible for, you expect them to do it.

This pre-occupation was not limited to the lecturing staff as technicians, administration and library staff made similar comments. It seems that the staff are concerned with things that are of a more immediate concern to them than with things that they do not normally come across in their working day. This lecturer took a pragmatic approach in deciding between what constituted a key and a major system:

> The division between key and major basically is that if it stops running will the college notice too much in the long term? If it will then it is key and if you can manage without it in the long term then it's major.

Only two staff members declined to offer opinions over whether systems were key or major or to rank the systems and even these two people completed some of the boxes. One of these two people was on a short-term contract to write a Health and Safety manual for the College and the other was a long serving technician. Neither felt he knew the systems well enough to pass comment on them.

Overall, there does not appear to have been a discernable difference between the levels of knowledge about the college systems amongst the different grades of staff other than those that would arise from their every day interactions with them. Obviously caretaking staff would not have common interaction with systems such as registers or ISRs but they

would interact with the annual leave system and ordering systems. Allowing for these differences it was apparent that the non-academic staff could comment on systems operations.

4.11: Accountability.

The question of accountability and to whom the respondents felt they were accountable provided some answers that seem to polarise into two main camps. There are staff members who identify accountability as a process of doing their job and those staff who seem to see it as a compliance requirement of their job. In the first case, those that consider it a process, comments like the following were made:

> In the context of the job I do I am expected to be sensible, mature and intelligent but that means being able to get on with the job, being able to spot when things are going wrong and speak to my line manager when necessary and be advised by him rather than go tugging at his coat tails every five minutes.

This respondent views accountability as communication both up and down the structure:

> I think it (accountability) is communication. If there is a problem you should communicate that as soon as possible to the appropriate people, especially your line manager and communicate down the structure as well because accountability should be about sharing.

Both of these respondents appear to be making the point that accountability is a process that requires confidence both in the manager and the managed to act in a mature, responsible way. The accountability appears to be internalised and part of their normal working activities.

The second view of accountability, compliance, is also apparent from the responses such as this from a senior manager in the college:

I am accountable to the Chairman of the Corporation and the funding body. I'm actually accountable to everybody in a sense. I'm accountable to the students in terms of a high quality learning experience and I am accountable to the community.

Here the sense is that accountability is something that has to be complied with to prove that you are meeting your obligations to those that require an accounting and a justification of your actions. In this context the accountability appears to be externalised and something that is done to you, perhaps generating a certain amount of resentment. This viewpoint can be supported by another comment about the responsibility that educationalists feel for their actions:

(Accountability) A negotiable concept, which means that in education there is more leeway for decisions that are made and you take more responsibility in education than you would in industry outside.

It certainly seems to be true that educationalists feel accountable for their actions and see accountability as having a wide application. The respondents cited feeling accountable upwards to their managers as being their primary role as this response shows:

We are accountable to the Director of Learning and Resources, he is then accountable to the Executive Committee, then to the Principal and then up to the governors. I interpret being accountable as being upwards rather than downwards.

However, other respondents felt that being accountable had a wider application:

I feel accountable to my students first and foremost and I feel very accountable to my colleagues in the sense of being colleagues and friends. Day to day, the students are the people I am accountable to because if you do that bit right all of the rest is relatively unimportant.

It is clear from the responses that the staff member's place in the hierarchy has an influence over the conception of accountability. Lower down in the hierarchy the person will view accountability in terms of his or her place in the ranking. As one member of the administration staff put it "being accountable is being aware of (your) responsibilities to students and to staff." That sense of responsibility is not linked to being a manager, lecturer, administrator or caretaker, rather it is about being aware that you have a duty to act responsibly and to account for your actions to a wider group of people if required to do so.

4.12: Talking about systems.

This section of the questionnaire asked the respondents to talk about the operating systems within the college that they have contact with and to identify them as the most important to the college, least important to the college, and to talk about one other system that they felt strongly about, good or bad. Not all of the respondents wanted to identify a system as least important hence there are only 21 responses. Similarly, 3 respondents did not want to talk about another system but 21 did.

Not all respondents had personal experience of the systems identified by the SMT. This was particularly true for the non-academic staff who would not have day-to-day interaction with systems such as the ISRs or registers. These non-academics talked instead about the systems that they were most familiar with on a day-to-day basis such as ordering goods and annual leave booking. This increased the original list of systems and the number of responses that the staff could make as indicated by the next table.

4.12.1: Systems identification.

This table summaries the staff's response to the question of whether a system should be considered as Most Important to the college, Least Important or whether it was another system.

4.12.2: Staff identification of most important, least important and other choice system.

Table 4.10:

System	Most Important	Least Important	Other System
Academic Timetables	1	0	2
Admissions and Advice	0	1	0
Annual Leave Booking	1	10	0
Appraisal	1	1	2
Budgets	4	0	1
Communications (Internal & External)	1	0	0
Computer System	0	0	3
Curriculum Centre Support.	0	0	1
Fee Income and Recovery	3	0	1
Grievance	0	3	0
Health & Safety	2	0	0
Individual Student Record	1	1	0
Internal Verification	4	0	0
Management information system	1	1	3
Ordering Goods	0	3	2
Quality Monitoring (Internal)	2	0	1
Registers	0	1	3
Room Booking	1	0	0
Staff Development Applications	1	0	1

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Staff Recruitment	1	0	1
Total responses	24	21	21

Non-responses = 6. The non-responses represent staff who were not able to talk about other systems because they felt they could not identify either a 'least important system' or 'another system'.

The table indicates that all of the interviewees could identify a system as being most important and these responses are fairly spread out over the range of systems. Fewer staff could identify a least important system but an overwhelming number felt that Annual Leave Booking was the least important. The other systems that the staff could talk about are fairly spread out across the range, again with no overwhelming choice.

There does not appear to have been any difficulty for non-academic staff in identifying a "most important system". The non-respondents for "least important" (3 people) and "another system" (3 people) included two non-academic staff and one academic. This unwillingness to respond appeared to be reflective of their lack of awareness of the systems and their operations rather than a function of the respondent's place in the hierarchy. Other respondents, both academic and non-academic, might also have been unaware but they seemed to be more willing to offer an opinion.

4.12.3: Good points about systems.

This question asked the respondents to say what was good about the systems they had identified as Most Important, Least Important and Other System. The answers can be considered the characteristics of a good system. These, in summary, are that the system:

- Should not only work but be seen to work by its users.
- Should be easy to understand and operate, and be user friendly.
- Should not be easily confusable.
- Should help the user to maintain quality standards and engage its users in its operation.
- Should be flexible and adaptable to local needs giving staff some control over their actions.
- Should provide feedback to the user.

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- Might provide an element of planning for the manager.
- Should have advice available to the user in using the system. The provider of the help needs be someone who is familiar with the system and designated by management to give help.

In contrast to these characteristics of good systems design the college staff saw the following as typical of bad systems design.

4.12.4: Bad points about systems.

The following list is a summary of the college staff's opinions of the bad or, perhaps, the less than good points about systems operation in the college:

- Systems that are not working properly cause staff to lose faith in their operation. If the system is considered to be unreliable staff feel they have to double up the record keeping to provide trustworthy feedback.
- Management neglect of a system causes staff to resent and reject the system as worthless. Once a system is set up it has to be maintained if it is to retain credibility with the staff.
- Staff will reject systems that appear to be operated for cynical reasons. A feeling of resentment can be generated that staff rights are being ignored through the local interpretation of systems rules.
- Systems that have no clear purpose or may have had their purpose articulated incorrectly will be rejected. Some systems appear to have been set up without considering how they will affect the school or department that has to administer them. Such systems become burdensome and generate resentment.
- A feeling of lack of ownership of a system because the staff do not understand its operation or have not been trained in its operation. This can cause staff to opt out of responsibility for the system by rejecting it.
- Poorly trained support staff can cause resentment and dissatisfaction where essential systems are not working properly. This is a management issue because they should ensure that the staff employed to support the curriculum are

sufficiently trained for the job. An allied issue is not having sufficient staff to do the required work.

- Systems that are not operated correctly can cause the college to provide a less than adequate service to the students.

- Systems can suffer from the ethos that education is a merit good and should be treated as such. There are also differing perceptions between staff and administrative bodies such as FEFC over what constitutes quality provision of education. This difference in perception can make staff resentful of carrying out what they perceive as onerous administrative duties when they would prefer to be preparing teaching materials.

The bad points of the college operating systems as identified by the staff appear to be the counter points of the good. There is a tendency when asking staff to tell you about the bad elements of an employer's operation to be swamped with irrelevant material but the staff, in the main, used temperate language to describe their experiences.

The evaluation by staff of the good and bad sides of their experiences of using college operating systems led to the next question of whether the system was, in the opinion of the member of staff, achieving the college's aims and objectives. The results of this appear in the next section.

4.12.5: Systems achieving the college's aims and objectives.
A pertinent question to ask the respondents before they answered this question was whether they could state the college's aims and objectives. In fact that question was asked afterwards to see if it altered their point of view. A common answer was that the staff member could not quote the strategic aims and objectives directly but knew them in general as these answers illustrate:

I don't know them off by heart although widening participation, strengthening the financial position of the college are the main things.

I'm sure it is about life long learning and enabling students and things like that.

I don't know, well in broad terms I suppose the strategic aims of the college are to ensure that the students are taught with the quality and intensity they need to expand their learning.

Although the respondents could not quote the strategic aims and objectives in depth it is likely that they do have at least an appreciation of them and, interestingly, the lack of in-depth knowledge did not stop them from making an assessment of the systems' re contribution. There was no difference in the awareness of the strategic aims and objectives between the academic and non-academic staff evident from the data.

The following table summarizes the responses that were made of the systems' contribution to the strategic aims and objectives of the college.

4.12.6: Are the systems achieving the college's aims and objectives?
Table 4.11:

System	Yes	No	Not sure
Academic Timetables	3	0	0
Admissions and Advice	0	0	1
Annual Leave Booking	3	6	2
Appraisal	3	0	1
Budgets	1	2	2
Communications (Internal & External)	0	0	1
Computer System	1	2	0
Curriculum Centre Support.	1	0	0
Fee Income and Recovery	1	1	2
Grievance	3	0	0
Health & Safety	1	1	0

Individual Student Record	1	0	1
Internal Verification	3	0	1
Management information system	4	1	0
Ordering Goods	1	2	2
Quality Monitoring (Internal)	3	0	0
Registers	0	4	0
Room Booking	1	0	0
Staff Development Applications	1	1	0
Staff Recruitment	1	1	0
Total responses	32	21	13

Non responses = 6. Non-responses represent those staff who felt that they could not comment on a 'least important system' or on 'another system'.

The responses made by the staff to this question are mostly positive although over half are either No they are not achieving the aims and objectives or the respondent was uncertain. There did not appear to be any division between academic and other grades of staff in their responses with those who responded coming from all levels in the sample. Examples of the responses are listed here:

Positive responses on the systems operations:

Internal verification: Yes, because I think particularly on retention because there is a regular opportunity now for the tutor to give feedback.

Individual student record: …the system has got to be there because the information about enrolments is essential for the FEFC.

Budgets: The new system yes…now it will help because partly, it will have tighter control and it will assist us, we'll know what we've got to spend and what we haven't and I think that will help us move forward.

The negative responses are characterised by the following quotes:

Ordering goods: We were planning to run training courses ...but because of the lack of resources it hasn't happened. I haven't been officially told that but the term is going on and the money seems to have disappeared and promises (by management) aren't being fulfilled.

Annual leave: No, it is something that has gone airy-fairy with nobody checking up and staff not knowing whether they have to book a holiday or not.

Registers: Not at all.

The respondents who were not sure whether a system was helping the college achieve its aims and objectives follow this pattern:

Fee income and recovery: It is trying to (achieve the aims and objectives) but we are so tight staff-wise that it comes to the point that you are going to lose money from not having the right staff.

Appraisal: I can't be as specific as I would like to be because there are a number of issues here...it's just not crisply defined enough.

Individual student records: It can do. We now check learning agreements and if this was done across the college this would help the college achieve its targets.

The system that stands out as not helping the college achieve its aims and objectives is the Annual Leave booking system. The respondents are pointing out the lack of

management direction with the system that could be seen as symptomatic of the uncertainty that some staff members feel about college systems. The lack of direction, the neglect of the system and the wide local interpretations of the rules leave staff uncertain of their rights and responsibilities. The uncertainty gives rise to resentment of other members of staff who are perceived as taking more than their fair share of leave:

> I think it gets in the way because it does reduce people's commitment and motivation...some people might abuse the system, the vast majority would not. There is a possibility that the management might abuse the staff.

In contrast, a defined system such as quality monitoring is not ambiguous and its role in the college is widely known and understood; however, that does not mean that it does not have its detractors:

> ...it is becoming so big and bureaucratic that it becomes an elaborate form filling exercise which you can't get away from because it is the nature of the beast.

It would appear that if the staff are uncertain about the purpose of a system it is more likely to be considered badly. The vagueness and uncertainty that certain operating systems suffer appears to be borne out by the responses to the next question.

4.12.7: Improving the systems.

The respondents were asked to suggest how the system might be improved. The staff members kept making the point about reducing the ambiguity in the system operation saying things like: "it is all too vague and woolly. It needs to be more formalised and standardised." Other comments made the that point the management do not seem to be very interested in the systems, as in this case: "I don't feel that anyone is really interested" and "...more emphasis at senior management level is needed to get them focusing more."

The futility of some systems operation can be felt by this quote from an academic member of staff:

> Looked at from the coalface it seems like we are sending information into a black hole. We send the dockets to say that students have left or changed course and it doesn't seem to make a blind bit of difference to the figures. You wonder why you bother when it doesn't seem to be taken into account.

Another staff member felt that there was a need for the SMT to be more proactive: "Somebody has got to acknowledge that this is not good enough and take control." The tenor of this section is that Staff feel exasperated at the way operating systems, which should help them work effectively and efficiently, seem to work against them. The management is not seen as helping the situation by appearing to neglect the systems and doing nothing when problems are highlighted.

However, that is not to say that management are not doing anything constructive as one respondent noted: "I do think that what they've done (management) is a vast improvement over what has happened in the past." The problem would appear to be that there is a great deal more to be done before the staff feels that the systems are meeting their needs and the needs of the students. The next section considers some of the points that the Staff wanted to add but felt were not for the questions above.

4.12.8: Making other points about systems.

The question provided an opportunity for staff to make comments that they felt would be inappropriate in the foregoing part of the questionnaire. The results were rather eclectic but a typical example illustrates the depth of awareness of the problem that faces management when trying to set up a system where none existed before:

> The best example of how the new contract has actually reduced the ability of a college to achieve its aims and objectives ...if you book annual leave you take it whereas in the past you might do marking and planning while on 'holiday'.

This is a very deep observation of the way that human nature works when it feels that it is being abused. In this case, the SMT felt that a system would reduce ambiguity and increase fairness to staff, teaching and non-teaching, by providing guidelines for all staff. It would seem from this the system has reduced operational efficiency by developing concepts of working time and non-working time in staff who had not conceived of such a stark difference before. The next set of questions asked about the help that is available to staff in the college from line managers and support units.

4.13.1: How much help is available.

The number of college systems has grown since incorporation and the management has had to take over the employer role previously occupied by the LEA. The proliferation of systems means that staff do not always have the knowledge of the system that is required to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. The following narrative illustrates the type of problem that can arise where a staff member is inadequately trained to deal with a situation and does not know whom to ask for help. The staff member is an academic who was new in post and who had not been given training for that post:

> There are a huge number of forms and procedures that it was presumed I would know about and when you don't, everything falls apart and you actually have to go and find someone to go and do that. I had a variable hours lecturer not being paid because I had not filled out a certain form. It tends to be the little things like that and the operational things that tend to get overlooked. The outcome was that the lecturer was upset, everybody was upset (sic). The lecturer missed out on money although he did eventually get paid; the National Insurance was different so we had to pay him, as a good will gesture, the difference in the NI he paid so it cost the college money for its poor operation.

The amount of help available to the staff appears to be variable and dependent on the staff member actually being proactive in finding the assistance needed. This phenomenon was not restricted to the academic staff but extended to all grades of staff within the college. A common comment was: "The systems are there but it's up to me as an

individual to find out what they are and how to use them." Another comment indicated that the staff member had not been trained in the use of systems: "What I know about using the college operating systems I have probably assimilated over the last 5 years but probably more by accident than by design."

Help to use the operating systems is available but it seems that you have to know who can help: "Pretty good as long as you know whom to ask." The most common source of help in using the operating systems is the line manager who themselves may not know what they are doing as this quote from a middle manager indicates: "With the budget I had no help whatsoever...its been a case of finding out as opposed to being trained."

The lack of assistance in using the systems is known by the SMT as one member commented: "I don't think staff get enough help which is a resource issue...that shows a lack of customer focus, the staff being the customers in this case." The acknowledgement that there is a lack of help for staff does not seem to have helped in ensuring that it is provided. The kind of the help that staff do manage to receive was the subject of the next question and this indicated the practical nature of the assistance rendered.

4.13.2: The Nature of help received by staff members and who gives help.
Question 5b asked about the nature of the help received and the respondents indicated that this was of a very practical nature although other help was available from the email system in the form of notes.

The practical help came most often from the Head Of School as this response indicates: "The Head of School helps with getting information from MIU and disseminating it out to tutors." Help is also available from the staff in the units who are seen as being very supportive as is the person or people who develop the system: "Normally the person who gives help can be the person who devised the system which can be useful because they know how it works." However the technical people who devise systems are not always able to communicate very effectively: "...they tend to be not terribly helpful maybe because they are technicians and technicians aren't able to talk to ordinary people very

easily." Another respondent in this comment picked up the benefit of having a system specialist offering help to the user:

> I think it is always important to get user feedback, it's important to see it from the operator's side, then get a user's perspective of what's good and not so good, then look at that and come up with a solution.

The email system and the post-boxes in particular can prove useful in disseminating information and help but that itself is not always a benefit as this respondent pointed out: "There is a lot of information on email but you have to go into a variety of post boxes to find it. Unless you know that the information is in the post box it can be very time consuming.

The lack of communication about how the systems work in the college seems to stem from the very outset of when new staff join the college as this quote shows:

> Part of the problem is to do with induction...because I never had one and I suspect quite a few of us never had a proper induction so I am not quite sure that I know all of the systems and I'm not sure that I am operating them correctly anyway.

The respondent above has been in post for five years but the problem of not having an induction is a current issue as this new appointee indicates: "An induction into the new role. There is a lot of reliance on staff good will to support the new person."

The last comment is quite interesting because it is clear that the systems operate largely due to the good will exhibited by the staff as a whole and their willingness to go to some lengths to ensure that the college keeps operating. The next question asked the staff to identify the help they wanted and who should provide it.

4.13.3: What help would you like and from whom?

The replies indicated that a designated person who could be consulted would be a useful help. One member of staff had gone further and drawn up a list of 'useful people' who could be called upon to give advice and guidance when needed. Training was also seen as necessary especially in using the Management Information System (MIS): "...we need training in how to use it so we are all using it (MIS) effectively and help us be more efficient in the jobs we do."

Work that is seen as belonging to the Curriculum Centre is pushed down to the Schools and this does cause resentment due to an increased work load: "Many of the tasks that are meant to be done for us by the support units are put back to us so what was meant to be easier becomes a double or triple exercise." Another respondent made a similar point but suggests the reason this happens: "It is no good going to the Curriculum Centres because they seem to be doing things for the management and not the schools. I do all of my own typing because we don't get any support."

The type of help the staff want would appear to be reasonably unsophisticated and for some not difficult to find. However, it does seem that the staff feel unsupported and under trained to cope with the demands of their jobs. This feeling of being unsupported and under trained is not restricted to the academic staff but extends to other grades such as the administrators and ancillary staff as well. The next question asked about the training that staff had received to do their jobs.

4.13.4: Training received.

The respondents had received very little formalised training to help them do their actual jobs either as new employees or as promotees. The training referred to was job specific rather than updating in a professional specialism although where the respondent was a lecturer or support person that was the training they were mainly

concerned with. This quote from a relatively new member of staff illustrates the position in regard to both professional and job specific training:

> I haven't received any training on how to be a programme manager. I've had no training within the college on how to deliver a lesson. I am teacher trained but outside of this college you would expect to get a Newly Qualified Teacher year but you don't get it here. I also expressed an interest in furthering my Ds (Training and Development Lead Body Qualifications). I've got D32 and D33 and it would be nice to get another one but there's been no opportunity to do that either even though I've asked around.

The lack of formal training in job roles does not mean that training does not occur. It does but it tends to be informal as this comment shows:

> I was given a sort of 'sitting by Nellie' induction by the person who was leaving which is probably as good as you are going to get but I had this fear that there's all sorts of gaps because that sort of thing happens when you do things in a rush.

The respondent's fear of not knowing if the training prepared him for the job raises stress levels and its rushed nature means that actual learning may be minimised. A number of respondents relied on professional bodies to provide training, such as The Library Association who provide training in using Library catalogue systems and the Institute of Management who provide professional updates on a regular basis. A respondent from the caretaking staff relied on training by his union to tell him how to do his college job because he had never received training in the college.

Other factors that lead to training being sub-optimised are the difficulties of actually taking time from the job to attend training sessions, as this administration staff member explained:

> Training is available but sometimes it is not convenient which is no fault of the college really especially as a part-time member of staff. You want to do as much as you can while you're in and if a course falls during my work time I do the work and I don't go to the course.

It is interesting how this respondent is willing to take on the responsibility for not being able to attend the training session when it might be argued that the college is responsible for making sure that the staff member's job is properly covered whilst attending training. Staff see the problem of cover for personnel whilst training as a major obstacle. This is a problem that is not restricted to the administration staff as this quote from a member of the academic staff shows:

> The problem is nowadays that there is nobody free to cover you: although they say you can have cover there is actually nobody to cover because of low staff numbers. Where it's maths or something you can find cover but when it's a specialist subject you just can't do it. We have suffered with part time lecturing staff. All right, they have taught at other colleges but they don't know our system although it's similar and the course is the same everywhere. It's the paper work, suddenly they've been and gone and there's no record and you end up doing their work as well during the summer.

Actually finding alternative cover for the absent member of staff is the responsibility of the prospective trainee although the payment must be authorised by the Head of School and the Personnel Department. Such a system acts as a positive disincentive to

seek training because the staff member will worry about the course and the students whilst away from them.

Job specific training has taken place recently for lesson observation and target setting. Other job specific training can prove difficult when there appears to be an element of discouragement by the line manager, as this quote indicates:

> The NVQ level 4 Management was to have been a support for being a Team Co-ordinator. What I found, especially on budgets for which we got no information unless you actively went and sought it, the NVQ4 asked for documents so I went to my then HoS who was very uncomfortable with that and said that she would give me some documents and I received some documents for my portfolio from another school. To me that highlighted problems with the situation I was in. I made a complaint and something was done but I felt that I wasn't being managed correctly. The training made me more aware about something I was getting annoyed about and it just heightened it.

The reason why the line manager was reluctant to help the trainee is not clear but it may be that she felt threatened in her own knowledge of the budget system because she herself had not been adequately trained. The dissatisfaction felt by the member of staff can be seen in the last line of the quote and the strength of feeling was still strong when she related the incident to the researcher. Such poor staff management can be very demotivating and lead to problems at a later stage of the person's professional development. The Staff have identified the lack of training for their jobs but what benefit would training have bought to the college? That is the subject of the question that follows.

4.13.5: How did training help you do your job?

So few people had received training for their job that only a few comments were made in response to this question. One respondent who had received training answered: "If I didn't know how to use the systems I wouldn't be able to do my job." This suggests that the training had a direct benefit to the college that would not have been received had the training not been undertaken. Another person who had received some training made this comment about the long-term benefit from training: "Better understanding but too little time to practice. It's often rushed and by the time you come around to practising what you've learned you've forgotten it." The people who had not received training seemed to have a clear image of the benefits to be gained from training as the responses to the next question showed.

4.13.6: How do you think training would help you do your job?

The themes that come out of the responses to this question are confidence, security and authority. Staff would feel confident in their dealings with students, each other and management because they would be certain of what they were doing, as this quote indicates: "You would feel happier about the tasks you have to do. I have a lot of responsibility but I lack the authority in some areas." A manager needs to be aware of the implications of certain actions when dealing with staff members, and the legal implications. This is certainly true when the manager faces taking disciplinary action against a staff member as this respondent pointed out:

> The management of people, there is a lot of equal opportunities legislation. It will raise my awareness and give me some background knowledge, it won't give me everything...but it will give me strategies I think for managing.

A confident staff member can deal with problems effectively and efficiently, generating confidence in the staff member, the management and the students and

making the college appear well managed. A staff member who knows less than the students is a little worrying to the students but this academic staff respondent relies on students to find out what developments have occurred in industry:

I tend to keep up to date by reading trade magazines; the only real training is knowing what's happening and being up to date out on site and you get that from talking to students who are installing new equipment all of the time.

While all teachers probably glean such knowledge it would undermine confidence in the staff if it were widely admitted. The theme of security refers to being secure in the knowledge that you are certain that what you are doing is correct, as this quote indicates:

It will hopefully give them (staff) a little more confidence in me, I'm not saying they haven't got it, I don't know, but because I will have had training and so, again, I'll understand where they are coming from when they have got a particular issue. And also there is one thing that we've been dealing with...that has been a great learning experience but things like that I will have the knowledge what the procedures are.

This staff member is indicating that the staff she manages may not have confidence in her actions because she is untrained and knowing that makes her feel insecure in her actions. The next quote builds on this point by indicating the insecurities that a new member of staff felt when first employed by the college:

Training would have helped because although I had been a programme manager in my previous college the role of programme manager is different at this college. I

think training would have helped me to hit the ground running instead of wasting time wondering what I should do.

The need for a new member of staff to be effective quickly indicates a definite training need that is not being supplied and this is recognised by staff who have recently joined the college: "It would have made me more effective earlier on instead of making mistakes in order to realise what I should have been doing." The authority to act and knowing what you can do as a staff member with responsibilities is lacking in staff as this quote indicates:

If we do have some sort of budget devolved down to us I would expect to get some sort of training to do the job effectively on budgeting. If we are given a job to do some training would be helpful. The problem with this place as far as I'm concerned is that things change but they don't tell you things have changed and you have to pick it up so you waste time.

The frustration in the lack of training comes out of the comments made by the staff and it is almost as if the very people for whom the college exists are overlooked. This respondent makes an important point:

It has directly affected the students because you don't feel particularly confident or knowing what you are doing when you are organising students when you are in that classroom environment. You don't show that because you are a professional but there are times when things do occur and you think that shouldn't have affected them at all. That little chink in the chain with systems in the college should not be affecting them, and if you are talking about what the college is trying to do which is having students at the heart of whatever it is that's saying it's not working is it? Things can't be perfect but things could run more smoothly.

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The effective and efficient operation of the college systems enhances the students' experience in the college and promotes confidence in the college management. It would appear that these facts are being neglected to the detriment of the college, staff and students. A proper strategy towards staff training would help the staff, seemingly at all levels in the college and across all grades of employee, be better employees and help them feel a part of the greater college structure as this final quote in this section indicates: "It (staff training) makes the college a holistic organisation instead of the fragmented organisation that we are." The next section deals with the question of who is responsible, in the staff's opinion, for making sure that the college systems work.

4.14.1: Who is responsible for making sure the college systems work?

The table below summarises the responses to this question:

Table 4.12:

Principal		Senior Management Team		Heads of School/Units		All Staff		Not Sure	
3	12.5%	10	42%	3	12.5%	4	16.5%	4	16.5%

The respondents to this question identified the Principal as being responsible for systems in only three cases, the majority taking the view that the SMT, which includes the Principal, is responsible for systems operations. If we include the number who identified the Principal as being responsible for systems, that makes over half the respondents think the SMT are responsible for systems. Only three respondents thought the Heads of School or Heads of Units were responsible although one assumes that they take an active role in the management of the college. The number of staff who considered the operation of the systems to be the responsibility of all staff members was only four. This is a small number of people and suggests that the staff do not feel a great responsibility towards the systems and would support the findings in the quantitative data analysis above. The final category of not sure is a little worrying in that these people have no clear idea of whom they should report problems

with systems to in the first place. Nor do they have a clear idea of their own role in the process of providing feedback to the operators of the systems. The role of the staff in the effective and efficient operation of the systems was the subject of the next question.

4.14.2: If a system was not working effectively or efficiently what would you do?

Originally this question asked staff to differentiate between what they would do if a system was not effective and if it was not efficient. It quickly became apparent that staff had difficulty in distinguishing between the definitions of effectiveness and efficiency, the responses being essentially the same, I will deal with them in like manner. Staff interpretations of the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency are considered below.

4.14.3: Staff action

When a system is perceived not to be working properly staff are prepared to take action to rectify it. The action appears, with certain exceptions, to be muted as this typical quote illustrates: "Depending on how important it was to me and getting my bit of work done, I would either have a whinge to the manager responsible or pass it on." The usual action for staff is to talk to their line manager so that the manager can take action as this member of the support team commented: "I'm on the bottom rung of the ladder and could hardly go up to the Principal and say this is not working. I would expect my line manager to pick it up." Other members of staff are not so modest and have contacted the Principal direct when they have felt the situation warranted it:

I have sent an email to the Principal and she did reply concerning lined paper. I was told that we were not getting any lined paper because we are using too much of it and it's too expensive. So I sent an email to the Principal who sent one to the manager concerned who replied that I only had to ask her for some paper to have it supplied. But I know there would have been no point in asking because the

manager was the person who had made the decision not to buy lined paper. It did get a result but it is very rare for me to put my head above the parapet.

Staff can talk to the Principal and she will take action so the belief that she is someone who cannot be contacted is quite wrong. The last line of the quote is quite interesting because there is a sense to the data that staff are reluctant to take action in case they are rebuffed. The following quote illustrates the kind of defensiveness that can be exhibited when a staff member takes too much interest in a case:

When I try to check whether a student has paid the fee for the course I have been told 'that is nothing to do with you, that's our job' by finance. I don't bother any more now.

It could be that the staff member is being too sensitive to the Finance Office's comment but the net result has been that that staff member will now be reluctant to become personally involved in this area of the college operations for some time. The comment also illustrates that where a manager is over defensive of their territory, poor systems can be perpetrated to the detriment of the students, staff and college, as this narrative indicates:

I did some work when I went down to the advice centre and everybody was saying they weren't very efficient. But when you saw the volume of inquiries they had to deal with...they don't have the technology to answer 5000 calls. There is no back-up system for the lines. There is no policy for how quickly you should answer the phone call. The information they had to answer the query was appalling. Instead of having like a catalogue to consult they had to get up out of their chair to go to a bank of leaflets. That to me was the most ludicrous thing. To effect the change we got together to discuss the problems they had which wasn't even seen by the person running that section who had devised a little system for her self but did not see it a

useful mechanism for anybody else so that changed. Efficiency is wading in there and doing something. It was also about defending the people in the advice centre who were getting brickbats from everybody but when you looked at what they actually had to do it was totally unfair.

The lecturer who made this comment was an outsider working in the centre for a short time and who had the seniority to be able to make comments and be heard. What is not clear is for how long or if the other staff in the college had been complaining before action was taken to rectify the situation. There is a sense of hopelessness in some comments made by the staff as if their views are of no consequence: "I could tell somebody that it (the system) is not working but I'm not sure that I could do anything." In such a situation staff become reluctant to interact and poor systems operations are perpetuated through lack of action. There is a contrast here to the previous question where staff consider the SMT to be responsible for making systems work because without the type of feedback the staff provide the systems cannot be improved. Other staff indicate a pro-active approach to poor systems: "In extreme situations you invent your own systems because you find that you are not getting what you need from the system. Then you are duplicating." Whilst such independent behaviour may be seen as the only response possible when management refuse to act, the root cause of the problem, the system, goes uncorrected and continues to cause deep resentment amongst staff.

4.14.4: Interpreting effectiveness and efficiency

As mentioned above the staff are confused over the difference between being effective and being efficient, as this quote from a manager illustrates:

Effective and efficient are two different things but you can use the same phrase to suit both. I would regard something as efficient if it did not require quite the same amount of support. If more resources were put into the actual teaching and

learning... now that is where I would put efficiency and I can see that the FEFC might regard having as many documents as you possibly can prove that you are or that you are not doing what ever it is but I don't believe such documents prove anything one way or the other. I know they're necessary but efficiency I think is where you can see the majority of resources going into education. That is the actual chalk board or white board of education and seeing as many resources as possible going in to that.

The respondent does not consider where money goes as important or whether it is going to where it can be used most effectively, only that the money goes into education. Nor does he consider the outcome from the expenditure although he does talk about something not needing the same level of support. It is not clear whether he means that the resource spend is used efficiently or not in that context. What does come through is the confused use of the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency. This confusion was apparent in most of the staff but not all. One member of staff could give an interpretation of both concepts clearly:

Effective: Something fit for its purpose and produces the expected results. Normally when you implement a system you put it in expecting it to produce those results and if it produces a good percentage of those results I would say it is effective.

Efficient: Something that produces result with the minimum of effort or in the shortest time causing the least hassle to the people involved.

This respondent could also give an interpretation to the concept of economy:

If you economise too much then some of the things won't work very well. For example if you end up with a lot of young cheap staff who don't have a lot of experience they won't deliver on quality.

This seemed rather intriguing until she explained that she had previously worked in the area of Time and Motion study. This respondent was the exception as only a few other people could give an interpretation of these concepts that approach those usually applied to public service. The manager quoted above referred to the documentation required by the FEFC as part of the quality system and it is for this aspect of college systems that the last part of the questionnaire sought information.

4.15.1: Quality

Question 7a asked staff how they would describe quality in the FE context. The question gave some hints to different interpretations by offering the prompt of Total Quality Management (TQM), Quality Assurance (QA), Quality Control (QC) or another system that the respondent might know. The following table summarises the answers given:

How would you describe quality in the FE context?

Table 4.13:

	TQM	QA	QC	Not Sure	No Response
Responses	2	10	4	6	2

Staff members had difficulty in distinguishing between the different quality systems, which is why there are so many staff who are not sure which system is in operation. The response could be symptomatic of a deeper feeling that quality is not to do with the quality of the teaching so much as it is about the quality of the paperwork, as this comment indicates: "I see quality in FE not at all in the sense that it always seems to

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be about having paperwork and statistics. No one seems to talk about teaching and learning in terms of quality." This comment is not that rare in education circles as this next quote shows it is the staff and the quality of their work that is seen as important by several staff members:

Quality is really down to the lecturer at the bottom of the pile. Depending on how conscientious he is with his work is to how good (sic) his course is which I feel the quality of the college is reliant on how good your course is. That is what gets the students in and gets a good name for the college. I think it is up to the individual lecturer or perhaps the course manager. So perhaps it goes back to the system that there should be a quality system for the college it doesn't matter if it don't work... so long as you can run your course that is all I worry about at the end of the day.

This comment shows the importance the staff member places on his personal professionalism to deliver a quality product. Such personal standards are what the college rely on to deliver quality provision; however, the documentation does prove to bodies such as FEFC that the college is meeting its obligations to monitor quality. The largest response was to confirm that the college operates a quality assurance system with various monitoring instruments that provide feedback on performance. Those instruments do not always operate as intended:

I sometimes doubt the quality of the statistics we receive. We have recently been asked to get our students to complete an induction questionnaire (as part of the quality monitoring) which are quite difficult to complete and I think there is a lot of suggested help going to the students, especially the less able, to complete the forms because they haven't got a clue. I looked at some and you could see the tutors' influence in helping them (the students) complete them but if you had given that level of students the questionnaire to go away and do by themselves you would never have seen it again.

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Such monitoring is a feature of a QA system and the constant stream of questionnaires can become a worry if the staff member is not fully briefed on its purpose. Where students are in need of help, as in the case above, the level of help that staff can give should be made plain to prevent abuses of the type hinted at from occurring. Several members of staff thought that the college operated a TQM system but this would appear based on a misunderstanding of the term as this quote indicates:

> From my limited knowledge I would think we are looking at TQM. We are looking at quality within the organisation and which we are monitoring all of the time. We are also subject to external monitoring by the FEFC.

The last comment comes from a support staff member who did not know the difference between the quality systems mentioned above but who gave this opinion of what quality should be about: "Happy students achieving, happy staff. They both go together. If the students are happy and the staff are happy I don't think the college would have a lot to worry about." However, there is something to worry about in the shape of the FEFC's proposal to link an element of college funding to the quality of the provision. The last question in the questionnaire asked staff what they thought would be the implications for the college of this linking.

4.15.2: Linking funding to quality
The responses to this question were divided into three main themes of what will be measured, increased pressure on staff and positive attitudes towards the proposal.

4.15.3: What will be measured?
The responses that follow this pattern seem to be concerned that the measure of success will not be achievable given the quality of the student intake and the prospect of unrealistic standards being set:

If you are going to link funding to quality how are you going to measure it? Are you going to say quality is part of lesson observation so performance is going to be linked to a rating that is then going to be linked to pay rating and so on. If you've got a group of students who have been tested through the ALBSU test at a low score on entry you know that is going to have a knock-on effect with their achievement. If you say our target is to get 50% through the qualification, 75% through partial qualification, and 100% finishing the course but not necessarily achieving the qualification that would be great. But what I think the college will want is 100% passing as well as achieving which is not possible. So you are being penalised for the abilities of the students on the programme. You can't say you can't join the programme because you've got to give them the opportunity to develop.

The concern that standards will be unrealistic and unachievable are natural when staff are trying to provide a valuable learning experience for students while being pressurised to do more with less resources, as this quote indicates:

It seems more important to have the paper work trails than to do the teaching. I don't think there is anything the college can do to improve the quality of the courses because I see quality as quality of course not quality of systems…we take students with no qualifications and train them which may take longer than 2 years but will eventually come out with a qualification and feel good. But you take them from nothing and there is no add on or stuff that people will accept. The FEFC just want numbers for achievement even where the student started late on a roll on roll off programme. I feel that we are being penalised for offering what the college wanted.

4.15.4: Pressure on staff.

The pressure to provide documentation to prove quality also prompted responses that the emphasis will be away from teaching, which the staff sees as its main activity:

> It will increase bureaucracy, there will be less emphasis on the teaching, looking at the quality of systems, and everything that goes throughout the college and that will detract from the main purpose of why we are here.

The level of paper work also prompted comments about the cost of providing the proof that quality systems exist in the college. Feelings of insecurity are being generated by the constant checking of outside bodies: "...the feeling that they are being checked upon by someone from outside the college could be demoralising."

4.15.5: Positive attitudes.

Not all of the staff see the linking of quality as a negative thing. This respondent believes it will focus management on the important issues:

> This should be a good positive development because it cuts out the non-quality time wasting resource-based activities. The reality is you have to find the right quality indicators. If you are linking quality to the college equivalent of 'A' level league tables then you are going to lose an awful lot in the refinement process. We have got to find ten or a dozen indicators of quality to make sure we get a three dimensional approach.

The reference to A level league tables is noteworthy in the context that education is measured by results in the GCSE and A level courses and a good performance in these examinations attracts more and possibly better students to the college. It may be seen as significant that staff members from across all grades both academic and non-

academic could identify the potential danger that the college will be in if the FEFC proposal is adopted. However, the number of staff who see linking quality to funding as a basically good thing are far outweighed by those who express concern at the prospect and the possible problems that such linking would create.

4.16: Summary of quantitative and qualitative results.

Chapter 4 was arranged in two main sections corresponding to the quantitative and the qualitative data. The quantitative data focused on the degree of correlation that exists between the college Senior Management Team's view of the important operating systems and that of the staff. All of the data in this section was analysed by t-test procedures and the level of confidence was set at a minimum of .05.

4.16.1: Quantitative data.

The analysis of the quantitative data indicated that there was a significant correlation between the SMT and the staff view of the importance of the college operating systems to the college. However, the correlation between the SMT view of the importance of the operating systems and the staff's view of their importance to their job points towards no significant level of correlation. This result indicates that whilst the Staff think the systems are important to the college they do not consider the operating systems to be of importance to them or the job they do.

4.16.2: Qualitative data.

The qualitative data was grouped into five main areas that analysed the staff's opinions as to the operation of systems in the college.

4.16.3: Section one.

Dealing with the questionnaire.

The first question considered dealt with the responses to the question on the difficulty that staff had dealing with the systems. The questionnaire indicated that staff are not very concerned with the operation of systems in the college but that they are aware of them. The level of awareness that staff could show indicates that they are able to comment on the operation of systems and make judgements as to their efficacy.

4.16.4: Accountability.

The next question considered the role of accountability as it applies to the college staff. The data indicated that there are at least two clearly identifiable interpretations of the concept of accountability being employed by the staff. The first interpretation is that of accountability as an internalised process. This form of accountability is seen as non-threatening and is taken as part of the normal relationship that exists between the staff member and other people. The relationship in this case being upward, sidewards to other staff and downwards to students and people lower down the hierarchy.

The second interpretation of accountability is that of compliance where the staff member has to comply with the demands for accountability by a body that is external to his or her activities. This form of accountability is more threatening and more likely to require an accounting that is upwards to an official body like the Governors of the college or the FEFC. Accountability in this context is viewed with suspicion by the staff and externalised from the normal activities of the staff member.

The Staff of the college have a conception of the role of accountability and are at ease with it although not always happy to be called to account when required.

4.16.5: Section two.

The next section of the questionnaire asked the staff to think about the role of operating systems and how they worked in the college. The good points of the systems identified by the staff emphasised the importance of clarity of operation, flexibility

and feedback on performance. The bad points identified poor systems design, neglect by management, lack of ownership of the system and poor or the total lack of training of staff in systems operation. The strength of the bad points outweighs the good and indicates a lack of faith in the systems, resentment and rejection of their use by the staff. This finding corresponds with the analysis of the quantitative data that indicates that the staff do not believe that the operating systems have a meaning to their jobs.

Are the systems helping the college achieve its aims and objectives?

This question asked the staff to call upon their own knowledge of the college aims and objectives to make a value judgement about the systems. An additional question asked the staff member whether he or she could quote the aims and objectives and the answers indicated that whilst they could not usually give an exact quotation they did have an overview. This broad understanding of the college aims and objectives gives a weight to their estimation of whether a system contributes to the college or not.

The staff estimate of whether a system was helping the college achieve its aims and objectives identified the lack of management direction as giving rise to feelings of uncertainty over the systems. In contrast, where a system was clearly defined it was seen as being acceptable. It would appear that if a system is vague and uncertain staff will consider it as not helping the college achieve its aims and objectives.

Suggestions by the staff on how to improve the systems operations suggest that management need to take a pro-active role in sorting out the problems that are reported to them. The lack of management interest noted above needs to be replaced with a focused approach to making the systems work effectively and efficiently. However, care needs to be taken when devising or modifying systems that they do not counter the ethos of the staff and make matters worse by reducing effectiveness and efficiency. The example of the Annual Leave system where the staff are making a

clear distinction between working time and leave is evidence of a system that has not had its implications thought through.

4.16.6: Section three

This section of the questionnaire looked at the amount of help that staff get in using the college operating systems. There has been a huge increase in the number of systems that operate within the college since incorporation in 1993 to provide the management with the control mechanisms that did not exist when under LEA control. The variable nature of the assistance available to staff in using the systems is apparent from the responses by the staff, and mistakes inevitably happen because staff are not being trained in their use. Where help is available the line manager most commonly provides it although other support staff do offer unofficial help if requested. The type of help that staff want is unsophisticated and of a practical nature from the people who have devised the system or who have a good knowledge of how it operates.

Training is seen as being needed to help the staff fulfil their job roles effectively and efficiently but just attending training events is difficult since the staff member has to arrange staff cover personally. Arranging cover is increasingly difficult with a smaller workforce and indifferent temporary staff available. Such a system is a disincentive to participate in training and can be seen as a contradiction in an educational establishment. Staff see personal training in a positive light and would like to enhance their own effectiveness. The themes of confidence, security and authority come through in the responses with the staff seeing training as enhancing their ability to do their jobs properly and making them happier less stressed individuals. As the college relies on its staff to deliver a quality based service to the students it seems rather strange that so little effort has been put into making sure that they are able to do their administrative jobs effectively and efficiently.

4.16.7: Section four.

This section of the questionnaire looked at who is responsible for making the systems work and what staff would do if the systems are not working properly. The question of who is responsible for making the systems work has a clear answer for the staff, with the Principal and Senior Management Team being cited in the majority of cases. Hill (2000) comments that college managers had, since incorporation in 1993, adopted a directive style of management. The result from this section may indicate by using such a management style staff have been separated from the decision-making process and hence, very few of the staff considered that they had a role to play in ensuring that the systems operate correctly. This can be seen as underlining the opinion, noted above, that the systems are not relevant to their jobs. In the event that a system is not working properly staff are prepared to take action but this is very muted and they appear to be easily put off if challenged. Staff will report any problems with systems to their line manager but are fatalistic over whether action will be taken to put it right. Occasionally, a staff member will report direct to the Principal but this is rare and only as a last resort. Where problems persist with a system the staff member develops feelings of resentment and rejection of the system follows.

The staff seem to have very little perception of the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency as illustrated by the responses to being asked if they could define the words. Only one person could give a public service definition and it turned out that she had worked in a work-study role in the past. This lack of perception can be traced back to the lack of training for job roles and indicates a definite need to improve this function.

4.16.8: Section five.

Staff members were asked to identify the quality system in operation in the college but had difficulty in distinguishing between the alternatives of quality assurance, quality control and total quality management. The doubt that was expressed in answering this question, once again, illustrates the uncertainty within the college about the systems and their operation and the lack of staff training. Quality systems have become an

important issue in education and, some might argue, are going to continue to be so as funding mechanisms evolve. There is ambiguity in the minds of staff over the role of quality in education with staff resistant to paper based quality systems that do not appear to consider the quality of the education or training that the students receive. Rejection of such systems appears to be based on a misunderstanding of the role of the paperwork in proving the efficacy of the education to outside bodies. This misunderstanding can be seen as further evidence of a lack of adequate training of the staff who have to administer the systems and who see it as something done to them rather than as being a part of the accountability system. The operation of the quality systems is important to the college and will continue to be so if the FEFC carry through their stated intention to link an element of funding to the quality of the provision. The staff's view of the outcome of such a linking is the subject of the last question.

4.16.9: Linking funding to quality.

The responses made by the Staff to this question illustrate their concerns with quality in the college and the problems that are faced by almost all educational establishments when it comes to proving they do provide quality education and training. The themes of what will be measured and the quality of the student intake are prevalent amongst the concerns voiced and it can be surmised that the uncertainty that staff feel about this issue is behind the catastrophic opinions that are given. As has been seen already from the above, when the staff do not understand a system or an issue they react by rejecting it and imagining a series of difficulties that may or may not materialise.

The third theme that came out of the responses was that such a linking will improve the quality of the college because it will focus management onto the issues that need to be addressed. The foregoing analysis has identified the lack of management focus and its neglect of systems as being a major problem for the college, which the linking of funding to quality may redress. However, the refocusing will be through an outside agency acting in the place of the consumer, and not a planned strategy that has been internally recognised as being desirable. The significance is that when an outsider

forces action on management they seem to become focused only on that issue to the neglect of other issues that should be of equal importance. It could be argued that it is precisely because of the demands of the FEFC for their data that other internal systems have not been developed to meet the needs of the college.

The data provides support for the objective of the study which was to assess whether the staff share the same understanding of the importance of operating systems to the college. The correlation analysis indicates that there is a shared understanding of the importance of the systems but that the staff do not consider the systems important to their jobs. The second question asked whether the staff recognise the critical importance of some systems to the college. The data supports the view that they do but they are deeply concerned that they are not being listened to when they provide feedback to management about systems non-operation or lack of efficacy. The third element of the question about whether the systems are easy to use comes out as 'no' because of a lack of knowledge and training by the staff. Overall, the lack of management leadership is a major issue that appears to need redress if the systems are to be seen by the staff as important to them and their jobs and to improve the quality of the college.

Chapter 5

Review, Discussion and Implications.

5: Introduction.

This chapter is divided into five sections that will consider issues arising from the data summarised in chapter 4 with a discussion and consideration of the findings of the study, a conclusion based on the themes that have developed from the issues, a consideration of the practical implications arising from the study, consideration of the problems and limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

The purpose of this study was to investigate and evaluate the role of operational systems in a college of Further Education. Since the incorporation of colleges in 1993 there has been recurrent criticism about the role of management in colleges with several FEFC Chief Inspector (FEFC Inspection Reports 97/20, 98/13, 65/00) reports identifying a lack of management training as being at the root of the problem. Operational systems can be seen as the interface between management and the managed; how the systems are designed, managed and operate can give insights in to the management processes at work

The study's main aim was to examine staff attitudes, perceptions and personal experiences of their regular use of college operating systems. The study looked at staff perceptions of the term 'accountability' and what it meant to them to be accountable, the familiarity of using systems at the college and the degree to which systems contributed, in their opinions, to the college's strategic aims and objectives. The study also looked at the level of help in using operating systems the staff received, its availability and nature. Attitudes to effectiveness and efficiency were evaluated to see the degree of correlation between the staff's conceptual understandings of the terms and the definitions usually attached by public service organisations. Lastly, staff attitudes to quality in the FE context and to the proposal to link quality to funding were sought to evaluate the effect this proposal might have on the college. The objectives of the study were:

1) To examine whether there is a correlation between what staff see as systems that are important to the college and the level of importance the staff attach to those systems for themselves.

2) To examine whether staff have a conception of accountability and how it affects them in their day-to-day work.

3) To examine whether staff can discriminate between well-structured operating systems that help the college achieve its strategic aims and objectives and those systems that do not.

4) To examine whether staff can identify the type of help they receive in using operating systems and how that help can assist them to do their jobs better.

5) To examine whether college staff have a clear understanding of the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency.

6) To examine whether the college staff understand quality systems and that they understand the implications of linking quality to funding.

The research question was focused on the operating systems of the college and was stated as:

Do the Senior Management Team and the college staff share the same understanding of the importance of certain operating systems to the college?

The research question was deconstructed further to generate the following questions.

Do the staff recognise the critical importance of systems to the success of the college?

Are the systems easy for the staff to use and operating efficiently?

The study used twenty-four subjects who were drawn from the staff in the college both horizontally from across the ten schools, administration, support and maintenance staff, and vertically from Caretaking to the Senior Management Team. Two subjects were drawn from each section in the college where possible.

All of the data subjects were asked to complete an author-developed questionnaire that required both quantitative and qualitative responses. The quantitative questions were answered using a five point Likert-type scale with 1 indicating the most important operating system and

5 the least important system. Staff were also asked to indicate whether systems could be categorized as being Key or Major. The quantitative responses of the research group were compared to those agreed by an expert panel made up of Senior Management Team members using Spearman's Rank Correlation Co-efficient and statistical testing using a t-test analysis at the .05 level of significance.

The qualitative responses were collected in a face-to-face, tape-recorded interview with each of the subjects. The questions were designed to explore the subjects' personal experience of systems operation in the college, the level of support they had received in using systems and their understanding of the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency. The questionnaire also probed the subjects' understanding of the concept of quality in education. The responses were transcribed by the researcher and agreed by the subject prior to being analysed. All of the participants were willing subjects, no names were required and they were assured of confidentiality.

5.2: Issues arising from the data analysis.

Evaluation of the data analysed in Chapter 4 gives rise to twelve issues that will need to be addressed if the Management and Staff of the college are to work together effectively to the benefit of the students and college. These issues have been grouped under four main headings of management issues, staff issues, joint management and staff issues, and systems issues.

Each headline issue has been further deconstructed to allow reflection on the underlying issues as seen by the researcher, and the implications for the college arising from these are then considered. The following tables summarise the issues, the underlying issues and the implications that arise from the issues. These are then expanded and developed in the following text.

Management Issues

Table 5.1

Management Issues.	Underlying Issues as seen by researcher.	Perceived Implications.
1) Management of college systems.	1) Management want to manage but lack the necessary skills and do not acknowledge the deficiency. 2) Government has given management the right to manage and created the managerial environment for it to happen.	• Without proper training in the job managers may continue to struggle to make the right decisions for the college. • Unless the SMT can show management and collective leadership ability staff may not have faith in them.
2) Senior management rejection of responsibility for operating systems.	1) Systems are not seen as important to the manager's every day operations. 2) Managers do not see how systems help to achieve the aims and objectives. 3) Quality systems means having systems that are both effective and efficient. 4) Systems are created to satisfy a need for a system as identified by outside agencies such as FEFC and not internal needs.	• If the management don't have conviction in the operating systems then staff may not either. • The continued rejection of responsibility for systems by management may confirm to staff that they do not need to worry themselves too much with using them accurately. • The quality of the systems could continue to deteriorate with corresponding poor scores from the FEFC and other funding agencies. • Possible loss of income if quality is linked to funding.
3) Management accountability.	1) The management have to comply with outside agency requirements but appears to resent the obligation. 2) Systems could be set up so that accountability is a natural by-product of the system. 3) The individual and collective accountability of management.	• Accountability might be shifted from the management to staff in an effort to reduce the culpability of the management for their inaction. • This could further alienate the staff and further define the division between the managers and the managed. • There appears to be a growing division between the SMT and the other staff groups in the college.

Source: Data respondents.

5.2.1) Management of college systems.

There is a recurrent theme, evident from the comments made by the respondents, that the Senior Management Team are not managing the college systems and providing a lead to the staff in maintaining standards of use. In this context, leadership means the whole Senior Management Team providing a coherent lead in behaviour. There are remarks from staff to the effect that it is futile to pass on comments and complaints about the systems to the management because they will not do anything to remedy the situation. Such evident inaction is disheartening to staff who express a level of concern about the college, the students and their co-workers and want to see the college improve, develop and thrive. Inconsistencies in the behaviour of the SMT in their management of systems is damaging to staff relations with staff

taking a fatalistic view point that management will not take action to remedy problems even where it is apparent that standards of service are being undermined by their inaction.

The underlying reason for the managers' poor performance could be seen as their lack of management training and the rejection of any suggestion that they may need to develop their own abilities beyond the narrow confines of the subject specialisms they once taught. The government, through the introduction of a system of managerialism, has given the college management the right to manage but their lack of training in the skills of management reduce the effectiveness of the managers and negate the benefits from such a policy. To the observer the arrogance that educational managers display by their refusal to seek training to make them more effective in their jobs could be seen as disqualifying them from being responsible for the multi-million pound organisations that colleges have become.

The implications for the Senior Management Team and for other levels of management within college can be seen to have two dimensions. The first is that failure to seek training in management skills could force the FEFC, and other agencies, to link funding to the introduction and implementation of management training programmes for the top layers of management in colleges. Such a development may not be seen as unlikely when one considers that the principle of linking funding to quality can easily be extended to a whole raft of activities that the funding agencies, and by implication the government, want to see introduced.

The second implication of this issue is that the SMT could be seen as amateurish and unfocused by the Staff unless they can show a high level of management and leadership ability. Where a problem with a system has been identified there is a need for decisive action to indicate to the staff that something is being done to remedy the problem. Such action may not be one hundred per cent successful but some action is preferable to doing nothing and hoping the problem will go away. The result will be that staff will develop faith in the SMT as it proves that it does have the courage to listen, act and resolve problems decisively and, in time, competently.

It may be seen that the apparent poor standard of leadership displayed by the managers of the college and reported by the respondents in managing systems leads to the next issue, which is the rejection of responsibility for systems by the managers.

5.2.2) Senior management rejection of responsibility for operating systems.

The evidence for this issue is the neglect of systems by the Senior Management Team and the apparent lack of interest by managers when staff members report problems with the operating systems. The view that senior managers do not appreciate the importance of the operating systems and how important they are to ensuring the college operates smoothly clearly comes through from the staff comments. Systems are not seen as being important enough to warrant management attention so are ignored as long as they do not move too far from their original purpose. Once again the SMT's lack of management training is, perhaps, the reason why they do not appear to understand how systems help the college achieve its aims and objectives by focusing action on the functions that can provide assistance in achieving them.

The third point is that having quality systems does not only mean having a system to monitor quality but also having systems that can be audited and confirmed as providing a service to the user. For a system to be efficacious to the college it should be both effective in what it is required to do and efficient in the amount of effort needed to achieve that outcome. It is quite obvious from the data that this description cannot be applied to many of the college systems and that deficiency must be the fault of the SMT.

The last underlying issue from the data is that systems are established to satisfy the demands of outside agencies such as the FEFC rather than the needs of the college to manage effectively. The results from the fifth null-hypothesis (see Chapter 4) examined the level of correlation between the SMT's rankings of the systems and the staff's estimation of their importance to their jobs. The result indicated that the staff rejected the notion that operating systems are important to their jobs. It is possible that this rejection by staff is because the management are themselves dismissing the operating systems as being unimportant. An interpretation of these results would be that the staff and the SMT do not have a synchronistic understanding of those systems that are important to the college.

Implications of the rejection of responsibility for operating systems by management appear to have four aspects. First, if the management do not have conviction in the operating systems then staff may not either, and the systems will probably not be effective in helping the college achieve its aims and objectives. Second, the SMT through their rejection of responsibility for the systems signal to the staff that operating the systems accurately, if at all, is not important

and the staff can probably ignore them. Thirdly, the quality of the systems may continue to deteriorate and the college will, as a result, achieve poor scores in future inspection reports. Fourth, if the FEFC do link an element of funding to quality there is the possibility that there will be a loss of income to the college where management systems are evaluated and found inadequate for their intended purpose.

The college operating systems are meant to help the organisation operate smoothly, effectively and efficiently, and to provide an audit trail so that the management can account for what has been happening in the college. The management's need to be accountable for their actions gives rise to the third of the management issues that have been identified.

5.2.3) Management accountability.

The Senior Management Team are accountable to the Governors of the college, to outside agencies such as the FEFC, and can be seen as being accountable to the staff and students of the college. There is limited accountability to the local community although the college does have a role to play in that it supplies educational services and employment to the area.

The data identified that accountability can be seen as being both procedural and compliance. Procedural accountability can be seen as being built into activities and non-confrontational whilst compliance accountability appears to be resented by those who are forced to provide evidence of their activities to others. The requirement to be accountable to the consumer and the government for funds provided to finance education is linked to the rise of managerialism in education and the construction of a government inspired consensus that education needs external regulation. The need to be accountable and to be seen to be accountable has required new systems to account for the resources that are received from central government and for the actions and decisions that are taken by management. The stresses on management to comply with accountability demands are considerable. The difficulty would appear to be setting up systems in the college that build in management accountability so that it is procedural rather than compliant within the definition of compliance accountability given above.

The implication of making the management accountable to agencies and consumer groups is that accountability may become a justification for actions rather than an accounting for actions. Where the management is constantly forced to justify what they have done, bureaucratic systems grow and are tightly applied to reduce the chances that management face criticism for

their actions. It might be conjectured that the growth of bureaucracy pushes down accountability to the staff in an effort to reduce the culpability of the management for, in the case of the college, the management's inaction in tackling the inadequacies of the operating systems. Such an action would almost certainly alienate the staff and further define the division that appears to be growing between the managed and the managers within the college.

There appears to be an increasing divide between the management of the college and the rest of the workforce both academic and administrative. This division seems to derive from the growth of a managerialistic philosophy in education where managers have the legal and moral right to manage. Similar divisions can be seen in Health Care where professional managers manage the professional health care workers. Educational staff are increasingly finding their professional status under threat from a loss of autonomy and the need to justify their actions to the consumer. The next section will explore some of the issues affecting staff that have arisen from the analysis of the data.

Staff Issues

Table 5.2

Staff Issues.	Underlying Issues as seen by researcher.	Implications.
4) Staff conviction that operating systems are not important to their jobs.	1) This would appear to be due to the management not communicating the importance of several of the systems to the college and hence to the staff. 2) When management neglect a system it signals that this is not an important system and can be ignored. 3) If management want staff to operate systems properly they must train them and make them aware of the need to operate the systems. 4) The division between management and staff makes the need for good systems more important due to staff turnover.	• Staff may need to develop a clear understanding of what is important to the college and themselves and what is not important. • The management may have a clear idea of what is important but this may not be the same. With such a division there appears to be no commitment by staff and it is difficult to see how the college can improve its service to its students. • The fault appears to lie with the management for not communicating the importance of the systems. • If this continues the college may find it hard to achieve its aims and objectives and could fall short in providing an effective and efficient service.
5) Staff rejection of responsibility for systems operations.	1) Cultural change from collegiate to managerial has drawn a definite line between what is staff responsibility and what is management responsibility. 2) This is an on-going process, as	• The academic staff appear to feel alienated by the management position and their loss of status. • The rejection by staff of responsibility for systems appears to provide evidence of the

	indicated by respondents, of staff drawing a distinction between what is non-working time and what is work time. 3) Attacks on professional status makes the division more clear as the staff work a 9 – 5 pattern. 4) Personal attacks on staff when faults or problems with systems are reported to management. 5) Feeling of futility when nothing is done to remedy failing systems.	changing culture of education where the professional no longer has power. • The administration seems to have grown in power and they are seen as the constant factor in the college with the academic staff, even the permanent staff, viewed as transient. • With a loss of status academic staff appear to defend their position by drawing, ever more starkly, the distinction between work and non-work to compartmentalise their professional lives. • Such a division may be a precursor to working for more than one employer where it will be necessary to draw a clear division between working for one employer and then another all in the same week.
6) Lack of staff training in using college operating systems.	1) The college would consider itself a generous provider of staff development but it is still not making sure that staff can operate the systems that ensure the college will work properly. 2) Management do not consider the systems important and therefore staff do not need training. 3) Training, where offered, is seen cynically, by staff, as complying with IIP requirements rather than a genuine attempt to train staff.	• Expecting staff to operate new systems without some form of training may be seen as unreasonable. • As the organisation becomes more bureaucratic there are more systems that may need to be explained with greater potential for errors. • By involving the staff in the operation of the systems, letting them know which systems are most important and why, greater accuracy in the systems operations may be achieved and improved services offered to the students.
7) Staff accountability.	1) Staff are accountable to a wide group of people. 2) There needs to be some consensus about accountability for staff. 3) How far does it extend and to whom?	• Clarity of accountability may ensure that staff are congruent with the organisation's aims and objectives. • It could possibly help the staff define where their loyalties lie and their place in the hierarchy of loyalty.

Source: Data respondents.

5.2.4) Staff conviction that operating systems are not important to their jobs.

The third null-hypothesis (see Chapter 4) examined the level of correlation between the SMT's Key and Major benchmark for the systems and the staff's estimate of their importance to their jobs. The degree of correlation was calculated as .443 with a level of statistical significance of .113, which is outside the acceptable range. The results from this correlation and the low level of statistical significance means that the null-hypothesis is retained which indicates that the staff do not see those operating systems identified by the SMT as being Key or Major as being important to their jobs.

The reason why the staff should reject the idea that the college operating systems are important to their jobs would appear to be due to several related issues. The first is that the SMT have not communicated to the staff that certain systems are crucial to the well-being of the college. This can be seen from the responses to the question on the difficulties of completing the questionnaire. The question was an indirect method of checking on staff awareness of the operating systems in the college. The results indicated that the staff do not, generally, think too much about how the college operates until it impinges on their day-to-day operations. When asked to define between a Key and a Major system the respondents did feel able to identify between them but not without some difficulty. It may not be seen as unreasonable to expect that staff members should know that certain systems have a direct impact on the college finances. However, if the significance has not been communicated to them they probably would not know.

The second issue returns to a previous point made above that management have neglected systems operations. If the management do not treat the systems operations seriously and take corrective action when faults are reported then staff will take a similar line and ignore the systems.

The third issue is that the growing division between management and the workforce requires reliable well-designed systems for the effective and efficient operation of the college. It is also essential that the staff be trained in the operation of the systems so that they can achieve a suitable level of accuracy and quality in their delivery.

There are several implications that arise from the staff's ignorance about the importance of the operating systems. There is no evidence of shared commitment between the Senior Management Team and the staff. The fault appears to lie with the college management for not communicating the importance of the systems to the staff and further indicates the poor level of collective leadership in the SMT. This is especially true about the Key operating systems of Individual Student Record, Registers and the Quality system, as these carry a financial penalty if they are not correct. If the management does not take action to correct the situation the college may find it hard to achieve its aims and objectives to provide an effective and efficient service, with financial penalties the inevitable result.

The second implication is that as the division between the staff and the management continues to grow, the staff may develop a clear distinction between what they see as important to them and their students. The SMT will find this distinction difficult to overcome once it becomes entrenched without careful, costly and time consuming staff development activities to overcome staff antipathy.

The belief held by staff that the operating systems are not important to their jobs can be seen as linked to a belief that they have no responsibility for the operation of the systems. This issue will be examined in the section.

5.2.5) Staff rejection of responsibility for systems operations.

This finding is interesting because the staff reject the notion that they have any responsibility for the operating systems of the college. Why should that be?

The incorporation of colleges in 1993 led to a cultural change for college staff. Prior to 1993 the academic staff were the central focus of the college. Professional teachers were the people who made decisions about education and dictated the direction that education was taking. Within the college and supporting the lecturing staff there was a small administration that provided a link to the Local Education Authority (LEA) at County Hall where the main support services were located and shared with all of the other educational establishments that were funded through the LEA.

Post incorporation the support services that had been provided centrally through the LEA had to be supplied locally and this meant employing, directly, a large number of administrative staff. New contracts of service were introduced that increased teaching contact for lecturers, reduced annual leave and reduced the generous severance benefits they had once enjoyed. Over time, government has lowered the funding for colleges and the number of teaching staff has been reduced to improve productivity. The use of part-time and temporary teaching staff to increase employee flexibility has further reduced full-time employment in the sector. The lecturers' status, in common with many other professional workers in the public sector, has progressively been eroded from being a valued professional to just another employee of the college.

The change from a collegiate system of organising the college to a managerial system has given the SMT the power to manage. However, there appears to be a definite and growing division between the managers and administration and the teaching staff. This is apparent from the staff's insistence that it is the SMT's responsibility to make sure that the college systems operate properly and their rejection that the systems are anything to do with them. Further evidence, albeit indirect, comes from the way the staff draw a distinction between working and non-working time like holidays and weekends. Some staff insist on taking tea breaks and lunch breaks, to which they are entitled, but which they never used to do, regarding it all as working time.

Part of the problem appears to be that teaching staff do not feel valued when they make comments about the operation of the systems. A characteristic of managerial systems is that when the system is criticised its operators will defend it even when the system is plainly suffering from faults and the complainant is offering advice in good faith. There are several instances commented on in the data where staff, in an attempt to help students or potential students, have offered comments to the administration and been harshly rebuffed. Such attacks on the staff do not encourage them to take an active role in improving the college and the service it provides.

The data has an underlying feeling that comes through from the staff that there is a futility in complaining to the management about the operation of the college systems. Nothing is done when you complain so it is pointless telling anyone about it. A fatalistic acceptance of poor service is built up that becomes a self fulfilling prophesy of impending catastrophe amongst the staff that undermines its willingness to take an active role in maintaining and improving service levels.

The division that appears to be growing between the management and staff can be seen as having serious implications. The rejection by the staff of responsibility for systems operation may prevent the systems from being made to operate successfully. The culture that allows staff who complain to be attacked personally for giving feedback cannot thrive and will continue to make the same mistakes as before as Mill (1859) pointed out:

If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong they lose the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error.

Mill (1859)

In essence Mill is saying that the systems will not change unless the people who operate them challenge them and actively encourage others to challenge them also. Where a challenge is made and found to be wrong that can strengthen the system too by showing that it operates correctly. In the parlance of management this can be called a win-win situation.

Staff are drawing a distinction between working and non-working time and this appears to be a growing trend that in some way allows the staff to manage their relationship with the employer. If the trend continues to develop, as seems likely, then staff will have lost their professional status and become artisans delivering a day's work for a day's pay, and the profession will be the poorer for it. Some may see the ability to draw a clear division between working time and non-working time as a pre-cursor to working for more than one employer as worsening conditions of service in education erode job security.

5.2.6) The lack of staff training in using college operating systems.

The evidence from the data identifies that the staff are not operating systems properly and that there is a lack of training for internal processes. Why should this be when the college would probably consider itself to be a generous provider in terms of staff development funding?

The staff can apply for financial assistance to attend courses to improve both their academic skills and to pursue non-job related interests such as a foreign language. Such staff development is essential for the college to maintain its Investors in People (IIP) certification. The problem is that this type of staff development is not the same as staff training. Staff training concentrates on giving staff the skills to carry out their job tasks in a prescribed manner so that the required standard of performance can be maintained. Staff training could be expected to broaden the staff members' experience and make them better at their jobs and more aware of the role they play in the college operations. Training in the wider implications of the systems operation would, it might be expected, encourage the staff member to be more harmonious with the management's imperatives and create a shared commitment to achieving them.

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Training in systems operations is not carried out on any systematic basis in the college and might be seen as symptomatic of the management's disinterest in the operations of the college. One academic staff respondent who had to arrange cover for his class so that he could attend a training session gave an indication of how staff training is viewed. The prospect of arranging for someone to cover his class, supply the work to be done in his absence and to mark any assignment that was issued was so daunting that he did not bother to go to the training sessions even though he knew they were worth while and pertinent to his job. It can be surmised that this one respondent has colleagues who have similarly been put off seeking training by the prospect of finding cover for their absence.

It might be expected that the administration staff would not be affected in the same way, but a respondent who worked in the administration found that he was in a similar position because of demands to complete work and not wanting to let people down.

It might well be that the underlying issue here is that there is insufficient staff employed to take up the slack when staff need to have time away from the normal working routine for essential training. Such issues have been discussed in other places and other publications and might well be the subject of further research.

The implications from the foregoing can be seen to be threefold. Firstly, it may be considered unreasonable to expect staff to operate systems effectively and efficiently if they are not trained in their operation. The result will be that systems will continue to be badly operated and not meet their operational requirements for quality.

The second implication is that as the organisation becomes more bureaucratic there are more systems. The systems need to be explained to the staff so that they can operate them properly or errors may proliferate making the system costly, inefficient and, ultimately, rejected.

The third implication for this issue is that of shared commitment between the SMT and staff to the college goals. It has already been noted above that the goals of the SMT and the rest of the staff, both academic and administrative, do not coincide. It cannot be a coincidence that the level of staff training is low and staff commitment is equally low. Unless the staff are properly trained and informed of the importance of the college operating systems it might be expected

that the low level of shared commitment between the SMT and the staff will continue and grow making it difficult to raise the quality of the college operations.

5.2.7) Staff accountability.

A staff member's place in the hierarchy does not appear to be relevant to the conception of accountability since it is a sense of a duty to act responsibly rather than having a particular role that defines that duty. However, the question of being accountable for actions indicated two differing views of this concept. The first was the idea that being accountable is procedural, incorporated into the job and internalised by the staff member. The second was that of compliance where the staff member has to prove that an obligation is being met. The role and scope of both of these aspects of accountability can be seen to have an impact on the day-to-day operations of the college.

Procedural accountability is the normal day-to-day accountability that can be internalised and is the reporting and feedback operations that staff are expected to carry out as part of their duties. This form of accountability is very broad, with the academic staff member accountable to students, managers, Internal Verifiers, the employers of students, the parents of students and just about anybody who asks for information about their work. One could say that the academic staff member is accountable to everybody and anybody who requires some form of accounting. Failure to supply information and justification can bring censure and the threat of disciplinary action.

Compliance accountability appears to be where a staff member is required to be accountable to internal managers who are not direct line managers or to outside bodies such as the FEFC or the external validating bodies like EDEXCEL or RSA. The accountability in this case is externalised, extra to the job and resented by those asked to account for their actions to another person or body and having no bearing on the requirements of the staff and students of the college. This form of accountability has grown and can be seen to be a direct result of the government's desire to increase the accountability of education to the consumer. The amount of bureaucracy is often what causes the lecturing staff in particular to resent compliance accountability and is where action is needed to incorporate the need to be accountable into the normal working activities of the staff and in particular the academic staff.

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The implications of clarifying the role of accountability may be that staff can comply with demands for accountability without suffering the stress that sudden requests for information can cause. By clarifying the staff accountability and bounding it they would have a clearer idea of where their loyalties lie and to whom they should account for their actions. Clarity of accountability could also ensure that the staff are congruent with the college's aims and objectives by setting out a clear hierarchy of loyalty.

Joint Issues

Table 5.3

Joint Issues.	Underlying Issues as seen by researcher.	Implications.
8) The absence of a shared understanding of which systems are important to the college.	1) This reflects back to staff perceptions and can be seen as poor communication of this information to the staff by management. 2) Staff concentrate on those systems that affect them immediately. 3) Negative feedback from systems operations and personal experience reinforces the individual and student needs rather than the college needs.	• Greater emphasis may be needed on seeing the whole picture so that staff don't forget that the college is a system that relies on the members to play their part individually and collectively. • There appears to be a need for this to be emphasised to all staff at all levels. • Without a shared commitment to the college goals there may be little hope of improving the college's performance.
9) The absence of a shared understanding of the meaning of effectiveness and efficiency.	1) Lack of management training confirms the absence of a shared understanding of these terms. 2) No one is setting out what is meant by these terms.	• Without an agreement of what it means to be effective and efficient the college may find it hard to devise systems that satisfy the needs of the students, staff and management.
10) Dichotomous concepts of quality between academic staff and outside agencies.	1) Staff see quality as the end product. 2) The FEFC want to see that evidenced by documents. 3) Staff do not want a bureaucratic system with the emphasis on documentary evidence. 4) Lack of training in quality concepts is possibly the root cause.	• Unless staff can be convinced of the need to provide suitable documentation the college may never achieve exceptional grades in inspections. • The result may be cuts in the college income when the FEFC link funding to quality. • This despite the fact that quality probably exists in the courses that are provided.

Source: Data respondents.

5.2.8) Absence of a shared understanding of which systems are important to the college.

The lack of a shared commitment to the college aims and objectives between the SMT and the rest of the staff has already been commented on above but this section will concentrate on the issues relating directly to its absence.

The first issue is the absence of communication of the significance of certain systems to the college by the senior managers of the college. The quantitative analysis of rankings evaluated the SMT estimate of Key and Major operating systems and the staff's ranking of their importance to the college. The result indicates a moderately strong support for the belief that the SMT and staff share an understanding of the importance of the operating systems. The comments made by the staff indicate that whilst they know that systems are important they do not know the significance of those systems or the importance of operating them accurately. So, while the SMT and the staff do share an understanding of the importance of the systems, the staff do not know why the systems are important and to which systems they should pay most attention.

The second underlying concern stems directly from the first in that the staff, not having a clear lead from the SMT on which systems are most important to the college, concentrate on those systems that they see as being most important to themselves. This aspect can be seen in the quantitative result for the sixth null-hypothesis, which examined the level of correlation between the staff's estimate of the importance of the systems to the college and to the staff member's job. The result indicates that the staff consider the importance of the systems to the college to be close to their own estimate of their importance to their jobs even though they have no idea of the level of importance of the systems to the college.

Systems that staff consider important will tend to be those that have an immediate impact on what they do on a day-to-day basis. Thus ordering materials for a class is seen as being more important than marking the register because it has a greater impact on the lecturer's everyday actions. When the staff member is asked to check the details on an ISR for accuracy the task is pushed to the back of the pile because the staff member does not know the importance, or the financial implications, to the college of making sure that the document is accurate. This preference for dealing with immediate problems is reinforced by the actions of the management, as can be seen in the next concern of positive feedback from systems operations.

Positive system feedback occurs when the staff member who disregards its operation identifies a system as being unimportant. Feedback, or even the lack of it, reinforces the belief and the staff member transfers interest to another system that gives a more satisfactory response. The nature of the positive feedback is that the staff involvement in the systems that give satisfaction through the interaction increases the reasons to deal with those systems. That

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system that gives no feedback or appears to have no purpose decreases the reasons to interact with it to the point where it ceases to be of importance. If there is no consequence from ignoring the system then that further reinforces the staff member's conviction that it was right to ignore the system and he will continue to do so.

The effects of such positive feedback can be seen where the staff have complained to the management about the operation of a system but no action has been taken to remedy the situation. Complaining to management obviously had no affect so it is pointless complaining. The staff member will concentrate on what he or she can influence and not bother with the things that cannot be changed.

The implications for these issues can be seen in two ways. The first is that without a shared commitment between the SMT and the staff the college may find it hard to improve its internal and external quality performance. Extolling the staff to do better, be more diligent over form filling and follow through systems is pointless without some understanding by staff of why it should be done.

The second implication is that it may not be possible to improve the standard of internal systems performance if staff are ignorant of the importance of the systems and their personal role in the college systems in the widest context. The college is a system that relies on the staff to play their part both individually and collectively. Without precognition of what that role is and how they fit in to the system it is unlikely that the staff will be able to improve on their actions.

5.2.9) The absence of a shared understanding of effectiveness and efficiency.

The responses from the data subjects clearly indicated that the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency were not clearly understood by the college staff, with only one person able to identify the meanings. The apparent lack of understanding amongst the staff for the distinction between these twin factors of systems operations is confusing. Both words can repeatedly be found in the published literature from FEFC and the achievement of an effective and efficient education service is one of its major aims. The college itself has the phrase effective and efficient arising frequently in its policy documents, yet the staff do not have a clear idea of what it means to be effective and efficient in public service terms. It can be surmised that this collective lack of understanding of these terms is another example of how the training of staff

within the college does not ensure the effective and efficient operation of systems. Further, without some common understanding of what it means to be effective and efficient no attempt at any valid description of what is meant by internal effectiveness and efficiency can be made.

The implication for this issue is that it is almost impossible to make the college effective in targeting its aims and objectives and being efficient in achieving them without some understanding of what exactly is intended. Attempts to make the college effective and efficient may fail purely because there is no shared understanding what these two terms mean and the practical action needed to bring them about.

The problems faced by the college over the issue of what is effective and what is efficient can be seen, in part, in the next issue of quality and its different meanings.

5.2.10) Dichotomous concepts of quality between academic staff and outside agencies.

Quality appears to mean different things to college staff and to the funding agencies, being the quality of the teaching and the quality of the systems to prove that quality exists. Of the two, the quality of the teaching might be considered most important to the academic staff who have personal standards and ethics of behaviour that force them to deliver a high quality learning experience. To prove that quality exists it is considered necessary to have some form of documentation, which is what the funding agencies require, and it is this aspect of quality systems that the academic staff seem to dislike.

It is possible to see the link to accountability, above, in that the accountability required is proof of compliance to a set of standards set up by a body outside the academic's usual sphere of interest. The very act of being required to comply with FEFC standards appears to create unwillingness in the staff member to provide the documentation. The suggestion being made by requiring proof is that the professional lecturer is not capable of using a standard of professionalism that will deliver a quality learning experience for the student without monitoring by management. The requirement for staff to prove that they are providing a quality product is in line with the development of a managerialist philosophy in education that has sought to make professionals more accountable to their clients. The resentment demonstrated by academic staff to the control required by FEFC and implemented by the college management is similar to that seen in other public services, such as the NHS, where the power exercised by the professional staff has been removed in favour of consumerism.

The reduction in the power over education once held by academic professionals has led to resentment and resistance to management control. However, the FEFC proposal to link funding to quality will mean even greater emphasis will be placed on proving that quality education and training is delivered, and will require staff to operate the systems with a high level of accuracy. Staff training in quality systems would appear to be the key to the successful continuance of funding when and if this proposal is enacted, although it could be argued that staff training is needed regardless of any outside compulsion from the funding agencies. The formulation of the system would also appear to be important so that accountability is built into the process and thereby negates the resistance and resentment that staff have to compliance with FEFC rules.

This issue appears to have two main implications for the college. The first is that unless the staff can be convinced of the need to provide the necessary documentation, the college may never achieve exceptional grades in funding body inspections. This is despite the fact that quality might be present in the provision and demonstrated through student retention and achievement.

The second implication is that unless quality provision can be proved in a way that is satisfactory to the funding bodies, the college funding may be cut as a penalty. The knock-on effect of cutting funding does seem to be self defeating since if the funding is cut it is likely that further problems will surface as staff move on to other jobs and the funds are not available to replace them. Whether the government, in framing the proposal to link funding to quality, has thought through the possible implications of cutting funding to a college that already has problems is not clear but will no doubt be tested at some time in the future.

Systems Issues

Table 5.4

Systems Issues.	Underlying Issues as seen by researcher.	Implications.
11) Systems not being improved when identified as having problems.	1) Managerialism defends itself by attacking its detractors. 2) Personal attacks on staff in the college who have pointed out problems with the net result that staff are reluctant to pass on complaints. 3) Management indifference compounds the situation by inaction.	• Management indifference to poor systems operations may sustain the situation rather than improve it. • A culture that allows personal attacks on the people who point out errors may never learn from its mistakes because it defends itself rather than listening to the feedback.
12) Systems helping the college achieve its aims and objectives.	1) Evidence that the major systems are not contributing to achieving the aims and objectives. E.g., Registers, MIU. 2) Lack of management understanding of the role of systems. 3) Poor leadership through poor systems management.	• Systems do not appear to be helping the college in all but a few instances and where extra impetus has been given due to circumstances such as inspections. • Quality provision as a routine may not happen until the management take operating systems seriously and concentrate on making them work effectively and efficiently.

Source: Data respondents.

5.2.11) Systems not being improved when identified as having problems.

Systems within the college have improved since incorporation but not enough to give the Staff confidence in their operation. The SMT appear to lack focus on systems like the register and management information system, which clearly do not work efficiently or effectively, and seem reluctant to take control of the situation. The lack of attention by the SMT appears to undermine the staff's confidence in both the systems and the management's ability to manage the college. Such neglect also appears to reinforce the apparent lack of leadership in the college by the senior managers.

The majority view of the interviewed staff was that the SMT, which includes the Principal, is responsible for ensuring that the college operating systems work correctly. Only four of the staff considered that it was their responsibility in any form. The Staff appear to be refusing to take responsibility for systems operations and are pushing responsibility upwards to the SMT. This may be because the staff feel they have not had a role in setting up the systems and the systems should, therefore, be maintained by those who did have a role in setting them up. It could also be that by distancing themselves from taking responsibility for the systems staff feel

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that they are protecting themselves from a sense of culpability for their ineffective and inefficient working.

When staff do try to take a role in improving the operation of systems they are, often, rebuffed by the operators. Those people with responsibility for the system in the administration will enter into a classic managerialist defensive mode and attack the staff member at a personal level rather than admit that there could be anything wrong with the system. Such action can be so off-putting that the staff member will not intervene again regardless of the situation. John Stuart Mill (1859) identified that there is a tyranny of prevailing opinion that is difficult to challenge and which will defend itself against the individual who speaks out against the majority or accepted view point:

> There needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling;
> against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own
> ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the
> development, and, if possible, prevent the formation, of any individuality not in harmony
> with its ways, and compel all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its
> own.
>
> Mill (1859)

The result of the failure to address system faults is that staff may devise unofficial back-up systems that duplicate and double their workload but provide a safety net without which the college could not operate. The responses from the data subjects also point to a sense of futility that staff feel when they report a problem with a system that causes them to assume a downward spiral of despair and demotivation. Continued attacks on staff could undermine their morale and promote a climate that does not engender a shared approach to solving problems in service provision. The powerful response that is elicited by a critical comment prevents action being taken to remedy problems and so disadvantages the students that the systems are meant to help.

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5.2.12) Systems helping the college achieve its aims and objectives.

An aspect that arose from the data collection was that staff were willing to make an assessment about the efficacy of the college's systems even though most admitted that they had only an overview of the college's aims and objectives. However, it is likely that, although the respondents could not quote the aims and objectives exactly, they do have a perception of them and can make judgements about whether the systems are helping the college based on their personal experiences.

Two issues arise under this heading and will be explored here. The first is that there is clear evidence that certain systems are not helping the college achieve its aims and objectives. Two systems considered to be key, the Register system and the Management Information System (MIS), are repeatedly identified as not working properly, whilst the non-key Annual Leave Booking procedure is the system most commonly identified as being of almost no value to the college. The anger and frustration that these systems engendered in the respondents was palpable and comments about being demotivated by them were made frequently.

The second issue stems from the SMT's lack of action to correct the systems even though the problems are well known. The reluctance displayed by the SMT to take positive action reinforces the staff's conviction that the senior managers are weak and irresolute in their desire to see the college improve its service to both internal and external customers.

The implication for the college that stems from these two issues has two dimensions. The first is that the staff appear to have lost faith in the internal operation of the college. Systems are by-passed or ignored and alternative systems are created to make up for the failings of the official systems. The Staff realize that the systems do not help or are of limited value to the college in achieving its aims and objectives and can safely be ignored. Such a belief may be fallacious since the repercussions might not be instant but occur at some point in the future and may have serious effects perhaps of a financial nature. However, the lack of feedback of the result of their actions or inactions further reinforces their belief that the system is of no value. The quality of the provision cannot be improved until the SMT improve the support systems that underpin the whole structure of delivery. The improvement is not only about the working of the systems but also the people who operate the systems as it is these people who act as the interface between the system and the rest of the staff in the college.

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The second dimension is that the SMT appear to be weak and without real ability to manage the college. When the management ask the staff to improve the quality of the courses staff point to the poor operation of the systems and ask why they should bother since it is clear that the management have not bothered to improve the operation of the systems that support their efforts. It can probably be said that the quality provision of service as a routine will not happen until the SMT take operating systems seriously and concentrate on making them work effectively and efficiently.

The issues identified above and their implications have recurrent themes that keep appearing, although the themes have different dimensions to them that will be explored in the conclusion.

5.3: Conclusion.

There appear to be three related findings that develop from the above discussion and which seem to indicate why the college operating systems do not answer their purposes. These are the lack of staff training in the use of operating systems, the poor management and neglect of operating systems and, perhaps the most important, the lack of management leadership by the SMT. These three related findings, together, form the main finding of this investigation that it is the managerial philosophy of the senior management that shapes the internal workings of the organisation. These findings will be explained below.

Staff Training

The first of these findings is that of staff training. The environment in which education works has become and is increasingly becoming routinized with the operators of the systems, ultimately the senior managers, accountable to a wide group of stakeholders for their actions. In such an environment management needs to be flexible, creative and responsive in its work practices whilst further down the hierarchy such positive attributes are less welcome. The systems that operate within the organisation need to be clearly defined and controlled to ensure that the chain of accountability can be audited.

The evidence appears to indicate that once an operating system has been devised and installed the management ignore it. There appears to be little attempt by the SMT to monitor the systems to make sure that they are working as required and meeting quality standards. An effort could be made to use one of the methods, or similar methods, advocated by Laudon and Laudon (1996:p371-374) for devising and installing operating systems, but there appears to be little or no commitment at SMT level to do this. Staff are not trained in the workings of the system and because they do not know how it works use it incorrectly or worse do not use it at all. If the system does not work properly the staff lose faith in the system and seek alternative methods of dealing with the work. This will often take the form of staff created systems that not only duplicate work, giving an impression of doing extra work, but may also replace the official system.

Failing to train staff in systems operations can also be seen as a failure to communicate within the organisation. Training in this context is communicating the desired operating procedures so that staff can carry out the required actions in an effective and efficient way. Training might be

seen as especially important in an organisation that is increasingly relying on part-time and temporary staff that embrace the organisation's core values, aims and mission only for the limited time they are employed The identification of a lack of staff training leads to the second main finding of poor management and the neglect of systems.

Poor management

As the weaknesses in the system become apparent, criticism from the users force the operators to take up defensive positions and attack the critic or critics on a personal level. This defence can be aggressive and abusive of the staff members who are subjected to it and has many of the characteristics of Managerialism as described by Entemann (1993:p190-193) and Fergusson (1994:p95). Management, in defence of the system for which they may have some responsibility, refuse to do anything to correct the problem as this may be seen as confirming that a problem exists and might indicate that they are in some way at fault so they ignore the feedback from staff. This lack of action fuels the belief that management do not care about what is happening, and reinforces the need to set up duplicate systems to act as back-up should the official system fail. This is effectively a circle of response that feeds on negative feedback created by the inaction of the management. The negative feedback provides a ratchet effect by reinforcing the positive feedback from the need to have your own systems as a back-up to the, apparently, ineffectual authorised systems.

From the managements failure to act on feedback from the systems operation comes the third finding that derives from the data and its analysis that identifies the lack of collective management leadership as a problem.

Management leadership

When a system is perceived as not achieving its intended objectives the staff expect those in senior management positions to take positive action to remedy the situation, but this does not happen. The absence of remedial action by the senior management appears to indicate that the system is not important, which has a cascade effect down the hierarchy. The result is that the system is not perceived as being important to those who operationalise it and who can safely ignore it and concentrate on those systems that provide more immediate and pressing problems. The result from the this situation is that operating systems that are important to the college, in that if they are not working correctly there is a financial penalty, are not seen as

important to the staff who should be concerned that these systems operate properly. A further result is that the quality of the service provided both internally to staff and externally to students may not be up to the standard demanded by both the funding agencies and the students.

Management philosophy

The three preceding findings together form the main finding of this investigation that it is a Senior Management Team's philosophical approach to management, its belief system (Popkin and Stroll 1969:p1-2), that sets the agenda from the top level of the organisation to the bottom level. Silverman (1970:p120), who commented that the difficulties of the organisation might really be the polite way of referring to the difficulties of senior management, seems particularly pertinent to this finding. Where an organisation's management team is poorly trained for the job then it would appear that the organisation would also perform poorly. If the SMT is genuinely concerned to make the organisation work effectively and efficiently it is necessary to pay close attention to the internal workings and methods of working through the operating systems. This includes paying close attention to devising systems, installing systems, monitoring systems and listening to the users of the systems to ensure that they are still achieving what they were devised to do and not suffering from operational drift or have become obsolete. Ignoring the feedback that is received from the users of the systems suggests an arrogant, dismissive and aggressive management that is not in tune with the rest of the organisation and which is unlikely to learn from its mistakes. Nor is such an organisation likely to be successful in achieving its strategic aims and objectives since the senior management will forever be blaming others for their own lack of care to attention and detail. Finally, if the agencies that fund Further Education do decide to carry out their stated intention to link funding to quality then there might be well-founded cause for concern amongst the organisation's stakeholders of the ability of an under trained Senior Management Team to achieve the required standard of quality.

5.4: Practical Implications.

The findings of this study may have practical implications for the management of the college in its attempts to maintain and improve the quality of the services it provides. The findings from the study demonstrate the importance of staff training, obtaining staff commitment to the key operational systems and maintaining and improving the quality of the service.

The training required falls into two distinct categories. The first is training in the use of the operational systems by the users of the systems. The second is management training for the managers within the college hierarchy.

The first aspect of the findings from the study clearly indicate that staff training in operational systems is, almost, non-existent. Staff have little idea of how to use systems that may have cost a lot of money to install but are then under-used or used incorrectly. The result from the under training of staff is that duplicate systems are devised that do help the staff to carry out their tasks and, in some cases, provide a back up to the official systems. If some one had asked the staff what was needed to help them do their job, it is likely that useful systems could have been devised. Unfortunately, seeking staff advice on what is required from the systems, from the aspect of the user, does not appear to be part of the management ethos of the college. It may well be that the lack of clear lines of consultation on matters that concern the users of the systems is indicative of a management that has not been trained in management techniques, and management training is the second aspect of this implication.

The reluctance of management to seek training means that specialist staff need to be employed to support the managers in their day-to-day activities. Where necessary, such staff should be provided with a brief to provide assistance as needed. Indirect training, in the form of briefing sessions, could be provided as an interim measure until practical action can be taken to provide appropriate management training for those who need it. There has been a start made on providing management training for the SMT with Principal training being provided to the Principals of colleges. Whether the training will be extended down to the next levels in due course is not yet clear but it is a start and welcome because of that.

The second implication from the study indicates that the staff of the college do not share the Senior Management Team's appreciation of which systems are the most important to the college. There are issues of staff training that need to be addressed and suggestions have been made, above, for how these might be achieved. Going beyond that, the SMT need to look to their behaviour and the signals they send to the staff about how they view the operating systems. Where the staff should be committed to improving the systems operations then the SMT must indicate that commitment is needed and then work to achieving that commitment

amongst the staff. This might take the form of public displays of support in word and deed to emphasize the SMT commitment. Commitment to the operating systems will become even more important if the FEFC decide to link funding to quality.

The third implication to arise from the study is that if the FEFC do link funding to quality provision then the operations of the systems within the college will become crucially important to proving that quality does exist. This can only be achieved by the commitment of the whole organisation to operating the systems to a high level of accuracy and by having faith in the systems. The means to do this appear to depend on the SMT giving a lead to the college and providing adequate training for the staff, following up criticism of poorly operating systems and showing a commitment to improve operational effectiveness and efficiency.

5.5: Problems and Limitations.

A number of problems and limitations were encountered in the process of implementing this research study, which should be considered when interpreting these results and should be dealt with when continuing this type of research. Essentially the problems and limitations can be identified as five issues: the manager as a researcher, undue influence, the scope of the research, questionnaire design and the passage of time. Each of these issues will be reviewed below.

As a practicing manager within the organisation that I was researching, the data subjects can perceive that some political capital can be gained by trying to give answers that will please the researcher. These answers may be in furtherance of an aim, a personal issue that might be advanced or trying to gain favour in some way. To counter this problem it is recommended that the researcher make it clear at the outset that the data collected will not influence the researcher's relationship with the respondent.

In a similar way to that above the researcher's manager or managers can try to influence the data collected by directing the researcher to certain key informants. Such direction may not be an intentional attempt to influence the findings but this can be the result. This report wanted to hear the views of the people who actually had to operationalise the college systems so it would not have been appropriate to collect data from informants who were not a part of the sampling frame. It is not always politically possible to exclude certain staff from the sample if directions are received on whom to interview but an independence of thought should be applied when seeking other informants.

The data collected for this study focused on the staff's experiences of using operational systems and a criticism of the data could be made that it has not included, overtly, the views of the SMT. However, the views of a very senior member of the SMT are included in the data and have been considered in the context of that person being a member of staff and a user of the systems. It could be argued that in this context the views of the manager are representative of the situation and the operations of the systems as experienced by that manager. The intention to collect staff views and opinions of systems operations did provide an interesting problem with the interpretation of words and phrases as is indicated below.

In this study a structured questionnaire was used to guide the interview stage and provide some focus for the researcher-respondent discussion. A problem with the questionnaire, that was not apparent in the pilot stage, emerged after about half of the respondents had been interviewed. The question asking them to distinguish their actions between being effective and efficient proved to have the same response due to the staff members not being able to distinguish between the two concepts. This problem was not apparent in the pilot possibly because the people who tested the questionnaire did have a grasp of the difference between effectiveness and efficiency but were not, strictly speaking, representative of the sample frame. In the light of this experience it is recommended that the piloting of the data collection instrument should be carried out with a sample representative of the main sampling frame to ensure that the questions are as clear as possible and to remove ambiguity.

The limitation I would mention is the time frame of the data collection, which spanned a period of three months in an academic year. This is a relatively short period and does not reflect the changes that have been made to certain systems both during and after this time. Several systems, like the Management Information System, have proven to have so many problems that major changes have been introduced to ameliorate the situation. Other systems have become embedded in the wider college system and have been operating correctly and with the acceptance of the staff. However, it is probably true to say that there has been too little time since the changes to assess the benefits that may have been achieved.

5.6: Suggestions for future research.

This section will present five suggestions for further research into the subject of college operations. The first suggestion is for further research into the subject of operationalising the concept of accountability so that the resistance that appears to be fostered by having to conform to demands for accountability from bodies outside the college can be dealt with easily. On operationalising accountability and building it into the normal performance of the staff, a clearer more beneficial and less stressful relationship might be engendered with validating, funding and regulatory bodies. Such research would have to examine the structure of systems and how individuals report to their superiors on their activities. Possibly, such research would look at the personality of the person who uses the system to investigate whether he is the type who can conform to operational requirements or a person who finds conformance difficult.

The second suggestion for further research would be to examine the role of Managerialism in educational establishments. The division between management and the managed and its effects on the provision of educational services might provide an insight to the tensions that appear to be developing in schools, colleges and universities between education professionals and managers. Parallels might be drawn with the NHS, which has undergone a similar transformation and where professionals have also lost status.

The third suggestion for further research is to examine the reluctance of promoted staff to seek management training in the college. It seems a paradox that an educational establishment should not have people trained to the job they were employed to do when there is a clear need to support the managers in their activities. Why there should be systemic reluctance by staff to be trained is difficult to identify. Whether it is the higher management's reluctance to be trained cascading down to lower levels or some other fundamental reason is not clear. Research might centre on the manager's own views for resistance to training but the underlying reasons may be difficult to find. Further investigations might uncover the reasons for the reluctance of staff to seek training that could be overcome quite easily and to the benefit of the organisation and education generally.

The fourth suggestion is to widen the research to include other colleges to see if they have had similar experiences to those described in this study. The reports by the FEFC Chief Inspector

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(Circular 97/20) (Circular 98/13) (Circular 65/00) and the comments made by Brownlow (1998: p1) in the FEDA publication "Inform" suggest that the experiences reported here are not isolated to the college in the study. A similar research methodology might uncover comparable findings on a wider scale and might suggest other methods to deal with the situation.

The fifth and last suggestion for further research is to explore the way the concepts of effectiveness, efficiency and economy are applied in education. The data collection phase of this research indicated that college staff had very little conception of these related issues and it could be asked "how do college management achieve effectiveness and efficiency if they do not understand the concepts?" It may be that staff have an innate understanding of how to be effective and efficient but one could ask whether these processes are understood and applied correctly. Such research could take the form of asking staff to examine case studies and asking them to decide what to do. An analysis of their responses may indicate whether they would have been effective and efficient in achieving a desired outcome.

Name: Post?:

Time employed by college?:   Time in present post?:

Responsibilities?:

Accountable to who?:

1a) In the box below can you list some of the operating systems that are to be found in the college. Look at the list of systems. Can you indicate whether, in your opinion, a system could be regarded as a Key system or a Major system.
Note:
A **key** system will be one that is critical to the success of the college. A **major** system is an important system but one that is not so critical to the success of the college.

System	Key or Major?	Importance to the college?	Importance to your job?
Internal Verification			
Appraisal			
Grievance			
Individual Student Record			
Staff Recruitment			
Registers			
Staff Development Applications			
Budgets			
Fee Income and Recovery			
Ordering Goods			
Academic Timetables			
Quality Monitoring (Internal)			
Annual Leave Booking			
Room Booking			
Any Other System? Add below			

1b) Can you score the systems as to their importance to the college.
    1 = very important, 5 = not important

1c) Can you score the systems in order of their importance to you in your job.
    1 = very important, 5 = not important.

2a) Thinking about the system you consider to be the **most** important to the college can you tell me about your experiences of using this system? What words do you associate with this system? The most important system is:.............................

2b) Can you tell me the good points about the system?

2c) Can you tell me the bad points about the system?

2d) Do you feel that the system is helping the college achieve its strategic aims and objectives?

If no - why not?

If yes - how?

2e) How would you improve the system?

2f) Are there any other points you wish to make about this system?

3a) Thinking about the system you consider is **least** important to the college can you tell me about your experiences of using this system? What words do you associate with this system? The least important system
is: …………………………..

3b) Can you tell me the good points about the system?

3c) Can you tell me the bad points about the system?

3d) Do you feel that the system is helping the college achieve its strategic aims and objectives?

If no - why not?

If yes - how?

3e) How would you improve the system?

3f) Are there any other points you wish to make about this system?

4a) Thinking about one of the other systems can you tell me about your experiences of using this system? What words do you associate with this system? The other system is:
…………………………..

4b) Can you tell me the good points about the system?

4c) Can you tell me the bad points about the system?

4d) Do you feel that the system is helping the college achieve its strategic aims and objectives?

If no - why not?

If yes - how?

4e) How would you improve the system?

4f) Are there any other points you wish to make about this system?

Systems operations and support
5a) How would you describe the amount of help you get in using the college operating systems?

5b) What is the nature of this help and who gives it? Or

5c) What help would you like to have and from whom?

5d) What training have you received to help you to do your job/jobs better?

5e) How do you feel this has helped you to do your job?
or
5f) If you have not had any training - how do you think such training would help you do your job?

Effectiveness and Efficiency.
6a) Who in your opinion is responsible for making sure that the college operating systems work properly?

6b) If a college system is not working effectively what would you do to remedy the problem? (Effectively - doing the right things)

6c) If a college system is not working efficiently what would you do to remedy the problem? (Efficiently - doing things right)

Quality
7a) How would you describe quality in the FE context?
  TQM?
  QA?
  QC?
  Other?

7b) The FEFC are proposing to link funding to quality. What effect do you think this will have on this college?

Thank you for your co-operation in completing this interview.

Memo

To:

From: Reg

CC:

Date:

Re: Interview

Thank you for agreeing to let me interview you for my thesis. I am enclosing a transcript of the interview for you to look at and confirm that it is a true representation of our talk. If you want to add something or delete something please do so. Once you are happy with the transcript, could you sign it at the bottom of the text on the last page and return it to me.

Thank you once again for your help in this matter.

Appendix 3

Raw data used for staff ranking of 'Importance to the College'.

Staff rank / System	1	2	3	4	5	No Response	Researcher Ranking
Academic Timetables	12	6	3	1	0	1	1
Annual Leave Booking	3	8	2	4	6	1	2
Appraisal	6	9	6	1	2	0	2
Budgets	21	2	1	0	0	0	1
Fee Income and Recovery	17	3	3	0	0	1	1
Grievance	2	10	5	3	3	1	2
Individual Student Record	12	3	4	1	1	3	1
Internal Verification	14	4	2	1	1	2	1
Ordering Goods	7	3	8	3	2	1	3
Quality Monitoring (Internal)	13	8	1	1	1	0	1
Registers	14	5	4	0	0	1	1
Room Booking	10	8	1	3	1	1	1
Staff Development Applications	5	5	11	2	1	0	3
Staff Recruitment	18	4	1	0	0	1	1

This table indicates the rankings and their frequencies that Staff ascribed to the systems being considered by the investigation. The ranking with the highest frequency was taken as the representational ranking for that system by the researcher.

FEFC References

Reference	Topic
92/01	Preparing for Incorporation.
92/12	Internal Audit.
93/12	The Council's Aims.
93/14	Assessing achievement.
96/12	Proposals for a revised inspection framework.
97/12	The framework for inspection.
97/20	FEFC Inspection report for 1995 - 96.
97/22	Procedures for inspections.
98/13	FEFC Inspection report for 1996 - 97.
98/21	Quality Improvement Strategy - Consultation Document.
98/37	Quality Improvement Strategy - Responses To Consultation.
98/ July	Accountability in Further Education.
95/October	Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1994-95.
99/October	Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99.
65/00	FEFC Inspection Report.

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