THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

GENERAL STUDIES AND PASTORAL GUIDANCE
AS ELEMENTS OF CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT
IN SIXTH FORM COLLEGES: A CROSS-CASE STUDY

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Abbreviations used in the text

'A' level   -   Advanced level of the General Certificate of Education

'AS' level   -   Advanced Supplementary level of the General Certificate of Education

CEE   -   Certificate of Extended Education

CPVE   -   Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education

GCSE   -   General Certificate of Secondary Education

HMI   -   Her Majesty's Inspectorate

LEA   -   Local Education Authority

NFER   -   National Foundation for Educational Research

PSE   -   Personal and Social Education

ROA   -   Record of Achievement

SATIS   -   Science and Technology in Society

TVEE   -   Technical and Vocational Education Initiative Extension

TVEI   -   Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND FOCUS

In assuming the character of 'open-access' institutions, sixth form colleges currently cater for a diverse clientele. Since principally scholastic concerns are no longer appropriate for a large number of their students, 'preparation for adulthood' - the cultivation of qualities that young people should take with them into the outside world - has become the cornerstone of curriculum policy. This in turn has found a comfortable identity and comprehensive expression in the notion of addressing the needs of the 'whole-person', i.e. having due regard for the social, emotional and intellectual functioning of the individual.

The research recorded in the following pages focuses on two characteristically distinctive aspects of curricular process which seeks to operationalize a whole student-centred ethos: Pastoral Guidance and General Studies. Both purport to underpin students' wide-ranging study programmes (to a degree that for many they necessitate compulsory involvement) particularly in the sense of facilitating interconnections between areas of personal and social experience deemed pertinent to emerging adulthood. Conjointly, these curricular elements exemplify much of what sixth form colleges declare to be their broader educative purpose and offer significant insights to the evolution of continuing education.

Changing emphases of this kind and their place within the general framework of a developing sixth form curriculum have, in very recent times (i.e. postdating the Education Reform Act) found a correspondence with and been informed by other developments.

These have also been seen to counteract the 'limitations' of narrow academic subject specialism and are, respectively, the concept of cross-curricular themes and dimensions (in the other than specialized terms of reference of the National Curriculum) and alternative 'pathways' which aim to provide parity of achievement with traditional academic outcomes - i.e. vocational education.

The investigation sought an understanding of the perspectives within sixth form colleges towards the realisation of objectives in key areas where 'enrichment' of experience is traditionally integral to the education of the 'whole individual'. In so doing it aimed to provide an appropriate representation of participants' construction of reality.

Since both Pastoral Guidance and General Studies are deemed to contribute to the personal fulfilment of students, there is an inherent logic in examining their perspectives as part of the research process. 'In-house' questionnaire surveys involved students in Comprehensive sixth form colleges in the 'burgeoning' 1970s in consumer response to the broad scope of their work and provision. Research studies of the sixth form have examined, hitherto, areas such as: students' views of what the aims and objectives of sixth form education ought to be; what they see as the aims and objectives actually pursued by sixth form teachers and the views of teachers regarding the importance of these aims and objectives. Where the attitudes of either group have been explored, the manifest concern has, in general, been for a wide range of curriculum issues, rather than the circumscribed boundaries of the present study.

Additionally, indeed, most importantly, there has been a marked lack of emphasis on information relating to the correlation or match between the perceptions of the respective groups towards the realisation of key objectives per se.

Pastoral Guidance, whilst prominent historically in schools from the 1970s onwards, has assumed particular significance within sixth form colleges for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the relatively brief period of time (as little as nine months in some cases) for which students are in their tutors' care generates an intensity and sense of urgency towards identifying and meeting individual needs. Secondly, relationships have to be built during a phase of personal development in which the transition to adulthood is made; negotiated and contractual approaches to learning and articulate questioning by a frequently-changing student population make it likely that such relationships will be under constant examination and review. Thirdly, the staff-student ratio in most colleges creates the opportunity to establish a more intimate sense of tutor group identity and companionship, with consequent effect upon the nature of staff-student interaction.

General Studies courses or modules designed to foster an education that was not narrowly subject-specific, came to achieve similar prominence. The development of programmes of general education which complemented those of academic study and which provided breadth and balance and a range of experiences deemed to be of value on the threshold of adulthood, was one of the distinguishing features of sixth form curriculum reform within institutions that were non-selective, non-eletist and not specifically concerned with preparation for Further or Higher Education.

In assuming a centrality customary in many sixth form colleges, such programmes were seen to provide social as well as academic enrichment since they sought to bring together students who were from different subject backgrounds and who had varying aptitudes and levels of aspiration.

It was hypothesised (on the basis of the writer's previous experience as a sixth form tutor) that the enactment, interpretation or perception of key objectives in these areas (if not the objectives themselves) might vary from institution to institution (hence the need for a multi-site study). If due account was to be taken of this variable it seemed necessary to develop awareness of the matrix of 'co-operation, compliance, competition, resistance and authority'[1] in which curriculum policy is usually determined and delivered. This complex study of process was expedited through the researcher's temporary 'membership' of the college communities - the nature of which is illustrated in Chapter 5 but which in methodological terms might generally be conceived of (and referred to here) as a participant observation role.

In eliciting and clarifying the attitudes of staff and students, and seeking to establish the extent of their agreement about the concept and value of curriculum enrichment in given institutional contexts, it was anticipated that current understanding of the 'underlying purposes and realities of sixth form education'[2] might be extended. The study therefore provides:

1   a phenomenological record of philosophy and practice in the areas under

     investigation;

2   insights into the nature of the relationship so obtained;

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3   sets of data that may be compared in order to determine their context dependence

and the utility of the methodological approaches that generated them.

It further considers the extent to which, as organisation theory suggests, participants might define the 'situation' according to their individual position within the hierarchy[3]. Staff were, therefore, differentiated for the purposes of sub-group analysis in terms of their 'standing ' as 'senior' (Head of Department and above) or 'junior' staff respondents. This theoretical model was also applied in the case of students - ie in terms of whether respondents were in their first or second (or subsequent) year.

Within this methodological framework, the investigation sought to profit from the advantages that might accrue from incorporating data collection strategies 'traditionally' associated with positivistic and non-positivistic forms of research respectively. The procedures adopted comprised two affective domain instruments in the form of questionnaires and a series of unstructured interviews and were informed by access to college documents relevant to the areas in question. Whilst these are discussed at some length in Chapter 5, an initial description of the general orientation of the data collection process is given below.

A guiding principle in the study has been a preference for 'discovery' as opposed to 'pre-structure' - for inducing concepts and theory from data as it is being revealed and interpreted. The process is one, it may be said, that -

'confronts empirical reality from the perspective of those being studied'[4].

5

Since concepts and theory are generated from -

'processes of interaction between observation and analysis and explanation',[5]

research accounts so developed have been referred to as 'grounded studies'.

Whilst not designed as an Action Research study, the investigation does focus upon issues of concern to, and identified by, the participants themselves (see later discussion of the writer's methodology in exploring the 'attitude domain'). It therefore embodies features of that process; though in offering opportunities for reflection and critical evaluation by those who develop and implement policy, it does not suggest remedial action nor recommend particular intervention strategies.

The research was conducted in all three of the then existing sixth form colleges of a shire county, during the Academic Year 1989 to 1990. The three institutions featured in the investigation have been referred to under the pseudonyms of 'Newfields College', 'Settledon College' and 'Medley College'. These names reflect something of their perceived character.

Newfields College had been established over twenty years and had seen service by three Principals since its evolution on site from a town's grammar school. It inherited, in consequence, both personnel and tradition and maintained a reputation for academic excellence. With over nine hundred students on roll, it was some 50% larger than the other two colleges and at the time of the research was undertaking a 'review' of aspects of its organisation and curricular practice.

Pastoral Guidance and General Studies were areas where there was a particular concern; both were likely to be subject to radical change in line with a developing 'whole-student' centred ethos.

Settledon College and Medley College had been opened just one year prior to the commencement of research; served adjoining socially-contrasting areas of a city community (disadvantaged and enabling respectively); and had in some ways developed in parallel through close professional association of their Principals under the Education Authority's Local Re-organisation Plan. As new, Comprehensive colleges from their inception, they were jointly unfettered by historical legacy.

In terms of managerial style, however, the two colleges appeared quite different; Settledon College gave close guidance and firm direction to both staff and students in seeking the fulfilment of its aims, whereas Medley College reflected the pursuit of goals in more diverse and idiosyncratic ways. (It is interesting to note how the style of the colleges' documentary materials in Appendix IV and V tends to suggest this).

Collectively, therefore, there was among the three institutions an interesting variation in historical, social and operational terms which, in itself, underpinned the rationale of the cross-case study.

Methodological perspective and philosophical orientation

The study seeks an holistic perspective from which a detailed understanding of given situations and participants' multiple interpretations of them may be gained; it acknowledges the potential of the researcher as a data-gathering instrument responsive to context and adaptable to circumstance, and recognises the necessity of developing an intimate familiarity with the research setting through fieldwork. Such characteristics may be located within the tradition of qualitative case study.

Merriam has defined the qualitative case study as -

'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon'.

which relies heavily on -

'inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources'[6].

Case study research may, however, as Merriam points out, be conducted at three levels:

DESCRIPTIVE   - presenting a detailed account of the phenomenon under study.

INTERPRETIVE - using data to analyse, interpret or theorise about the phenomenon.

EVALUATIVE   - undertaking assessment of the merit of a particular practice or
                 programme.

Whilst early studies generally focused on the first of these levels, more recent research has reflected a combination of description and interpretation or description and evaluation; the present study embraces the former of these combined approaches.

Qualitative case study research has, to some degree, been synonymous with ethnographic investigation; however, the former may be considered to constitute a more limited study of a particular aspect or aspects of group life and to eschew concern for the cultural context (the argument may, however, be an over-simplification and reference should be made to the writer's later discussion on historical frameworks and symbolic interactionist perspectives).

In the light of the semantic debate, it does not seem inappropriate to regard aspects of the current study as ethnographic in style, since it incorporates what Woods[7] considers an important strength of such research, namely, the validation of data through the crosschecking that the field situation provides. Where the study deviates considerably from a genuinely ethnographic perspective is in respect of the time spent within the chosen setting - months rather than years being the operative timescale.

Multi-site or cross-case study (the terms are used inter-changeably) whilst enhancing the potential for generalising beyond the particular is, as Stenhouse[8] quoting Walker[9] points out, dependent on 'condensed fieldwork'. Whilst the writer would not wholly agree with Stenhouse that such constraints presuppose a principally interview-based approach, nor that one should rely consequently on 'observation from participants'[10], there are clear differences between the depth study of a single case and a comparison among cases.

Case study research designs (cross-case or otherwise) do, of course, present a number of challenges: chief among these, perhaps, is the role of the researcher himself in his capacity as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis - his sensitivity, adaptability and integrity all being put to the test. Additionally, there is the issue of what Sieber[11] has termed 'the holistic fallacy', where what is claimed as representative of the whole may, in fact, relate to but a part of the case. Finally, on a practical note, there has been a marked absence of agreement on the structure of case study reports and guidelines for the aspiring case study researcher.

However, advocates of the case study approach give testimony to its strengths: Stake[12] suggests that case study research knowledge is more concrete than other forms; Stenhouse, who undertook much pioneering work in the field, writes of a tradition which -

'may be seen as a systematization of experience within which interpretations are critically handled in the interests of preventing experience from becoming opinionated'[13];

whilst Merriam sees a range of advantages in its being -

'a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real life situations (it) results in a rich account ... It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences (and) help structure future research.'[14]

Qualitative case study designs do not preclude the employment of 'quantitative' methods of data collection, though there has been considerable debate about the extent to which the two can be combined. Thus, scales, tests, surveys and questionnaires have all been used in conjunction with participant observation and unstructured interviews; serving as a form of triangulation that enhances both validity and reliability. Denzin's comments illustrate the point:

'By combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies'.[15]

Whilst some investigators see qualitative inquiry in the light of being a necessary precursor to quantitative procedures, or view the latter as providing useful objective corroboration for the former, others perceive the possibility of more complete integration:

'..... the theoretical structure that guides analysis can be derived wholly or

largely from qualitative fieldwork; certain of the survey results can be

validated, or at least given persuasive plausibility, by recourse to observations

and informant interviews; statistical relationships can be interpreted by

reference to field observations; external validation of statistical constructs is

afforded by comparison with observational scales ..... provocative, but puzzling

replies to the questionnaire can be clarified by resort to field notes'.[16]

An integrative approach in methodology, it may be argued, presupposes a unidimensional view of research - ie one which questions the basis for paradigmatic dichotomy. Thus Sherman and Webb observe that -

'All research is qualitative in aim and must retain a quantitative perspective';[17]

whilst Merriam, taking a similar view, comments -

'There is a sense in which all data are inherently qualitative; before something can be quantified, it has to be identified, named and understood. Both qualitative and quantitative data are interpretations of experience'.[18]

How far the argument for methodological integration is accepted may depend, it is suggested, on the extent to which it is felt that 'multi-techniques' may be employed on a more or less equivalent basis. Whilst it may be desirable for sets of data to have parity with respect to their value and validity, in practice, most investigators have opted either for research designs which consign quantitative data to the role of reinforcing aspects of a qualitative framework of inquiry, or relegate qualitative data to an essentially illustrative function in presenting the 'facts' generated by quantitative techniques.

Although the present study seeks to attribute equal importance to the data acquired by different methods, the writer's preference is to describe his approach in terms of what Davies et al[19] have referred to as a 'juxtaposition' of methods, rather than to claim integration of theoretical perspective.

However, an at least partial reconciliation of 'competing' paradigms is evident in the authors' further contention that -

'methods qua techniques do not 'belong' monopolistically to anyone .....,'[20]

By such means, the writer has sought to demonstrate adaptability in responding to the dynamics of the research process.

Sampling strategies

The selection of the research 'sites', whilst clearly influenced by the degree of access accorded to the writer and the extent to which they facilitated his activities within them, was largely determined, as noted earlier, by the character of the individual institutions and their development within the general climate of reassessment and review of the needs of the 16 to 19 age group. From participants' response to such innovation and change, it was anticipated that valuable insights concerning (re-)examination of their perceptions and beliefs might be derived.

The timing of fieldwork activities targeted a period of the college year (post-Autumn Term) which, it was felt, would hold some significance for all student respondents. For those in their first year, the pattern of college life might be expected to have been established and perspectives subsequently formed; for those in the final year, nearing completion of their formal programme, the period might also prove significant in terms of their taking a retrospective view of initial expectations, experience during their first and subsequent year(s) and the amalgam of derived benefit in relation to their envisaged future.

Consistent with the sequential emergence of contextual data patterns and their analysis, grounded research has looked to non-probability forms of sampling. One such form (and that employed in the present study) which facilitates an on-going selection process that reflects changes in direction, focus and scope in the investigation, is 'sequential criterion based sampling'[21]. This embraces 'negative and discrepant case selection' where the researcher attempts to locate and collect data which confirm or contradict emergent themes and phenomena, and 'Theoretical Sampling' - a method attributable to Glaser and Strauss and defined by them as follows:

'Theoretical Sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges'[22].

It is a process which takes into account location, people, materials, times and instances in accordance with principles of naturalistic coverage and selection. Although a formative influence in much social research in relatively recent years, adequate descriptions have not always been offered in the research literature as to how Theoretical Sampling is actually initiated and how decisions are made as to what constitutes theoretically relevant data[23].

Whilst respondent sampling is further described in some detail in later accounts of the writer's fieldwork activities, acknowledgement is made here of the important role played by key informants in aiding selection of a broad range of contexts in which to observe and initial encounters with the participants themselves.

Despite the distinction between the sense in which the term 'sampling' is used here (with regard to both explicit and implicit forms) and its meaning in a statistical, experimental sense, it has not always been used confidently in the reporting of case study research. Stenhouse[24], for example, writes of 'issues of selection' and refers to a 'collection of cases', though elsewhere in his work it is evident that his reluctance to employ the term stems from his perception of generalizability as it applies to case study research[25]. The possibilities of re-conceptualisation are examined elsewhere, but the writer is content to assume reader interpretation of the term consistent with the above.

Cross-case analysis

Whereas in an individual case study the investigator is concerned with the sampling of sub-units (eg people and events) in collecting data, in multi-site studies he is engaged in collecting and analysing data from several cases in order to provide a unified description across cases. Each of the colleges involved in the cross-case analysis undertaken here is first considered as a comprehensive case in itself; in then offering an integrated framework comprising all three cases, outcomes are examined in the light of specific contextual variables which may have affected them.

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CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SIXTH FORM GENERAL STUDIES

This chapter and the succeeding one present the literature review of General Studies and Pastoral Guidance in two major sections. Whilst for the reasons expounded in Chapter 1, these curricular elements are linked in both conceptual and pedagogical terms, their historical origins, the factors which have influenced their evolution (e.g. the involvement of government agencies) and their present state of development are sufficiently discrete to make such an arrangement beneficial to reader understanding.

Whilst there appears to be a range of preference amongst sixth form colleges for the term used to denote courses of general education, (whether 'main', 'core', 'extension', 'liberal', 'central', 'college', 'minorities', 'options' or 'integrated' studies), and whilst differences of emphasis may be implicit within this, it is proposed to adopt the generic term of 'General Studies' in subsequent reference to such courses in this review. The fact that the colleges themselves have (by and large) sought to avoid the term may have much to do with its historical associations; and it is to this perspective that one might usefully turn to chart the influences upon the development of current college programmes. General education has been an integral part of the sixth form curriculum debate over the last thirty years or so. Concern for the effects of over-specialization and their counteraction by notions of 'breadth' and 'balance' have given rise to a number of initiatives in this direction.

Prior to the late 1950s, general education had, rarely explicitly, entered the consciousness of the architects of the sixth form curriculum; specialization was paramount and the only concession to its dilution was the occasional Arts period for the Scientist. The debate about the scientific/literary divide (which foreshadowed concern about the wider issues of general education) and the contribution of the over-specialized school curriculum, had its evolutionary cornerstone in C.P. Snow's Rede Lecture: 'The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution'.

An early 'official' response was that of the Central Advisory Council for Education's Report '15-18' (more commonly known as the Crowther Report)[1]. This continued to endorse the principle of subject study in depth but voiced concern about premature specialization. Whilst the report did not go so far as to recommend mixed selection of arts and science 'A' levels it did advocate that science students be encouraged to achieve greater literacy and that arts specialists become more numerate. The means of achieving these ends was seen to be the devoting of one-quarter to one-third of the school week to 'Minority Time'. This comprised 'Complementary Studies' which balanced the main course of study and 'Common' elements which were to be taken by arts and science students jointly (these would include such courses as religious education, music, art, philosophy and physical education). Interestingly, at the request of its chairman, the Commission extended an invitation to LEAs to experiment with the 'Junior (ie sixth form) College' concept. Within this there would be -

'..... room for courses that were not tied to examinations and regulations, but existed just because they provided a good education'[2].

The report's continued emphasis on specialist education, however, was not designed to release resources for general education. In an attempt to implement Crowther's key recommendations on curriculum, three hundred and sixty schools under the 'Agreement to Broaden the Curriculum' resolved to delay specialization until the age of 16 and to devote one-third of the timetable to Crowther's 'Complementary' and 'Common Studies'. With no 'official' backing, and in the face of continuing pressure for the maintenance of the status quo, the initiative did not, however, achieve success.

The establishing of two national educational bodies in the early 1960s provided some momentum for the new area of curriculum which would gradually begin to make an impact in the latter part of the decade. These were respectively, the General Studies Association and the Schools' Council (which included a subject committee for General Studies). Working Paper 5[3] proposed 'Major' and 'Minor' subjects at 'A' level which would facilitate ancillary subjects or a broader curriculum for non-university students. Problems inherent in small sixth forms led to the rejection of such proposals by schools.

In Working Paper 16[4] 'Electives' had been devised. These would consist of courses of one or two years duration, be designed by schools to meet the perceived needs and interests of students and be internally assessed. Both schools and universities were agreed upon the unacceptability of such a scheme: the universities were wary of the relatively large element of internal assessment and schools were concerned about the development of a considerable number of sixth form courses. The specialization issue came to the fore again the following year with the publication of the Dainton Report[5] which, whilst it focused on the decreasing proportion of science specialists in the sixth form, called for a broad span of sixth form studies to postpone irreversible subject choices for as long as possible.

Some early research began to cast light on both philosophy and practice. Casey[6] investigated teachers' evaluation of assembled lists of statements of objectives for General Studies courses provided in a large sample of two hundred and thirty five schools. The survey sought in addition to identify the types of courses offered and to obtain headteachers' opinions about the way in which these were organised and about the provision of examinations.

The most frequently mentioned courses which Casey found in schools were in mathematics, art, English, world affairs, languages, science and religion - the widest range being where external General Studies examinations were taken.

Courses in English and world affairs were typically the longest at one to two years duration. It was reported that suggestions for compulsory external examinations were strongly rejected: 50% of respondents were in favour of voluntary examinations in General Studies and 30% wanted no examination whatsoever. Teachers' perceptions indicated that objectives in the 'affective domain' were rated more highly than those listed in the 'knowledge' and 'intellectual abilities' categories in all the above subject areas.

The Schools Council General Studies Project Working Paper 25[7] redefined the essential qualities of a General Studies course: these were that it should have general significance, allow interconnections between subjects and achieve general transfer. These theories of learning were to have a direct impact at a later date in constituting a rationale for a programme within the sixth form college context.

Christie and Oliver[8] showed that there was no correlation between an extension of 'A' level teaching time beyond four hours per subject and the likelihood of higher grades, and suggested that more time could be devoted to minority time courses or General Studies without jeopardising achievement in 'A' level subjects.

Student response to General Studies course development to date was illustrated by the Schools Council Sixth Form Survey[9]. Forty three percent of students overall said they would prefer to spend more time on General Studies. This figure is compounded, however, by the fact that the number of General Studies periods taken by students was subject to variation (those with most or least differing significantly in their views).

The survey also revealed sixth form teachers' opinions of the value of General Studies: two-thirds of all teachers questioned felt that such courses counteracted the effects of narrow subject specialisation and 84% thought General Studies 'valuable' for all sixth formers.

Schools Council Working Paper 45[10] gave statistical evidence of the greatly increased numbers of 'new' non-traditional sixth form students (subsequently a key factor in the development of sixth form colleges and courses of general education within them) and took as its central concern the promotion of discussion on the sixth form curriculum free from all considerations of specific examination proposals. Reference was also made to the 'general element' in the anticipated provision for sixth form students.

A two-tier five subject curriculum as enshrined by the Council's 1973 'N' and 'F' level proposals (Working Paper 47)[11] pointed up an attitude of conflict between those who wanted emphasis on preparing for university and those who valued the relevance of the curriculum to the sixth form as a whole. As Macfarlane[12] was later to point out, the drive for a general education by dint of examination reform based on a five-sevenths allocation of the timetable to main subject courses would in effect have been logistical decimation for General Studies courses in comprehensive colleges.

Other surveys which followed the Schools Council 1970 inquiry and revealed attitude patterning amongst sixth form students, or those who had recently been so, included those by Fogleman[13], Selkirk[14], and Makins[15].

A random sample of one thousand comments from fifteen thousand questionnaires administered by Fogleman, highlighted criticisms by recent ex-sixth formers of the narrowness and irrelevance of the sixth form curriculum. Makins' survey, published in the 'Times Educational Supplement', of sixth form students on the verge of leaving, found similar evidence of discontent. Over-specialization and an examination system that did not cater for students unsuited to higher education constituted common ground.

Selkirk's research found, by way of contrast, adverse attitudes among sixth formers to broader-based sixth form courses. However, the survey focused on a defined regional area and sample limitations restrict generalisation of the findings.

Taylor et al[16] conducted a survey of the attitudes of over four hundred sixth form teachers towards aims in sixth form education. In being asked to rank eight broad aims on the basis of the importance that should be attached to each[17], 53% (the largest percentage associated with any aim) allocated a ranking of one or two to general education (40% placing a similar emphasis on specialist education). When asked to rank the same aims on the basis of current actual importance[18] only 35% were able to assign the same high rankings (87% allocating those to specialist education). Since there were few significant correlations between curriculum proposal responses, the ranking of aims and allocation of additional resources, it was inferred that teachers may accept that the changing of the structure of the sixth form curriculum was not a pre-requisite for increased emphasis on General Studies.

Within Taylor et al's concluding note it was observed that there appeared to be no basic change in the foundations of the sixth form and its curriculum derived from Victorian educational concepts of classical and scientific scholarship.[19]

The extent of General Studies provision within the sixth form curriculum was indicated by the General Studies Association[20]: 60% of all schools surveyed in 1974/1975 had a common core as an integral part of the sixth form curriculum; a further 10% thought one desirable. A planned course, however, was not found to be the norm. Corroboration of the ad hoc nature of provision was given by Schools Council Examinations Bulletin 38[21] which reported that -

'By far the most common arrangement appears to be a programme which depends on the interests and enthusiasms of teachers who are available to become involved once the other demands of the curriculum have been met'[22].

Dean et al[23] undertook a longitudinal research programme of considerable scope within 16 - 19 education. Funded by NFER, it took as its brief the sixth form and its alternatives. The main instrument of research comprised a three stage questionnaire inquiry: after the first term of the sixth form, in the final term of the second year and during the first year of higher education or employment. Students' evaluations after two years of a sixth form course revealed a broad view of General Studies in all its diverse forms and ranges of provision. Those who had left the sixth form and were now in employment felt more strongly than those in higher education that General Studies and non-examination work had made the course more interesting and worthwhile.

It should be noted, however, that the numbers of those in the respective sample populations were not equated, there being significantly fewer in the former category than in the latter (ratio of approximately 1:2). Almost 50% of students from sixth form colleges had a similarly positive view of the value of General Studies (a figure not dissimilar to that reported by the Schools Council Sixth Form Survey) and a higher proportion in this group also saw an appropriate balance between examination work and a broad general education.

General criticism of content was still in evidence, however, and where suggestions for course reform did occur these related to the examination of practical issues linked to everyday life.

In its conclusions the research team commented on the current status of General Studies as revealed by its findings: it served at that time either to overcome over-specialization, or as a means of filling up the timetable with recreational/creative/physical activity;
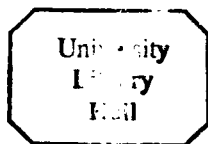
students were aware of the 'sharp distinction' between specialist and general aspects of the curriculum and perceived an importance and emphasis on academic qualifications; since General Studies was not usually examined, students had, it was suggested, 'proof' of its unimportance. It was concluded that the research gave a firm indication of the fact that the 'present approach' to General Studies did not gain student support.

Further evidence of student reaction specifically within sixth form colleges emerged from a survey of seven colleges by Watkins[24]. Entitled 'A Student's View of Sixth Form College' and distributed to institutions differentiated by environment (rural/urban/suburban), size (N O R ranging from two hundred and fifty - one thousand+) and geographical location, (the North/Midlands/the South) it provided, despite its scale, a reasonably representative cross-section of opinion amongst the sixth form college population. Watkins found that, on average, 32% of girls and 40% of boys thought General Studies 'a waste of time'. In some colleges a negative attitude was more widespread; reaction was inclined to be less favourable where General Studies courses were compulsory or mainly academic in orientation and more favourable where games and recreational courses were included. Popularity of courses mirrored some of the views expressed in Dean et al's survey, namely, that those with a practical emphasis on skills for everyday life took precedence over those of a more aesthetic or philosophical nature.

It was observed that most colleges took the pragmatic view that their belief in the intrinsic value of General Studies in the 16 - 19 curriculum was not met with a reciprocal response from students. Watkins did, however, draw attention to the difficulty students might encounter in assessing the immediate or short-term benefits of such courses, by virtue of what one college principal had referred to as: 'the fallacy of instant response'.

In a critical review of the literature relating to the 16 - 19 provision, Dean and Choppin[25] noted a lack of 'rightful emphasis' on General Studies. Whilst the review could not reflect the present perspective of a 45% expansion in the number of sixth form colleges, and the not uncommon allocation of four or five hours per week to general education (non-examination work as a whole bordering with some frequency upon 50% of the timetable), it did, nonetheless, identify factors that continue to have a bearing upon course design and implementation, not the least of which was that -

'students be encouraged to perceive the intrinsic value of non-examination work and not simply regard it as wasted time'[26].

The authors recommended that courses offered needed to be planned as 'an integral, co-ordinated part of the curriculum' and that given these criteria enthusiasm, conviction and purpose, resourcing and a widely ranging programme, whilst 'desirable', became matters of 'secondary' importance. (The latter part of this proposition would, in the writer's view, be unlikely to secure uniform agreement, but the reader is referred to subsequent discussion of this and other points arising from collective knowledge on the subject matter).

There are other initiatives which have provided momentum to the long campaign to establish the centrality of General Studies to the sixth form curriculum; suffice it to make mention of the Joint Matriculation Board's pioneering work in the 1950s on the examination of General Studies (by the early 1980s the subject had become the fourth most popular at 'A' level -

if not in the view of significant numbers of educationalists, the most academically rigorous) and the development of curriculum models which may provide a mechanism for the integration of specialist and general aspects of 16 - 19 education.

Many of the agents of change referred to above would, perhaps, not even cumulatively, have had the same degree of impact upon the shift of emphasis away from an examination-dominated sixth form curriculum (and hence on the establishment of General Studies at its centre) that the evolution of the open-access sixth form college itself has had. It is to the development of documented programmes of general education within these colleges that the writer now turns.

Developments in sixth form colleges

As 'breadth' and 'balance' became the watchwords of the sixth form college ethos (facilitated by institutional size, timetabling flexibility and multi-media resourcing) so increasingly diversified and ambitious programmes of General Studies were launched. Form the outset, Brockenhurst College in Hampshire sought to give due emphasis to 'Core Studies' that represented the most distinctive aspect of the college's divergence from the traditional sixth form curriculum[27]. This emphasis was realised through the provision of almost seventy courses and thirty recreational activities set in blocked periods and timetabled for five lessons per week.

Student access was ensured through the fitting in of examination courses around these blocked periods. Courses lasted a term, were continuously assessed and certificated and provided information about students that was incorporated in their final profile. Extension of students' interests and the discouragement of a utilitarian view of education constituted the programme's principal rationale, but also sought to bring about student integration (a key facet of a comprehensive college's philosophy). The core concept gave a prominence to General Studies that resulted in its adoption by colleges in later re-organisational plans.

Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke, took a more radical step in promoting its commitment to General Studies programmes. Macfarlane[28], who was then the college's Principal, gave a detailed and partisan account of the 'Main Studies' model, a term which reflected not only college philosophy but also the extent of non-examination work on the timetable. The proportion of examination study time was reduced to less than 50% of the working week for the majority of students; 'A' level studies were standardised at four hours per subject (cf Christie and Oliver)[29] and other examination courses at half that. Main Studies were timetabled throughout the week in the same way that examination courses were and grouped students on a mixed-ability basis. Thirty percent of all teaching time was devoted to the programme. In offering a selection of almost one hundred different options, however, the college found it difficult to reconcile student choice with course viability. This led to student dissatisfaction where second-choice subjects had a lesser appeal. Macfarlane comments:

'What appeared as a very attractive range of options in the prospectus proved a much-reduced list in reality'[30].

Integration of courses with similar content and the introduction by some subject areas of individualised resource/topic-based learning approaches gave rise to a change in the range of available options (a 50% reduction). Student choice was not, essentially, compromised since increased numbers and fewer Main Study courses allowed repetition throughout the week and, therefore, greater access. Prowles[31], Director of Main Studies at Queen Mary's College, outlined criteria for the success of General Studies courses: range was in itself insufficient if not reinforced by intrinsic quality as perceived by the students; courses needed to be carefully planned and resourced and have staff whose basic commitment was to the Main Studies area, to co-ordinate the team design and teaching of courses.

Integration of General Studies with the rest of the curriculum at Exeter developed from the ideas of Lord[32] who noted that, whilst topics of general interest relating to the subject were discussed as a matter of course within his sixth form history periods, separate General Studies courses subsequently devised proved unsuccessful. The college's initial strategy of entering all sixth form students for 'A' level studies led to low pass rates and relatively low esteem for the examination. In its place, the 'key' subject concept (essentially 'A' level studies with a doubled time allocation) allowed students to follow a complementary or contrasting General Studies course in conjunction with a given 'A' level subject. In acting as tutors for their students, 'key' subject teachers had a dual brief for both pastoral and academic welfare. The rationale underlying the course was derived from Schools Council Working Paper 25[33] in that it served -

'..... some of the agreed aims of a general education: inter-disciplinary connections, applications to modern life and so on'[34].

Despite Exeter's inability to establish the value of 'A' level General Studies for all (or perhaps because of it) a number of colleges continue to see the examination as an element of provision for those at least who wish to take it. One strategy in such cases adopted by a Humberside College, is to provide 'guidance' to the student in selecting appropriate courses from the wide range of General Studies options (known as 'College Studies') on offer. Colchester, a newly established college, lists 'Arts in Society', 'Science and Technology in Society', 'Organisation of Society' and 'Numeracy' as available courses for its intending 'A' level General Studies students. In some institutions students may opt to take the examination but must prepare for it in their own time (ie the subject is not timetabled). Stoke-On-Trent College viewed General Studies courses as an intrinsic aspect of preparation for external assessment. All students took an external examination; the syllabus comprised a number of modules and students were required to complete six extended essays which could either be inter-disciplinary in scope, or place an equal emphasis on scientific, arts and social science topics. Continuity of approach over the two year course was sought by one member of the General Studies Department maintaining contact with a group (for at least part of the time) over the whole period.

Some colleges currently have more autonomy than others in the shaping of the general element of the curriculum. Where TVEI (or TVEE) proposals are in more advanced stages of implementation, colleges have been obliged to respond with an emphasis toward the provision of courses which dovetail with the initiative's philosophy.

Tynemouth College, for example, in incorporating 'Core Experiences' derived from the North Tyneside statement on the 16 - 19 curriculum[35], offers students compulsory components in, among others, Information Technology, Work Experience, Recreational and Enterprise activities. Every student is required to take at least one 'Extension Studies' unit which occupies one - one and a half hours per week and lasts for a term. More Extension Studies courses can be added according to the pattern of selection for examination subject blocks or 'groups', eg a student taking three subjects from any number of groups (total study time a minimum of fifteen hours) would be likely to include two or three more Extension Studies units; four or more subjects taken would require little or no further commitment. The following extract from a draft statement on Extension Studies at the college is interesting in the context of the TVEI framework and with regard to the concept of 'balance' in the curriculum:

'Where a student's examination studies allow time for only one Extension Study, a balance of experience may be difficult to achieve, unless the academic programme is varied in the nature of the subjects chosen ..... However, in some cases the career needs of the students will over-ride the desirability of balance[36].

Certain colleges have envisaged General Studies as an appropriate vehicle for accommodation of the non-academic student. Increasingly accounting for a significant proportion of the intake, these individuals who in Macfarlane's[37] terms had hitherto achieved, neither academic success nor any other form of personal fulfilment, were seen as requiring something other than a repetition of the curricular provision that, for many, accounted for their current pursuit of further education.

South East Essex College was the first of the open-access colleges to cater for this group and to establish a one-year course of general education that aimed to equip the individual not only for employment but for the adult world in general. The course included such elements as: 'Media Studies', 'Learning to Learn', 'Basic Numeracy', 'Enterprise' and 'Community Activities', 'Career Studies, 'Developing Literacy' and so forth. It was certificated by the college and also allowed flexibility of transfer by the more successful student to a limited programme of examination studies after the first term. Non-academic students were also able to participate in General Studies that were open to all sections of the college community and were thus partially integrated in mixed-ability teaching situations.

Havant College's 'second chance' students (for whom there was a particular concern) also found a place in their college's 'Foundation' programme. Comprising 'Liberal Studies', 'Skills and Activities', and 'Support Studies', it offered students a basic general education that was designed to prepare even the least able to achieve (albeit restricted) certification (whilst also aiming to provide breadth and balance for all[*]). Students so identified had approximately 30% of their timetable devoted to Support Studies in addition to participating (as at South East Essex) in aspects of the Foundation Programme open to others.

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[*]In an interesting parallel of philosophy with that of Tynemouth College (see above), students at Havant with particular examination commitments - in this case those undertaking a range of 'O' level/CEE subjects - had a reduced programme of Foundation Studies.

Other perspectives relating to the place of General Studies in the education of the 'new' sixth form student are found in Dean and Vincent[38], Watkins[39] and Holt[40]. Dean and Vincent's survey of one year courses, reported as an early part of the research programme undertaken by Dean et al[41], brought the issue of external certification into renewed focus. Internally assessed courses were found, by and large, to be a preliminary to work leading to external qualifications; no students following 'entirely unexamined courses' developed by the institutions concerned were identified. Where such courses had previously existed in two sixth form colleges visited, students had demonstrated their disillusionment by 'opting out'. Whilst Dean and Vincent were able to report that -

'For the majority of schools and colleges and their one-year students the necessity for examined courses leading to generally recognised qualifications remains'[42].

- it should be noted that only a limited number of those to whom the conclusion referred were in sixth form colleges (N = 132).

Wilson's[43] discussion of a broadened curriculum which might incorporate 'new' subjects and activities (community/social service, projects, environmental/ecological studies, etc) offered alongside an academic curriculum, envisaged that non-academic students' 'Major' activities would be so constituted, whilst 'Minor' study would be based on choice from the academic subject list (the total range of subjects would be offered at both 'Major' and 'Minor' levels and the academic student would have the weighting reversed).

A more vocational emphasis emerged in Holt's[44] categorization of those students not seeking higher education, and in the argument for course components in general education to be related to a 'broad occupational focus'*. Three groups were identified in this vocational context: those for whom a sixth form course was seen as (a) vocationally relevant, not pointing to higher education, (b) vocationally exploratory and (c) the residual group (who were recognised as either having no employment to go to, or no confidence to apply).

The principle of student choice from an extensive range of General Studies courses has been maintained by most colleges; however, there have frequently been attendant constraints of time (duration/occasion/frequency), course area (whether 'support', 'liberal', 'practical/creative' or recreational in character), and staff endorsement (by the Personal Tutor to ensure balanced choice; by the module tutor to encourage course awareness and commitment). Some colleges define a compulsory core of General Studies that affords discussion of moral, political and social issues that are deemed pertinent to every sixth form student's experience (that a number of such issues have featured in the tutorial programme of many colleges is evidence of the symbiotic interchange within these areas of 16 - 19 provision).

Itchen College, for example, offered nine-week courses attended on a tutor group basis that focused on self-awareness and an understanding of society and the world at large.

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* Holt's broader arguments relating to General Studies and career orientation are referred to in the writer's later discussion.

Other colleges have set store by expectation of some degree of participation in recreational education of a physical nature - often the most successful part of the General Studies programme - but seldom akin to the team-orientated games of former years. 'Recreation' has further embraced not only individual and small group sports at Activities and Leisure Centres, but also a wide range of opportunities to develop both creative skills and aesthetic awareness.

Perhaps the most comprehensive data relating to General Studies provision in sixth form colleges in recent years, was that compiled by HMI[45] from 1983 - 1986 as part of a wider survey which examined curriculum provision, the quality of students' experience, staffing, accommodation and resources; and which emanated from the evidence documented in inspection reports, 'supplemented' by information and comment derived by HMI from their routine visits to the colleges.

As such, the relevant findings merit consideration in some detail. HMI distinguished two types of General Studies course: that which was examined and that which was not. In the former case, students took either an examination at Alternative Ordinary level of the General Certificate of Education, after one year, or at Advanced level after two. External certification reportedly granted courses particular status from the perspective of students since there was a direct correspondence with their specialist subjects, and an opportunity at 'A' level to offer a third or fourth subject for entry to further and higher education. It was found, by and large, that colleges expected students to undertake the General Studies examination essentially in terms of drawing on their 'maturity' and 'experience'. There was little direct teaching (in some cases none) as a means of preparation.

In many colleges non-examined General Studies assumed a central importance in respect of facilitating institutional aims to provide a broad, balanced education (frequently being part of colleges' 'core time', which incorporated other elements of entitlement such as tutorial provision). Where tutors offered guidance in course selection, or where 'carefully structured' programmes were found to exist, these aims were generally realised; however, in instances where examination studies were simply extended, other very closely related subjects added or narrowly-focused programmes otherwise pursued, this broadening function was deemed to be lost.

Additional limitations stemmed from the organisational arrangements made by some colleges: programmes based on random staff interests suffered from an inevitable lack of co-ordination; and those which required a convenient dovetailing with main subject timetabling led to optional take-up or non-attendance among students (who, it would appear, took their cue about the status of general education from the 'hidden messages' which such arrangements conveyed).

What was held to be necessary for successful provision in HMI's view was (as was found in the case of one particular college) -

'a conscious effort to provide courses of some substance, designed with clear objectives and attention to teaching method, and regularly reviewed or replaced according to the college's perception of changing priorities'[46].

That sixth form colleges offer a complex and varied pattern of General Studies courses, whether in terms of range of provision, emphasis or orientation and the degree of student direction is clearly evident; it seems appropriate to proceed to critical reflection on the same.

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW OF GENERAL STUDIES PROVISION WITHIN SIXTH FORM COLLEGES

Prior to making inferences concerning the above, it seems sensible at the outset to delineate the claims for General Studies that have been expounded in the literature and other professional contexts. General Studies has, it is suggested:

1   Provided a beneficial and varied mix of students in terms of ability, background and aspiration;

2   fashioned a 'common core' within the curriculum to ensure contact with key topics and themes by all students irrespective of course profile;

3   allowed a more generalised learning approach to complement specialist study (thereby providing 'breadth' and 'balance' between different types of knowledge and a range of experiences);

4   helped to establish the practical significance of the notion of student 'entitlement';

5   reinforced appreciation of the relationships between aspects of human knowledge;

6   developed autonomy in learning styles and 'transfer' of problem-solving skills;

7   allied the educational learning process more closely to the individual's world and those aspects of it that particularly interest him;

8   created a focus and model for curriculum innovation and development (and, therefore, staff development);

9   supplied a framework for those students unsuited to academic courses of study;

10   enabled individuals to develop new interests and leisure pursuits (either in the shorter or longer term);

11   encouraged perception of education as essentially more than preparation for external examinations;

12   offered a break for staff and students from the pressure of examination work;

13   fostered practical and creative skills;

14   given supplementary support in the study of academic subjects;

15   facilitated participation in (and the inculcation of skills associated with) co-operative working.

This list is, of course, by no means a definitive one but merely serves to illustrate the diversification of aims and objectives inherent in the parameters of provision.

On the basis of the evidence currently available it would appear that the sixth form colleges' corporate belief in non-examined General Studies as a vital component of the 16 - 19 curriculum has not, despite the multi-faceted nature of its rationale nor the corresponding enthusiasm on the part of those who determine it, been mirrored by a reciprocal response from students in general. At worst such courses are regarded as wholly obstructive elements in the important process of passing examinations; at best that if reformed, their emphasis should be an essentially utilitarian one. Where statistics are given, a favourable response towards General Studies seldom exceeds a 50% criterion; this despite multi-media resourcing; module provision of extensive range and variety, the appointment of senior staff to oversee delivery of the programme and certification to promote a sense of achievement. It seems unduly simplistic, therefore, to concur with the viewpoint promulgated by the Schools Council:.

'Few generalizations can be made confidently about students' attitudes to General Studies except perhaps to say that if the staff recognise that General Studies are important and part of the normal programme, so will the students'[47].

Holt[48] is critical of the sixth form colleges' management and delivery of the General Studies programme; for whilst they have sufficient timetabling flexibility and financial resource to create 'something other than a good intention gone to seed'[49] the emphasis is placed, he observes, on personal interest and preference rather than on the construction of a structured programme linked with career intentions. Individual interests would, in his view, still be acknowledged in such a scheme, but as in some college patterns of provision, common experience in key 'cultural' areas would also be offered.

Holt goes on to comment on what he sees as the colleges' reluctance to develop an integrated core and censures their marketing strategy of appeal based on choice 'turning optioned General Studies courses into a going concern'[50].

Although he acknowledges that the colleges are meeting a 'need', Holt is not sufficiently expansive on this to establish quite what this is, nor indeed, what he means by the term. His subsequent observations concerning the maintenance by the colleges of a 'pragmatic balance' between individual interest and individual benefit, his corollary that such arrangements are not to be equated with compensatory study or a common core and his appeal for a 'clear understanding of what is being offered', seems to imply an inability on the part of the colleges to differentiate between the aims and objectives that distinguish the varied programmes that are in operation. What does appear eminently sensible, however, is his discussion of 'balance' as it relates to general education, and the distinction he draws with regard to balance between areas of knowledge and balance in terms of the needs of the individual. The major direction in which General Studies for the 16 - 19 age range ought to be moving is, for Holt, as an intrinsic choice within a wider curricular theme.

This would tend to support the argument of Lord[51]. It may also help resolve the dilemma of colleges where, as one college Principal candidly observed, 'The centrality of General Studies is subscribed to, but a programme is bolted on'. One is reminded, too, of the recommendation of Dean and Choppin[52] with regard to the 'integral' focus in curriculum planning. This consensus of opinion is underlined by Schools Council Working Paper 45[53] which, in drawing the distinction between the compensatory and integratory functions of General Studies, clearly veers towards endorsement of the latter.

There are those who would clearly see this as a means of at least partially assuaging student demand for examination-orientated courses. Dean et al[54] highlighted the stark division which students saw in the examined and un-examined curriculum and noted that current arrangements did not engender support.

The colleges themselves have made concessions to consumer demands in this respect in the internal certification of courses and in the overall reporting of individual achievement in this area as part of student profiling. That General Studies courses retain a separate curricular identity in many institutions may have much to do with the comprehensive colleges' tenet that a subject does not have to be part of the formally examined curriculum in order to assume an intrinsic worth.

Whilst an extensive range of courses does not appear to be a pre-requisite for success it appears inadvisable to regard resourcing as a matter of 'secondary' importance in whatever context (cf Dean et al)[55]. The colleges themselves seldom make such a distinction of priority, offering as they do the support of Resource Co-ordinators and centralised facilities, and generating courses which by their very nature require a strong individual or corporate resource response. It is argued also that student disillusionment with courses run on 'shoe-string' budgets would constitute further undermining of confidence in the General Studies programme.

Subject options provision within the colleges (in conjunction with increased flexibility of subject combination requirements for admission to courses of higher education) has attenuated the 'complementary' profile of General Studies envisaged by those concerned at over-specialization.

Thus the narrow academic arts/science focus common until relatively recently, has given way to subject linking of infinite range and variety, creating, at least in part, it could be reasoned, the breadth and balance that underpins curriculum rationale in the sixth form college.

The diversification of provision previously noted suggests that the place and function of General Studies in the sixth form college curriculum is neither sufficiently well defined nor agreed upon in anything other than the broadest terms. If there is a constant to be identified, it appears to be that of student dissatisfaction (to a largely common degree) with such provision.

Macfarlane points out that General Studies is –

'an area of the curriculum conducive to new developments in both the content and methods of learning'[56].

Given that there has been evidence in recent years of innovation in sixth form examination teaching methodology and syllabus construction, it may be that a tangible measure of the otherwise often limited success of General Studies courses to date can be acknowledged as a contribution so made.

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THE EVOLUTION OF PASTORAL CONCERN - CONCEPT, PRACTICE

AND ORGANISATION WITHIN THE SIXTH FORM

The rationale for the structure and orientation of this review derives from the acknowledgement that the pastoral concerns of the Sixth Form draw their focus from a much wider theoretical and practical domain. It seems inappropriate, therefore, initially, to divorce regard for the age group from the general perspectives that inform the current debate on pastoral care (though these lead subsequently to more sample-specific considerations). Ribbins and Best[1] offer a model of the environment in which pastoral care is enacted that demonstrates this homogeneous association:

'Pastoral care is something which happens or should happen between teacher and student interacting in the context of an institution called a school or college which has four interrelated dimensions (disciplinary/order, welfare/pastoral; academic/curricular and administrative/organisational) and which is, in itself, located in a wider social, historical and cultural milieu'.

These dimensions have in themselves provided a focus for a body of literature which is as expansive as the contexts it seeks to document. Anything other than a synopsis of historical and current perspectives is, therefore, considered neither practical nor desirable.

The accelerated evolution of various systems of care, the development of pastoral hierarchies and the differentiation of 'pastoral' and 'academic' aspects of education were attributable to the rapid growth in school size during the 1970s. Through structural change it was assumed that pupils' needs would, correspondingly, be met. By institutionalising care, schools considered that they were providing care[2]. However, strategies for change owed rather more to prevailing doctrine than to empirical evaluation derived from theoretical standpoints.

Much of the published literature of the period had an overt concern for technique and practice; its emphasis was on 'structure' rather than 'process'; it represented a dominant conception of pastoral care that was 'convivial', 'optimistic', 'child-centred' and 'unproblematic', and constituted a 'conventional wisdom'[3].

Marland[4], Blackburn[5], Hamblin[6], Moore[7] and Haigh[8], among others, were potent agents of reinforcement for a view of care that was prescriptive, but which neglected to consider the practical implications for schools.

An influential paper by Best, Ribbins and Jarvis[9] set the scene for a shift towards the formulation of a critique of the concept, structure and process of pastoral care. The authors argued for a rigorous analysis of the philosophical, historical and social foundations of the concept and its manifest and latent functions; pointed up a serious discrepancy between what was being expounded by 'authorities' on the subject and implementation of care by practitioners; and postulated that in the given context, schools' 'concern' for pupil welfare was, more accurately, a concern for social control and administrative convenience.

The issues raised by the paper were subsequently addressed by a number of writers. Dooley[10] undertook a philosophical analysis of the term and concluded that its connotations with notions of dependence and continued fostering were inconsistent with teachers' central aims relating to pupil autonomy; whilst Lord[11] examined the interactive relationship of three sources of principles and development of thought and practice in the inaugural edition of the journal of the National Association for Pastoral Care In Education (which was subsequently to disseminate much of the 'new thinking' within schools). There has also been philosophical re-appraisal of the work of Hamblin[12] and Marland[13] in particular by Chambers[14], Hibberd[15] and McLaughlin[16].

Corbishley and Evans[17] adopted a sociological perspective in a cross-case study of two schools. Their empirical comment levels criticism at Hamblin[18] and Marland[19] in under-estimating the social and historical contexts that create organisational difficulties unique to a given school. The authors concluded that features of the structure of pastoral care are interpreted and evaluated in very different ways and that 'conventional prescriptions' of pastoral care were entirely inadequate.

The antecedents and development of institutionalised care have been analysed by Hughes[20], Lang[21] and Blackburn[22]. Hughes identified an incongruous relationship between nomenclature and objectives - Nineteenth Century overtones of 'obedience' and 'authority' seeming at variance with the declared encouragement of qualities of self-reliance; Lang traced changing emphases in thought and prescription dating from the public school tradition of the same period; whilst Blackburn drew attention to the developing role of the pastoral middle-manager and the shifting focus that has attended this from the 1950s.

The climate of 'review' gave rise to a dramatic increase in the literature relating to the theme of the relationship between the pastoral and academic aspects of educational provision. Whilst Hamblin's[23] theory of 'critical incidents' in a pupil's school career espoused an explicit concern for targeted support of the learning process, other perspectives perceived pastoral care as diverting attention from the deficiencies of the learning programme. Among the proponents of this position are Williamson[24] and Roberts[25] - both of whom point to the need for careful and reasoned consideration of the design of the academic curriculum if the 'problems' addressed by pastoral care are to be diminished. The relationship was further explored through Bennett's[26] consideration of the separate structural arrangements which often reinforce the pastoral/academic divide and via the work of Buckley[27] and Marland[28], both of whom advocated the notion of a 'pastoral curriculum' where 'teaching teams' assumed responsibility for all aspects of groups of pupils' education and whereby 'caring' and 'learning' were recognised as elements of the same enterprise. Empirical investigation of the relationship between pastoral care and the curriculum is not common; however, mention might be made of Vousden's[29] perspective on a whole-school pastoral curriculum and Joy's[30] cross-case study of the characteristics of the relationship so described.

Reference has been made to the co-existent dimensions of 'technique' and 'critique' and to discrepancies between 'theory' and 'practice' in pastoral care. Best et al's[31] case study of a large 11 - 18 comprehensive school attempted to draw together these disparate elements. Using an interpretive methodology, the study examined numerous aspects of pastoral care.

The investigators concluded that there was little evidence to substantiate the assumption that the institutionalisation of pastoral care roles corresponds directly with an increased concern for pupil welfare (indeed, an inverse relationship might be observed if systems were over-complex or inadequately defined); that a school ethos of care was, in all likelihood, an invalid notion since varied teacher perception would pre-suppose enactment of care on an idiosyncratic basis; and that where effective care is found to exist, this is not consequential upon formalised arrangements.

The 'conventional wisdom' of pastoral care which has been subjected to scrutiny in the critiques outlined above, has been parallelled by Lang's[32] citation of a similar 'wisdom' appertaining to teachers' 'knowledge' and 'understanding' of pupils' views and feelings. Lang presents the case for investigating pupil perspectives as a logical aspect of the research process (irrespective of its character) in terms of increased efficiency, the articulation of aims and objectives and as a necessary initial step towards increased pupil involvement and participation. Lang's research, which is recorded in a paper appropriately entitled, 'Taking the Consumer into Account', is set against the general paucity of rigorous research in the field to date and is, given its particular reference to the concerns of the present study, therefore, reported here in some detail.

Lang surveyed pupils' attitudes to pastoral care in twenty four West Midlands schools and declared the aims of the research[33] to be as follows: to -

1   provide preliminary information regarding pupils' feelings about, attitudes towards and understanding of a number of aspects of pastoral care and roles related to it;

2   give some indication of what the problems were that pupils felt confronted them;

3   explore the extent to which the contradictions noted in the structure and process of pastoral care were reflected in pupils' views;

4   ascertain the key problems pupils saw themselves as experiencing and the range of these problems;

5   map the range of elements pupils saw as going to make up teachers' pastoral roles.

Lang employed a methodology which incorporated the use of questionnaires, interviews and conversations and developed his hypotheses along the lines of 'grounded theory'[34]. Despite Lang's avowal that the research allowed only partial and fragmentary insights and that it gave little guidance for future initiatives, a number of important findings emerged[35]: some pupils are unaware of the contradictions and problems of pastoral care while others recognise them; pupils vary in their levels of awareness in relation to pastoral care and school generally; there were substantial variations in the degree to which pupils understood the nature and purposes of pastoral care in the school; pupils feelings towards the pastoral system and role in their school were more positive than originally hypothesised on the basis of pilot study data; many pupils tend not to use the pastoral system;

pupils regard accessibility and a humorous and open interpersonal approach as the most important things about teachers who are both popular and effective; and pupils encounter a number of problems and worries at school, the most significant of which are not necessarily those which are mainly dealt with by pastoral care.

The research confirmed that the 'conventional wisdom' of teachers relating to their 'knowledge' and 'understanding' of pupils' attitudes and perceptions towards pastoral care was, to some extent, erroneous; it recommended that teachers as individuals and schools as a whole should engage in investigating the perspectives, understandings and meanings pupils hold and ascribe to pastoral care; it endorsed an interpretative, qualitative methodology as an effective approach to the problem; and declared that teacher resistance to pupils' views needed to be recognised and positively addressed, if schools were to profit from the outcomes of research.

Teacher perspectives and attitudes towards pastoral care are to be found in both research-based and non-research-based literature. In the latter category, Marland[36] and Blackburn[37] are, perhaps, pre-eminent in conveying the 'conventional wisdom' of practical experience. Thus the former asserts that, for example, the teacher in the role of 'Tutor Ascendant' (ie one who is actively engaged in providing for pupils' welfare) will feel 'primary responsibility'[38] whilst the latter is able to declare -

'It is broadly true that members of staff become less anxious to split the roles of caring and demanding as they gain more experience and confidence in themselves as tutors and as teachers .....'[39]

Research investigations in this area include Grace's[40] study of views of pastoral care by subject and pastoral heads of department and an evaluation by Mace[41] of teacher attitudes to pastoral care in two secondary schools.

An investigation which sought to draw together the perceptions of pastoral care held by both teachers and pupils was conducted by Evans[42] in four Welsh secondary schools. Five hundred and eighty four Upper school pupils and one hundred and eighty staff were surveyed using a Likert-type scale. Evans' research design functioned at a purely descriptive level statistically - speaking; however, some of the findings are of interest in that they relate to an evident influence of the critique of Best et al[43] in particular and echo points raised in more ambitious research initiatives.

The aims and objectives statements used as response facilitating indicants were drawn from a number of sources in the literature on a largely verbatim basis and no attempt was made to incorporate statements that the school itself had articulated; however, the following conclusions were reached: that teacher perception of concept and structure was favourable, but that there was an evident lack of knowledge and understanding regarding process; that, correspondingly, pupils' perceptions towards the concept of school providing help and support were generally positive, but that there was greater dissatisfaction regarding the structure and process of pastoral systems; that pastoral care was viewed as being important to the schools' academic success; that whilst the definition of pastoral care was blurred by teachers' classification of a wide range of activities under the heading of 'pastoral care', there was, nonetheless, evidence of a pastoral/academic split - the problems of which were largely ignored; that there was some support for the premise that pupils' perceptions were being considered; and that pupils were reluctant to make use of the helping services provided.

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Evans' summation of pupils' views in the schools sampled was that pastoral work was seen as being 'rather sterile and pointless'; probably lacking, (according to Evans) -

'clearly stated objectives and necessary transfer of training and extraction of significant learning'[44].

Pastoral care in the sixth form

Having identified the general 'backcloth' against which pastoral care is currently conceived and enacted, it remains to consider those aspects which are particular to, and inherent within, arrangements for the 16 - 19 age range and for students in sixth form colleges in particular.

Such arrangements are, perhaps, most noticeably characterised by an acknowledgement that -

'the relationship between teacher and taught takes a new and maturer form at this stage',

involving students as, 'participants in their own guidance'[45]. It is this joint enterprise within an environment that is designed to be as near adult as possible that is central to sixth form college philosophy and markedly apparent in surveys of students' views.

Some indication of the importance which colleges attached to this notion from the outset, may be observed in the comments of various writers in a collection of papers on the theme of the sixth form college in practice[46].

Thus Gawthorpe[47], in referring to provision at Brockenhurst College in Hampshire, perceived -

'a community of young adults in which students have some responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs';

he noted also a 'need for new attitudes and creation of new relationships'[48], but acknowledged difficulties in relation to students requesting greater freedom than that with which they could comfortably cope and saw the task as being one of developing a 'sensible realisation' of the need for staff help and encouragement in asking for this.

Bailey[49] discerned a 'half-way house' at Luton for maturing sixteen year olds that bridged the gap between the closely-monitored world of school and the adult atmosphere of further and higher education and which combined supervision with an appropriate degree of independence. Tertiary arrangements at Preston gave rise to claimed benefits of an extended character: Crump[50] felt that the common educational environment shared with those having a more vocational orientation engendered a 'mutual understanding and respect'[51] and that the ability/aptitude/aspiration mix helped promote a favourable atmosphere for fostering improved personal relationships.

At Southampton, Leonard[52] noted, in common with Gawthorpe[53], the necessity for staff to adjust to -

'new concepts of teacher/student relations and to extend their pastoral and tutorial roles'[54],

in an environment which offered opportunities for students to gain experience in exercising freedom and responsibility. Interestingly, Leonard considers this interaction to be taking place at a time when young people are 'generally willing' to receive adult guidance. Little has a similarly benign perspective of student reaction to adult treatment of the age group at Stoke college in observing -

'a degree of self-discipline which makes staff supervision almost unnecessary'[55].

Clearly these pastoral 'successes' which typify the consensus view among those responsible for such provision, appear akin to the 'conventional wisdom' cited earlier. Given their lack of empirical foundation it seems appropriate to look to such research as might confirm or challenge the perspectives in question.

Criticism of sixth form colleges has often focused on the problems that attend transfer at 16+ and the subsequent question of the possible inadequacy of a period (which may be as short as nine months) in which the appropriate relationships have to be formed if student needs are to be met (cf Naylor's report for the Centre for Policy Studies)[56]. These associated issues create a useful framework in which to evaluate the colleges' success in meeting these needs.

Watkins'[57] survey of seven colleges provides some evidence of the adequacy of liaison and induction procedures. Eighty three percent of girls and 85% of boys expressed the view that they had 'settled down' within a period defined from 'the very beginning' to 'a few weeks' (a substantial proportion of whom 'felt at home' in the shorter rather than longer term). Watkins acknowledges that his terms of reference were not defined and that the creation of relationships constitutes the 'subtler part'.

However, broadly speaking, there is evidence here of the colleges counter-acting some of the immediate problems of the transitional stage.

Another investigation which attempts to match the theory and practice of transfer and transition is Dakin's[58] cross-case study of arrangements in two 'linked' colleges (technical and sixth form) and their associated 'feeder' schools.

Dakin interviewed staff involved in the transfer process in order to document something of student experience and to ascertain the respective perceptions of both schools and colleges regarding 'the mechanics of the system', which related both to the preparation given in the feeder institution and induction in the new college. It was concluded that there was an evident match between the 'theory' of transfer and observed practice which derived principally from staff being given both the necessary responsibility and sufficient time for liaison. The role of the Careers Service was additionally regarded as integral to the success of the transfer system.

Positive and anxiety-inducing aspects of transfer from a student perspective were highlighted in Ball and Pumfrey's[59] survey of two hundred and four students three months after joining a sixth form college. In addition to establishing worries and perceived opportunities at the time of transfer, the investigation also sought to elicit constructive criticism of the ways in which feeder schools, the college, parents, friends and the students themselves could have improved the process of transfer. The most frequently cited suggestions to effect such improvement related to provision of information and increased college-contact; other points raised were further guidance in subject choices and study skills, the degree of parental involvement, support of friends, and self-initiated efforts to derive greater benefits from liaison programmes, improve learning strategies and increase social interaction.

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Corresponding implications for the guidance system are self-evident; however, the authors also emphasise that careers guidance is perceived by many students as a major opportunity and stress the importance of an effective tutor-student relationship in discussing matters of concern to new students.

It is worth noting that sixth form colleges generally regard preparation for transfer as a continuous cyclical process. Watkins[60] provides a useful outline of three broad phases:

a) October to January - the provision of information and advice to potential students; delineation of college aims and ethos; a cameo portrait of what is 'on offer'. This first phase is characterized by circulation of literature and the presence of liaison staff in schools.

b) February to March - a period of application and acceptance; interviews are held and references taken up.

c) June to September - bridging and induction: students are familiarised with the college environment, staff and available courses and are encouraged to review subject choices and learning skills.

Doherty[61] undertook a study of reaction to a newly-instituted school sixth form induction course and found that students were anxious to seek help on educational or vocational matters, though not on personal ones; that they were satisfied with the educational guidance provided but demanded further vocational advice and that they saw the year head, not the tutor, as a reference point if a problem was to be resolved.

In addition, Doherty recommended the use of questionnaires as part of a wider framework for the evaluation of pastoral care.

A consensus of perspective with regard to the importance of cultivating adult attributes and valuing an atmosphere conducive to this was manifest in Dean et al's[62] survey of sixth formers in seventeen colleges and twenty two schools. In relation to other stated aims of 16 - 19 education, senior staff gave high frequency ratings to 'development of social responsibility and awareness' and 'development of personal qualities, particularly maturity and confidence'. Response to 'The most valuable educational experience offered' frequently made reference to 'Provision of adult (or near adult) environment'. Students on entry to college stressed expectation of adult treatment and those questioned after the second year of their course/having entered employment or higher education, commented favourably on this aspect of their college experience.

Kyte[63] adopted the role of 'teacher as researcher' at Rowley Regis College, Sandwell, in examining differences in perceptions of pastoral care as evidenced by data from an interview with a Vice-Principal and questionnaires distributed to other staff and students. The limitations of the college's pastoral care system as revealed by Kyte's investigation, related in particular to the role of the Personal Tutor. In addition to this being insufficiently well-defined, it was found that students related more to subject teachers than Personal Tutors and that both students and staff perceived pastoral care as the province of Senior Tutors. Kyte observed that the college appeared to have no overall policy on the development of pastoral care although perceived areas of agreement were found to exist (notably on the issue of close student-tutor relationships).

An inquiry that shared some common methodological ground with the present study, was Morgan's phenomenological investigation[64] of the accounts of staff and sixth form students about perceptions of pastoral care in a large upper secondary comprehensive school.

Morgan found that staff and students shared the assumption that pastoral care was essentially 'remedial' in character - that it operated in post hoc fashion to solve students' problems (as opposed to facilitating the anticipation and forestalling of difficulties by actively teaching awareness of critical stages and decisions, problem solving and students' responsibility for decision-making). It was noted (as in Kyte's[65] study) that students ascribed low prestige to their Form (Personal) Tutor and regarded Senior Tutors (Pastoral Heads) as the agents of pastoral care. In addition, Morgan reported congruence between the sixth form pastoral sub-system and that of the rest of the school. Finally, the special character of student-tutor relationships frequently alluded to at this level was not wholly reflected in the finding that, whilst staff anticipated that students would be willing to discuss 'personal issues' with them, the latter had a limited conception of 'legitimate' problems to be discussed. According to tutors, however, discussions of this kind did take place.

A further relatively recent perspective on the organisation and provision of pastoral guidance - specifically in sixth form colleges - is that afforded by HMI[66] in its survey of such institutions from 1983 - 1986. HMI drew attention to the pressures upon staff arising from the comparatively short period of time in which students were in their care.

Thus, there was a particular obligation in respect of acquiring sufficient information about students' academic background and future potential, as well as their personal interests and characteristics, if the most appropriate and beneficial course was to be provided. An obvious corollary to this was the need for the student to settle into such a course at an early stage and for immediate monitoring of both work and social adaptation.

In broad terms, HMI distinguished between those colleges which, as a result of institutional or Local Authority initiatives, had devised policies which met the differing needs of students; and those which, despite laying claim to offering 'open access', did not provide for the full range of need.

In ascertaining the effectiveness of Induction arrangements, HMI reported that 'most' colleges went to 'considerable' lengths to discuss students' future programmes of study, but found that Induction arrangements varied in length and depth; only 'some' schemes proving successful in both administrative and personal terms. Although the need to monitor progress closely during the early part of the courses was generally recognised by staff, the best practice was denoted by sensitivity to individual needs and the facilitating of any necessary changes to programmes of study with a minimum of 'fuss' and 'delay'.

In organisational terms, HMI found much that was laudable - a 'notable feature' of 'many colleges' being:

'well organised pastoral and tutorial systems ..... evolved to care for the academic, personal and social needs of students'[67].

The existence of written job specifications reflected the importance attached to a tutor's role; in some colleges, however, the task of guidance and monitoring was delegated to only a few members of staff and the role of the tutor was less well-defined. HMI's general conclusions regarding pastoral provision in sixth form colleges was that -

'The most effective system seems to be one in which time and opportunities for both informal and planned discussion with individuals are provided alongside a well-structured programme of activities taking place in tutor periods and where all tutors conscientiously and systematically undertake both pastoral guidance and academic tuition'[68].

Of the remaining sixth form surveys with which the writer is familiar, two in particular reveal something of the shift in emphasis towards the development of personal growth (and hence, pastoral concerns which foster this) which has accompanied the growth of the sixth form college.

Taylor et al's[69] survey of four hundred+ sixth form staff in schools in the West Midlands and North West of England is notable for its omission of any specific reference to personal development in listing broad aims relating to the main areas or aspects of sixth form education. Of those aims that teachers were invited to rank in order of importance, 'social and moral education' had the closest affinity to such a concern; only 17% of teachers ranked this aim in category one or two (out of eight categories) in the context of the importance they believed it should have and only 14% similarly in the importance they believed it actually had[70].

In similar vein, the <u>Schools Council's Sixth Form Survey</u>[71] of pupils and teachers revealed no significant difference in perceived importance of personal development from other aspects of sixth form life by either students or staff. Interestingly, however, 53% of all sixth formers cited better and closer relationships with teachers as the main difference between the sixth form and the lower school, noting in addition their being treated in a more individual and adult way, the existence of a less-formal atmosphere and a greater degree of dialogue with tutors. Correspondingly, 79% of staff thought greater maturity, confidence and a sense of responsibility the main benefits attained through the sixth form.

Stephenson[72], in common with most senior staff in sixth form colleges, is more sensitive to a reciprocity between staff-student relationships and personal development:

'..... the concept of positive personal development is much more than pastoral care in the sense of social work for those in difficulty. It means taking action that is calculated to influence and affect every student in an agreed way. This will be achieved most effectively with young adults by influence and therefore the right kind of staff-student relationship is essential'[73].

Similar perspectives are to be found in the work of other 'practitioners' such as Bennion[74], Macfarlane[75] and Watkins[76].

In common with schools, the focus of attention to the personal needs of students in sixth form colleges is located in the context of the tutor group. Its mode of organisation, its function and its management as outlined in the literature are discussed below.

The composition of tutor groups

Watkins[77] provides a useful summary of the different ways in which colleges organise their tutor groups. He notes that some institutions, New College, Telford and Itchen College, Southampton, for example, consider the needs of seventeen and eighteen year old students to be different from those of new entrants, who are, therefore, grouped accordingly. A clear disadvantage in this arrangement for Watkins is the question of group size being inconsistent with immediate and subsequent needs (being proportionately larger in the first year when individual attention is most needed and proportionately smaller in the second year when increased familiarity with college leads to less 'demand').

Most colleges opt for 'vertical' tutor group arrangements (mixed-age/mixed-ability) which Watkins argues (more convincingly in the writer's view than the generalization of a diminishing demand) extends relationships and promotes valuable interaction among the different age groups. However, Watkins adds the common rider of the desirability of catering for the needs of given sub-groups of students at certain points in the college year and the necessity of monitoring in particular, the needs of the one-year student.

Other criteria for grouping arrangements relate to subject-based considerations: Watkins notes that Richard Taunton College, Southampton, for example, attempts to match student interests and tutor specialisation on a 'loosely compatible' basis and, where possible, arranges student - tutor contact in the teaching situation. The obvious advantage of a common interest is acknowledged by Watkins but attention is drawn to students in this situation being unable to profit from the complementary relationship of having as a tutor someone by whom they are not taught.

A variation on this theme is Tynemouth College's approach where the four subject-based faculties define the tutorial system and John Leggott College's distribution of its TVEI students throughout the Lower Sixth Cohort in order to disseminate the TVEI philosophy.

The tutorial programme

Aside from daily periods of tutor-student contact for purposes of registration and administrative matters, a large number of colleges commonly allocate about one hour per week for structured tutorial work which not infrequently follows an agreed programme of 'topics' or 'units' intended to complement and support students' academic studies.

Baldwin and Wells' Active Tutorial Work Project[78] addressed in its final stages the personal and social development needs of 16 - 19 year olds in a variety of institutions. Its main aims, conceived in the context of a developmental group work approach, related to the understanding of human interaction and relationships, personal independence and preparation for the future, a sense of corporate identity through peer group integration, cultivation of appropriate learning strategies, self-evaluation, political and economic awareness and the ability to reconcile personal goals with the expectations of others. The authors stressed the need for parity between the perceived importance of personal and cognitive development, since the former would 'enhance and underpin' the latter, argued for specification of Behavioural objectives for affective education and called for unambiguous declarations of intention and content.

Hamblin[79] emphasises the 'vulnerability' of the age group and advocates the need for 'negotiated' as opposed to 'imposed' activity. The principle issue for Hamblin is that of 'guidance' and he identifies four 'basic modules' at its centre:

Careers guidance and the issue of unemployment

Social and life skills

Group interaction

Learning about learning

In constructing and delivering such modules there is a need, it is suggested, for self-created frameworks of evaluation devised by both staff and students which monitor input to the guidance sub-system, job analysis (what has to be done), skills analysis (how it is done), sources of inefficiency and output[80].

Bennion[81] examines some of the arguments pro and con the inclusion of tutorial work in the 16 - 19 curriculum. In the latter instance there are those who, Bennion points out, see colleges being over-protective and over-supportive, and view additional tutorial time as generating artificial activities towards which staff lack sympathy and for which they have inadequate training; however, tutoring 'rests its case' on 'helping students define and achieve their educational goals'[82]. Over and above student monitoring, liaison and essential administrative tasks, which may constitute tutors' central responsibilities, Bennion is conscious of a degree of latitude of approach consistent with staff preference and widely-differentiated student need. Watkins[83] discusses the problem faced by those colleges which have registration as the only scheduled student-tutor contact time. John Leggott College, for example, makes provision for a tutorial hour for the majority of its students about six times a year, when matters of assessment or examination entry arise; at New College, Telford, the Core Studies programme defines tutor group activity and tutors see their students for some two or three hours each week.

Whichever of these patterns is adopted, few colleges are likely to be able to devote the amount of time to personal and social education recommended by the City of Manchester Education Authority in its sixth form college curriculum guidelines[84], which suggested a total of six to eight hours a week for this purpose.

The management of tutor groups

For the majority of colleges, the Personal Tutor is the central figure not only of the pastoral system, but also in the work of the college as a whole. Charged with oversight of (typically) a group of some twelve to twenty students, he or she assumes a degree of responsibility which varies from institution to institution. Macfarlane[85] refers to an 'untypical devolution' at South-East Essex Sixth Form College where tutors have 'full responsibility' throughout a student's course, from the process of application to provision of the final reference and monitoring of leaving procedures. A more common role specification is also delineated; this might include: integration of the student into the college community and 'first-line' responsibility for his/her subsequent welfare, explanation and interpretation of college policy and procedures, oversight of a developing personal autonomy, monitoring of general academic progress (including subject staff liaison and student acquisition of study skills), identification and realistic appraisal of career/higher education aspirations and facilitating of effective interpersonal relationships. Macfarlane also draws attention to competing demands on the tutor's time from such sources as subject-based developmental work, participation in General Studies programmes, extra curricular activities and involvement in team planning and evaluation initiatives, in addition to a varied and demanding subject-teaching role.

Such pressures have given rise in part to an acknowledgement in the literature of the possible disfunction between 'official' policy and evident practice with regard to tutorial commitment.

Watkins[86] recognises that some college staff consider their teaching role to have a higher priority than their tutorial brief, whilst Hamblin[87] is alert to the necessary task (as part of the process of evaluation) of distinguishing 'systematically' between a tutor's:

prescribed role as laid down in job descriptions and official documents;

interpreted role which stems from the holder's beliefs and characteristics;

expected role which is a product of the beliefs and expectations of others and often associated with contradictions and conflict;

and

performed role[88].

However, HMI[89] found that whilst some staff gave the role of Personal Tutor only 'perfunctory attention' the attitude did not predominate. Watkins[90] identifies a further factor which derives from the interaction of these facets of the tutorial role, namely, that of staff confidence in undertaking the task, and stresses the need for support from senior colleagues and appropriate training, such as Hampshire LEA's two-day residential course for tutors at the end of the summer term to which a selection of students is also invited.

A slightly different emphasis is apparent in the view of Bennion[91] who, whilst accepting that 'good can be made better by training'[92], sees nothing intrinsic to effective tutoring that is not apparent in good teaching (the former simply being an 'extension' of the latter, the skills being 'interchangeable' and the roles 'complementary'). The notion of tutors requiring 'a special order of gifts' is overshadowed for Bennion by demonstration of 'sympathetic and detached judgment' accompanied by respect for the individual[93].

There is a conscious awareness, however, in Bennion's paper of the likelihood of a demand for tutor guidance and support which may be manifested in both provision of appropriate resources and -

'that most effective form of in-service training, namely the sharing of good practice among fellow practitioners'[94].

By way of conclusion to the foregoing, Stephenson's[95] view of the essential, if not principal task of personal and social development in which most sixth form colleges would consider themselves to be engaged, may be cited; it is a task enacted in an institution -

'in which all staff-student relationships are appropriate to emerging adulthood ....., in which members know and recognise each other as individuals, and within which each student can experience a sense of responsibility and identity within the community'.

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

This review of the evolution of the concept, organisation and practice of pastoral care has focused on the distinction that may be drawn between the literature of 'technique' and 'critique'; between a 'conventional wisdom' and a more rigorous and analytical perspective derived from empirical investigation and located in works of philosophical, historical and sociological reappraisal. It has further explored the theoretical and practical parameters that inform provision at post-compulsory level within sixth form colleges, both in accordance with pastoral concerns in general and the needs of 16 - 19 year olds in particular.

Within many sixth form colleges the principal aim has been that of the personal development of the individual. Colleges have sought especially to award status to the student and have stressed the necessity for appropriate staff-student relationships in this regard.

The Personal Tutor has been a central figure in the 'institutionalisation' of care, assuming, on occasion, full responsibility for those students in his group. The size and composition of college tutor groups has reflected concern for establishing a sense of identity and fulfilling interpersonal relationships, whilst tutorial work has endeavoured to help students determine and realise their educational goals.

There is some evidence to suggest that an adult or near adult relationship characterises staff-student interaction in colleges and school sixth forms and that the process of transfer and transition is managed to students' general advantage (in defined local contexts) – although student perceptions of the associated challenges need to be taken into account.

The most recent survey of pastoral provision – that undertaken by HMI[96] – has drawn attention to the problems faced in meeting the needs of sixth form college students as a consequence of the relatively brief period spent in a tutor's care; to the varying degrees of success achieved in this regard (both in the shorter and longer term); to (the latter notwithstanding) the generally effective organisation of pastoral and tutorial systems; to the importance within such systems of parallel opportunities for individual discussion and for participation in a coherent programme of activities; and to the value of staff being committed to both the pastoral and academic dimensions of their role.

Ribbins and Best[97] offer an assessment of the current position in the debate on pastoral care and argue the case for its future concerns. The need for 'outspoken critiques' of the 'conventional wisdom' has now been superseded, they suggest, by the need for systematic research of the various facets of pastoral care and the development of good practice (or 'technique') by means of curriculum evaluation and action research. Such initiatives, coupled with a rigorous and analytical approach, constitute the central part of the 'new' conception, organisation and practice of pastoral care.

Marland[98], in common with Lang, is conscious of the value of research both in enhancing present knowledge and understanding of pastoral care and in analysing and evaluating emerging practice. In acknowledging the criticism by Best et al[99] of his and other writers' concern with the 'structure' of pastoral care, Marland takes the opportunity to note the constraints of circumstance in being 'obliged to use anecdote and personal observation'[100] in the absence of more empirical data at that time. Marland argues that such research as has been conducted to date (the comment is sufficiently recent to broadly reflect the current situation) has assumed too narrow a focus in being remote from the practical implications of pastoral care in schools. The remedy, he observes, is to be found in a closer acquaintance between researcher and institution, in teachers themselves formulating questions for researchers to answer and in schools initiating and conducting their own action research.

The major directions for future research in pastoral care lead, in Marland's view, to the identification of pastoral procedures that will enable pupils to be more effective learners and the study of tutor-student experience and interaction.

The following extract from an edited report of a paper presented by Marland to a National Association of Pastoral Care in Education seminar at Warwick University illustrates both the essential problem of pastoral care as it is currently perceived and a means of addressing it that is pertinent to the present investigation:

'The current difficulty is the lack of conceptual clarification about pastoral care, with little or no consensus about what it should be doing. This is, perhaps, one of the most important areas for research in the future. More information should be collected through research and surveys on attitudes to and conceptions of pastoral care'[101].

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THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES IN THE ASSESSMENT OF ATTITUDES

In examining the issues concerning the theory and practical assessment of attitudes, it is intended that the emphasis be upon delineating problems of instrument design and use. It is not proposed to re-engage in debate of the relative merits and limitations of the principal methods of attitude scaling, which have been well-documented (though a rationale for employing the method of 'summated' ratings in the present investigation is offered at a successive stage in the study).

However, some indication of the range of perception of the concept of 'Attitude' and therefore the present 'state of the art', is deemed an essential if relatively brief precursor of matters more operational in character. As a hypothetical or 'latent' psychological variable, the many definitions of attitude that have been offered give testimony to its complexity. Allport's review of numerous earlier definitions gave rise to -

'a mental and neural state of readiness exerting a directive influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related'[1].

Thurstone[2] (and thereafter, Edwards[3]) and Nunnally[4] recognised a preference for positive or negative reaction towards a given psychological object, whilst Oppenheim[5] and Green[6] emphasise 'readiness' and 'consistency' of response respectively. However, Moore[7] concludes that the many ways of defining attitudes act as a constraint in establishing a satisfactory or universal definition.

The particular difficulties arising from attempts to resolve the questions of attitude scale validity and reliability have received considerable attention. McNemar[8], in a seminal article, conceived five methods of confirming the validity of scales; these were: that attitude as signified by a subject's scale score be compared with observable behaviour in a corresponding context - the degree of agreement to be taken as an appropriate indicant; that the scale be administered to groups whose opinions are known and the extent of differentiation noted; that scale scores be correlated with ratings of attitudes made by close acquaintances of the subjects concerned; that the test instrument be validated against a known scale (itself having satisfactory validity); and that subjects be interviewed to cross-check their declared opinions.

McNemar's strategies have subsequently been subject to critical examination by numerous authorities, of which a representative selection is deemed adequate here. Krech et al[9] indicate that -

'action is determined not by a single attitude, but by a number of attitudes, wants and situational conditions, operating simultaneously'.

Fishbein and Ajzen[10], Wicker[11] and Edwards[12] also offer evidence of attitude-behaviour inconsistency and sound a cautionary note concerning the predictive validity of scales. Further substantiation of the argument is inherent in Moore's[13] distinction between 'Expressed' or verbally elicited attitudes and 'Manifest' attitudes. For whilst the former lack permanence and stability, are of uncertain formation, vary in accordance with respondent maturity and represent either global or highly specific attitude constellations which may obscure the underlying attitude and its structure, the latter are, Moore suggests, susceptible to correspondingly greater errors of interpretation since observable behaviour may not be a function of the attitude from which it purports to derive.

The 'known groups' criterion whereby groups of individuals who are deemed to have different action attitudes are compared by virtue of their elicited verbal attitudes, has been employed with some degree of success by Thurstone and Chave[14], Eysenck[15] and Evans[16], among others. However, the limitations of this method of correlational validity have been addressed by Green[17], who draws attention to the difficulty of evaluating the extent of the association and observes that in addition the groups concerned are seldom very well 'known' (Green's 'ideal' solution to determination of correlational validity lies in the development of an 'action attitude scale' requiring 'extensive observation' of the subject; the practical implications of such a scheme in conjunction with its 'localised' validity account, of course, for the limited role of direct measures of behaviour in educational enquiry).

Krech et al[18] highlight a further constraint with respect to uncertainty of adequate discrimination amongst those who hold moderate as opposed to extreme attitudes. The authors indicate, however, that numerous scales have been invested with 'useful' validity through this method. Evans[19] is also supportive in suggesting that whilst the scores of different groups may overlap to some extent, scales which give credible results with known groups could reasonably be used to investigate the attitudes of those with whom the researcher is unfamiliar. McNemar's[20] third and final methods are found by Evans to have limited utility owing to the element of subjectivity involved.

However, Thurstone and Chave[21] obtained self-ratings of subjects' attitudes, which gave a correlation of +0.67 with scores on the attitude scale. Whilst this coefficient was not in itself unsatisfactory, the investigators did, however, decline to draw any significant conclusions from it since the reliability of the ratings had not been established. In discussing the establishing of concurrent validity (McNemar's fourth method) Youngman[22] emphasises that the construction of a new test instrument is often the direct consequence of the lack of an equivalent alternative - hence the need, he points out, for modification of relevant existing instruments or the employment of closely-matched ones for purposes of comparison.

The difficulties encountered by researchers in the pursuit of validity in the assessment of attitudes are reflected in Oppenheim's[23] contention that there is 'at present no way of making sure that an attitude scale is valid'.

With regard to reliability, Vernon[24] indicates that most attitude scales have a reliability of between +0.75 and +0.90. He suggests, however, that high reliability may be counter-productive if the resulting homogeneity of the items allows the respondent to present a conceptualised view of himself rather than his actual opinions. Green[25] reports that low 'stabilities' (test-retest reliability) of attitude scales have been accepted on the basis of the dynamic character that attitudes are deemed to possess. Studies of attitude change are, he points out, concerned with 'consistent shifts of response syndrome'[26] as opposed to 'sporadic changes in specific response tendencies'[27], and thus low stability of scores is to be anticipated. However, Green emphasises the need for parallel-form reliability as an indicant of the constancy of the change.

Where reliability has been determined on a single occasion of testing, ie when an estimate of internal consistency has been sought, the Kuder-Richardson[28] formulas have had widespread application. Cronbach[29] generalised KR20 to include items scored dichotomously or continuously; this formulation, in common with Guttman's[30] coefficient of reproducibility, tends to reflect a lower bound of the true value.

Cronbach, however, maintains that perfect internal consistency is not a pre-requisite for test interpretation. On a further methodological note, Youngman[31] advocates caution in determining the length of a test, since an increase in the number of items often gives rise to a tendency for the associated alpha to increase, thereby disguising the effect of unsuitable items.

In being allied to the issues of validity and reliability, the key concept of 'unidimensionality' has received considerable attention in the literature. For Anastasi[32], it is the definitive criterion, since attitude scales it is suggested –

'are designed to provide a quantitative measure of the individual's relative position along a unidimensional attitude continuum'[33].

Nuttall[34] notes that Likert Scales[35] are particularly prone to the problem of unidimensionality, since subjects with equal scores who are then deemed to have approximately 'equal' attitudes may vary in the patterning of responses which constitute the total score.

Whilst Nuttall cautions against interpreting individual attitudes on this basis, he acknowledges that in the case of group comparisons (as in the present study) the issue is a less vital one. Guttman's[36] approach to the problem of attitude measurement circumnavigated this difficulty but gave rise to attitudes under investigation being narrowly defined as a result of the requirement for attitude statements to be relatively homogeneous in content.

Further difficulties stemming from an emphasis on unidimensionality in scale construction are specified by Krech et al[37] who note that unidimensional scales may not in themselves have optimum validity where complex issues or future behaviour patterns are concerned, and that insistence upon such instruments may preclude study of groups whose attitudes are structured multi-dimensionally as opposed to unidimensionally. The subsequent question of the application of multidimensional scaling to attitude measurement has been discussed by Torgerson[38], Napior[39], Youngman[40] and Subkoviak[41].

The theme here has been taken up in a critique of research in the field during the 1960s and 1970s by Gardner[42], who found frequent absence of an underlying theoretical construct among scale items and confusion of variables leading to summation of items that were psychologically distinct. Gardner recommended the use of factor analysis or panels or judges to allocate items to sub-scales; the items to be then distributed randomly within the instrument and summed in association with items belonging to the same scale. By way of conclusion, Gardner stresses that the purpose and appropriateness of scales needs to be determined if validity is to be achieved on other than assumptive grounds.

The attribute of 'intensity' and the corresponding question of the 'neutral' region of scales has also been subject to debate and investigation. Oppenheim[43] advances the view that our understanding of attitudes and their role in behaviour prediction may be enhanced through consideration of the intensity component.

Two of the most commonly used scaling methods, those devised by Likert[44] and Thurstone[45], have been considered to give inadequate definition of the neutral region. In the former case, the interpretation of a neutral point may be highly ambiguous because of the different ways of arriving at a score in this region; in the latter case there may be a lack of correspondence between judges' allocation of neutral items in ascertaining their scale value and subject's perception of the same in responding (qv Krech et al)[46]. However Suchman's[47] use of the cumulative scaling technique facilitated demonstration of a U-shaped function between intensity and attitude score which made it possible to locate the area of minimum intensity and, therefore, the neutral region.

In general terms, precise definition of the minimum, or 'zero' point, is crucial only where it is deemed necessary to dichotomise subjects' views on a 'positive' or 'negative' basis.

Underlying discussion of technical problems of scaling there has been evident concern in the literature for the fundamental question of item construction and selection. These items, or 'statements', should, it is suggested, be 'meaningful and interesting, even exciting'[48], 'carefully edited and selected'[49] and 'carefully worded (and) insightful'[50].

Edwards[51] has summarised suggestions from a number of sources (Wang[52], Thurstone and Chave[53], Likert[54], Bird[55], Edwards and Kilpatrick[56]) regarding informal criteria for editing statements, and since these have helped inform the present investigation they are recorded below:

1   Avoid statements that refer to the past rather than to the present.

2   Avoid statements that are factual or capable of being interpreted as factual.

3   Avoid statements that may be interpreted in more than one way.

4   Avoid statements that are irrelevant to the psychological object under
     consideration.

5   Avoid statements that are likely to be endorsed by almost everyone or by almost no-one.

6   Select statements that are believed to cover the entire range of the affective scale of interest.

7   Keep the language of the statements simple, clear and direct.

8   Statements should be short, rarely exceeding twenty words.

9   Each statement should contain only one complete thought.

10 Statements containing universals such as 'all', 'always', 'none' and 'never' often introduce ambiguity and should be avoided.

11 Words such as 'only', 'just', 'merely' and others of a similar nature should be used with care and moderation in writing statements.

12 Whenever possible, statements should be in the form of simple sentences rather than in the form of compound or complex sentences.

13 Avoid the use of words that may not be understood by those who are to be given the completed scale.

14 Avoid the use of double negatives.

In conjunction with the writing of attitude statements, attention has been focused on one of the major problems of the self-report record, that of 'response set' - the conscious or unconscious shaping of a subject's pattern of item response, regardless of content, in accordance with motivational factors such as 'social desirability', 'acquiescence', continuous preference for 'extreme' or 'uncertain' response categories (or avoidance of the same) and so forth (Moore[57], Oppenheim[58], Cronbach[59], Martin[60] and Eysenck[61] among others). Whilst difficulty in detecting and compensating for response set is acknowledged, strategies for nullifying given sets have been devised (eg counterbalancing of the negative and positive orientation of scale items is a common method of cancelling acquiescence, although Knowles[62] argues against this).

The technique of 'forced-choice' comparison[63] was developed to combat the response set problem in general. However, whilst this method provides clear discrimination of an individual's characteristics, comparison between individuals is less easily achieved and 'frustration' effects may be generated through the restriction criteria.

Matthews[64] brings into focus the paucity of schemes for assessing attitudes in schools; for whilst there is frequent specification of affective aims and objectives, this is seldom accompanied by attempts to assess attitudes in the outcomes of education. In the context of the writer's own investigation it is interesting to note Matthews' citation of the Schools Council Sixth Form Survey[65] which found that students attached considerable importance to affective general aims concerned with encouragement of independence, development of character, personality and a sense of responsibility.

Matthews indicates that assessment of attitude by direct observation of student behaviour has begun to feature to a limited degree in external examinations such as Nuffield Science and the Schools Council Integrated Science Project. In conclusion, Matthews declares that teacher accountability presupposes overt assessment of children's attitudes utilising the pupils themselves as the main agency of assessment, thereby reversing the emphasis lodged in the assessment of cognitive outcomes.

A potential framework for matching statements of affective objectives and method of assessment may be found in the taxonomy constructed by Krathwohl[66]. This specifies classification of 'attainment' of an attitude, based on levels of adoption and acceptance of an educational experience. These levels are, in ascending hierarchical order: reception, response, valuing, organisation of values and characterisation.

Pedagogical considerations are also inherent in Moore's[67] recent review of the literature relating to attitude assessment in science and computer studies. Moore comments that of the 'exogenous' variables (those outside the school's control), gender is correlated quite strongly with attitude, whilst ability is a weak determinant. Where 'endogenous' variables are concerned (those within the school's sphere of influence), teacher classroom behaviours - especially instructional methods - and classroom 'environment' (the term for the complex psycho-sociological climate of the classroom) are the most significant correlates of attitude.

Attitude formation

In concluding a review of the theory and practical assessment of attitudes it seems necessary to give brief consideration to the question of the determinants of attitude formation (given the conceptual and methodological implications for the present study, and its possible outcomes in terms of institutional initiatives in developing/modifying existing perspectives).

Krech et al[68] offer a useful exposition of the factors which are instrumental in the shaping of attitudes; these are, respectively wants satisfaction, available information, group affiliations and personality. That wants satisfaction generates either favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards the object in question was demonstrated by Rosenberg[69], whose research into the orientation and intensity of students' feelings towards freedom of speech and its instrumental value in facilitating or frustrating personal goals revealed a significant association in this respect.

Davis's[70] study of community attitudes towards a public health measure revealed how exposure to 'factual information' may undermine rather than reinforce the validity of a given attitude; however, as Krech et al[71] observe, information generally contributes to the determination of an attitude with respect to its congruence to pre-existing attitudes. Many investigators are of the opinion that 'primary' or 'membership' group influence is a major determinant of attitude formation, ie that attitudes originate and are sustained in the context of the groups to which the individual 'belongs' (and to a lesser extent, those to which he aspires - his 'referent' group).

Group affiliation is compounded as a determinant of attitude, however, by the wants satisfaction of the individual who will select accordingly from the prevailing attitudes of the group; and by inter-group affiliation dynamics which may support conflicting or corresponding perspectives[72] (cf Furlong's[73] 'interaction sets', discussed elsewhere).

Finally, researchers have examined the role of personality in the formation and functioning of attitudes. Earlier investigations (eg Vetter[74] and Dexter[75]) sought clearly identifiable traits as correlates of attitudes whereas later research demonstrated a concern for revealing more general personality patterns which permeated attitude systems (cf French[76], Adorno et al[77], McClosky[78]).

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

Whilst there is some consensus in the literature with regard to an understanding of the concept of 'Attitude', the numerous definitions that exist are indicative of its complexity.

The fundamental question of validity has been a particular focus for the attention of researchers who have sought greater precision in the assessment of attitudes. Thus earlier formulations of validation criteria (McNemar[79]) have been subject to reappraisal and review ('action tendency': Moore[80]; Krech et al[81]; Fishbein and Ajzen[82]; Wicker[83]; Edwards[84]; 'known groups perspective': Green[85]; Krech et al[86]; Evans[87]; 'known instrument comparison': Youngman[88]; 'peer-group rating' and 'interview corroboration': Evans[89]).

Increased validity of test instruments has been achieved where attitudes are not congruent to group norms or where the self-concept of the individual is likely to be compromised, through the use of 'disguised techniques'. However, deficiencies remain evident where investigators have not identified an underlying theoretical construct among scale items or confused psychologically distinct variables in scoring procedures[90].

The concept illustrated in the first of these criticisms is that of 'unidimensionally' - a feature of scale construction that has been subject to wide-ranging discussion and investigation (Anastasi[91]; Likert[92]; Guttman[93]; Nuttall[94]).

The second relates to the need to allow for the multidimensional patterning of attitudes (cf Coombs'[95] comments on the structure of psychological traits) and the corresponding application of multidimensional scaling methods to their measurement (Youngman[96]; Torgerson[97]; Subkoviak[98]; Krech et al[99]).

In addition, the attitude itself may be held to be invalid if respondents are insufficiently well-informed with respect to the object of the attitude.

Other issues involved in the process of measurement include those of 'response set' (Moore[100]; Oppenheim[101]; Cronbach[102]; Martin[103]; Eysenck[104]), 'intensity' and the 'neutral region' of scales (the latter being adjudged inadequately defined by the Likert[105] and Thurstone[106] methods of scaling, but effectively demonstrated in the approach by Suchman[107]).

In ensuring that the attitude domain has been appropriately sampled and represented, investigators have given much consideration to the 'initial and basic problem'[108] of item assembly and selection (Edwards[109]; Oppenheim[110]; Wang[111]; Evans[112]; Likert[113]; Thurstone and Chave[114]; Bird[115]; Edwards and Kilpatrick[116]), thus facilitating understanding of the structure of the attitude.

Whilst effective aims and objectives are frequently valued and specified in education (Matthews[117]; Eaglesham[118]; Lewis[119]), little attempt has been made to assess outcomes in these terms. Pupils themselves might be instrumental in such a process. Measurement in this area has a theoretical basis as a result of the development of a taxonomic framework based on adoption and acceptance of educational experience[120]. In given subject areas (science/computer studies) significant correlates of attitude (gender/teacher classroom behaviour/classroom environment) have been identified[121].

Though conscious that it has not proved possible to sample adequately the 'action-tendency' component of attitudes*, nor to demonstrate measurement of the primary characteristics of 'multiplexity' (the number and variety of elements forming a component), 'consistency' (among cognitive, affective and action tendency aspects of attitudes), 'inter-connectedness' (giving rise to attitude clusters) and 'consonance' (among the attitudes making up a cluster), Krech et al[124] express the view that attitude measurement remains -

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* Some scales aim to elicit an 'action' response (cf Rosander[122]) but establish only 'intent' (cf Green's[123] notion of an 'attitude action scale' incorporating 'extensive observation' of the subject).

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'..... perhaps the outstanding technical achievement of the social psychologist'.

The position adopted in the present study is that the development and application of the attitude measurement procedures described in Chapter 5, is based on an awareness of their utility against the theoretical and practical background of assessment issues detailed above. Within an area of potential validity threat, 'fitness for purpose' has consequently been pursued with some vigour.

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ACQUISITION AND REPORTING OF DATA - OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In conducting his research, the writer has followed a key guiding principle in respect of enabling an assessment to be made of the evidence upon which analysis is based: that of providing a detailed description of the transactions and processes observed in the context of the research setting. This 'audit' trail[1] has important implications in terms of the issues of validity and reliability and these are examined subsequently in some detail.

Platt[2] discusses methods of presenting evidence in support of data which represent practical alternatives to the less feasible strategies of 'an appeal to authority' and total display of data. Three broad approaches are cited: firstly, that of using a systematic method and providing a general account of this, rather than describing the individual points in its implementation; secondly individual deductions may be supported by reference to the relevant aspects of methodology, or by sustaining them in ad hoc ways (consideration of positive and negative instances would be included here, for example); thirdly, use might be made of illustrations that are qualitatively representative of the data as a whole - generalization, where necessary, would then derive from selection of different examples which exhibit the range of meanings to be conveyed and the differential significance which should be attached to them.

Platt suggests that some combination of all three strategies seems most appropriate - the emphasis being dictated by the nature of the data and the conclusions which are to be drawn from them. In following a generally integrated approach to the reporting of data, as Platt suggests, the present study leans towards weighting in respect of illustration (affording the opportunity both for detailed concrete description and interpretive commentary).

Reliability and validity

Of the issues of reliability or replication, generalizability and internal validity which arise in the context of the reporting of qualitative data (separate consideration is given in respect of the quantitative dimensions of the study), the first is perhaps the least problematic. 'Reliability', or the extent to which findings can be replicated, has been viewed (in its positivistic sense) by numerous authorities as being of limited relevance to qualitative case studies or an ethnographic framework of enquiry. Mackinnon, for example, notes a lesser preoccupation with reliability or replication of what is discovered than with 'advancing empathic understanding'[3], whilst Hammersley observes that although 're-studies' may be undertaken in the field, it is the -

'..... object and setting of the study (the community) not the hypotheses and procedures of the original research which are replicated'.[4]

Thus the concepts of 'replication' and 're-study' are not synonymous. Merriam has been more emphatic in rejecting the applicability of notions traditionally based on constancy of phenomena and a single reality:

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'Because what is being studied ..... is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted and highly contextual; because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and because the emergent design ..... precludes a priori control, achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful, but impossible'.[5]

Others have looked to alternative concepts: Lincoln and Guba[6], for example, refer to 'dependability' or internal 'consistency' of results; reliability in these terms derives from explanation of the researcher's theoretical orientation, a detailed account of the procedures of data collection and analysis (the 'audit trail' referred to overleaf), and both data and method triangulation. In addition, whilst the researcher's primary objective is to demonstrate an adequate representation and grasp of participants' construction of reality, idiosyncratic interpretation of data and methodological perspective make replication neither possible nor desirable. Walker takes up the former issue in stating that -

'..... the relationship between our representations of events and the events themselves is not critical because no claim is made for our representations as against those made by anyone else'.[7]

Generalizability, or comparability, or external validity as it may variously be referred to, has, by comparison, proved to be a more complex issue. As in the case of reliability, viewing generalizability in the manner of experimental, statistical studies points up an obvious lack of correspondence with the rationale and processes of qualitative case study.

In sample-based research the investigator is concerned to establish the equivalence of his sample and the population from which it was drawn, in order that a known distribution of given variables may be predicted for other settings, groups of individuals and so forth. Thus, it might be suggested that whilst case study research may be able to furnish-

'internally coherent and plausible explanations for individual cases,[8]

its 'deficiency' is in respect of not allowing generalization.

However, concern for context need not necessarily be regarded as an impediment to generalization if the latter is reframed to reflect the underlying assumptions of qualitative inquiry[9]. Whilst an extended discussion of the reconceptualization of generalizability is not undertaken here, mention might be made of Cronbach's proposal for 'working hypotheses'[10] which take account of local conditions in describing and interpreting phenomena as the researcher moves from situation to situation; Erickson's 'concrete universals' which derive from -

'studying a specific case in great detail and then comparing it with other case studies in equally great detail'[11],

(ie locating the general in the particular); Stake's notion of 'naturalistic generalization'[12] where personal experience, intuition and tacit knowledge form the basis of judgement of transferability; and 'reader or user generalizability', where, as Wilson[13] points out, what is applicable to given situations is determined by people in those situations.

Spencer and Dale consider generalizsation in case study research may be attempted (though not assumed) given certain procedures:

'..... the individual cases are treated as wholes-in-context, rather than as units in samples of populations ..... There must be a systematic (and, therefore, relatively complete) description of the units to the compared: of their properties, the patterned relationships between the properties, their relationships with their contexts and the properties of those contexts. Then propositions must be formulated about that particular pattern of properties. Finally, situations in other times and places must be examined to see whether similar patterns exist: the propositions can then be generalized to other situations where similar patterns are identified'.[14]

The authors also draw attention to the value of generalizable concepts developed in the course of a study which make an important contribution to the refinement and extension of current knowledge, and also to the 'new knowledge' which is acquired through the provision of explanations to those in the situations under study (the latter observation is one which is consistent with Stenhouse's view[15] that case study research should be of benefit and interest to those people who are studied and that it should be directed to improving the capacity of such individuals to do their job).

In undertaking an examination of several cases, the present study increases the potential for generalizing beyond the particular case, as well as creating opportunities to establish 'the range of generality' of findings and explanations and to identify the conditions under which such findings will occur.

Sound inference being the goal of all research, an inquiry conducted within the traditions of qualitative case study has no lesser concern for internal validity than one which emanates from a more 'experimental' design; indeed in the former instance such a concern is likely to be subject to greater critical scrutiny than may be the case in respect of the latter where validity is accounted for at the outset. Case study research affords the opportunity to present a detailed account of the processes and procedures employed, in order to establish authenticity of inference; at the same time, however, detailed and full description of the case (or cases) will allow development of alternative reader interpretations. In investigating the perspectives of those on whom the inquiry focuses, claims to validity derive from a researcher's representation of participants' construction of reality. From a qualitative standpoint, reality is viewed as -

'holistic, multi-dimensional and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed and measured'.[16]

When reality is viewed in these terms, the style of research presently adopted and described facilitates a claim for strong internal validity.

In addition, a number of procedural strategies were used to enhance the validity of findings; these included:

1   Triangulation (both multiple data sources and multiple methods).

2   Checking interpretations with participants involved.

3   Gathering data on-site over a period of time.

4   Peer-referral.

5   Involving participants in the various phases of research.

6   Acknowledging one's own biases, assumptions and theoretical predispositions.

Such measures safeguard the likelihood of sound conclusions grounded in verified evidence and help counteract the possibility of omission of significant data. Murphy comments:

'Because fieldwork is designed to explore issues in depth, it naturally has to be selective and the number of sites visited is usually quite small. Within these sites only a small number of events are observed, only a few people are interviewed and only some documents are read'.[17]

Ball is, perhaps, unduly categorical:

'For everything that is noticed a multitude of things go unseen; for everything that is written down a multitude of things are forgotten'[18];

however, such claims as are made with regard to insightful portrayal of a case are informed by awareness of issues of this kind.

Staff interviews

Tape-recorded 'Exploratory' interviews were held with senior staff of the colleges during the months of October-December 1989. The individuals concerned had designated responsibility at Principal, Vice-Principal and Senior Teacher level (the latter being variously referred to as 'Professional' or 'Senior' Tutors).

Each college was approached by letter (outlining the parameters of the study, the researcher's background, the envisaged time-scale and proposed methods of data collection) which requested an interview that would in part allow for reinforcement of the initial approach, but which essentially would have a heuristic purpose - namely the development and collection of ideas that might inform an understanding of the perspectives of particular groups of potential respondents within the institution. In this way it was hoped that not only would the thematic areas of the research begin to assume a more definite focus in both dimensional and directional terms, but that attitudinal and perceptual expressions so derived might facilitate construction of questions and scale items for use in the proposed Attitude Questionnaire. In common with investigations which have developed instruments for measuring attitudes on similar methodological lines (cf Barker Lunn[19] and Smith[20]), it was anticipated that constructs elicited from (as opposed to imposed on) respondents would enhance validity (the concept of which is discussed in greater detail elsewhere). Such expressions were considered in the context of both statements of philosophy located in policy documentation and observations made on site within various sub-units of the institution.

In the case of Settledon College and Medley College, interviews in the first instance were with the senior staff member to whom the Principal had delegated the task: the Vice-Principal and Professional Tutor respectively (the Principals in both colleges being interviewed subsequently). In the case of Newfields College, the Principal undertook personal responsibility for the 'briefing', subsequently delegating responsibility as 'key informant' to the Vice-Principal. Measor's[21] point regarding 'critical awareness' during interviews in terms of interpretation and data congruent to the themes of the study was acknowledged by virtue of limiting sessions to a maximum duration of one and a half hours.

The interviews were conducted in the offices of the staff concerned and guarantees of confidentiality were offered to all respondents.

As Oppenheim indicates, the outcome of exploratory interviews shapes the investigator's emerging conceptualization, instrumentation and subsequent analysis[22]; it was felt, therefore, that not only was it necessary to penetrate any defensive 'front' that the individual may attempt to maintain, but that the format should be such as to encourage spontaneity and at least a partial confiding in the researcher. Woods identifies this stage of 'access' as a third and optimum level beyond those of an 'initial performance' for public scrutiny and abandonment of rhetoric and ideology in favour of a more naturalistic position[23]. He goes on to draw attention to the problem of progressing beyond the first stage of access when interviewing senior management (and Principals in particular), since the further an individual moves up a hierarchical structure, the more role-bound he or she becomes. The status of the data is then, clearly, subsequently open to question.

Whilst Woods's general point concerning a reduction in formality by avoiding use of an interview schedule and working for 'some kind of rapport'[24] seems eminently sensible, the strategy of not recording or taking notes (as Woods suggests) was not adopted. Whilst the writer's facility for recall was to develop during the course of the investigation, his ability to retain the significant 'facts', let alone more subtle nuances of discourse, was adjudged far from certain at the outset.

Retrospectively, the decision did not appear unwise. In only one instance was there a clear indication of respondent behaviour being unduly affected by the procedure, and then perhaps as a result of researcher error in addressing an evaluative area in the first instance rather than a descriptive one, which would have facilitated a better rapport (cf the comments on the initial orientation of interviews by Whyte[25] and Davies et al[26]).

Further evidence of the absence of procedural effect, and perhaps the achieved level of access in exploratory interviews with senior staff may be derived from the 'openness' which was apparent - an example from each institution may suffice to demonstrate the point:

In response to a question concerning the perceived value of General Studies in practice, one Principal volunteered -

'Do you want an official answer, or are you interested in the reality?'.

The principal of a college in the same area, in discussing the role of the Personal tutor was -

'..... anxious to avoid the cliches';

and a third had by implication striven to present matters as they stood by 'instructing' his Deputy -

'to give full and free access to whatever information can be offered ..... otherwise there is no point to the visit'.

Whilst Principals were interviewed on only one occasion (though conversation regarding the progress of the research took place in other areas of College), Vice-Principals and Senior Teachers were not infrequently seen subsequently (generally in their role as 'key informants' - discussed below), often as a result of invitations to address any issue that may not have been covered in initial interviews. This freedom of access proved to be of great value in enhancing the quality of data; however, it was originally anticipated that single interviews supplemented by casual discussion in the staffroom, over lunch, etc, would yield data of sufficient worth (especially since both data and method 'triangulation' were to be employed). As was later apparent, it proved possible to concur with Rudduck's report of the Library Access and Sixth Form Study Project regarding the -

'..... collective richness of the data ..... elicited through one-off interviews'.[27]

Tripp[28] cautions against reliance on single interviews which, he argues, are best suited for those whose views are well-established and rehearsed. Subsequent informal conversation revealed that the senior staff who participated in the exploratory interviews had stable views that had been, in large measure, articulated unequivocally.

In accordance with the qualitative perspectives adopted in the study, the exploratory interviews established an informal framework of enquiry deemed appropriate both to the status of respondents in various groups and at various stages of the investigation. Thus whilst Oppenheim's ideal free-style interview - 'a continuous monologue' accompanied by 'supportive acknowledgements'[29] from the researcher may not have been fully realised, the role of the latter was minimised to avoid possible reactivity (where responses generated were simply a function of the questions asked rather than representing salient features of attitudes freely acknowledged). The pace of the interview was, by intent, therefore, dictated by the respondent with whom the researcher interacted by means of non-directive prompts, reiteration and summary and encouragement of periods of reflection. An inevitable consequence of this 'unstructured' approach - namely that of the subject digressing from the thematic areas under consideration was anticipated (and frequently evident). However, since the primary objective was to access thoughts and feelings of particular significance to the individual concerned, some loss of 'control' was judged to be not only acceptable but potentially rewarding.

Within the thematic agenda of set objectives and their perceived realisation in College, omissions by the respondent relating to the researcher's awareness of key issues in 16 - 19 provision were noted, partiality of information recorded and investigated via other respondents, documentary sources and observed events.

Similarly, self-selected aspects of the theme and particular key questions addressed by the subject were cross-validated to determine idiosyncratic viewpoints and common perspectives. Advocates of the qualitative paradigm hold that the quality of data is consequent upon the quality of relationship built with the respondent - a notion that is alien to positivist researcher 'neutrality' and 'distancing'. Patton has an important point to make here regarding the distinction between 'rapport' and 'neutrality':

'Rapport is a stance vis-a-vis the person being interviewed; neutrality is a stance vis-a-vis what that person says'.[30]

The 'low profile' of the researcher outlined above notwithstanding, it was deemed important to compensate for time constraints in establishing rapport and an appropriate level of 'access'. Strategies that were adopted to help facilitate this included preliminary social conversation, exploration of shared educational interests and experience and additional personal biography of the respondent (the latter having, as Edwards and Furlong[31] point out, some prominence in the ethnographic literature of the early 1980s in relation to its importance in understanding subjects' construction of reality).

This reciprocal flow of information gave rise on several occasions to the development of a dialogue - usually post-interview - concerning the emergent emphasis of the study and the researcher's initial perceptions (cf Saran's experience of interviewing 'policy makers'[32], who, as 'interested respondents', questioned the researcher). Additionally, as intimated earlier, subjects were encouraged to offer descriptions of structure and process within the college before being 'asked' for declarations of intent and assessment of outcome.

Senior staff as 'key informants'

A majority of the fifteen senior management staff interviewed fulfilled the role of 'key informant'; this is not to suggest that other staff did not act in this capacity (a young geography teacher with a temporary allowance who was actively involved in promoting the restructuring of the role of the Personal Tutor, and a sociology teacher who proved an articulate critic of current General Studies provision, may be cited as examples of more junior staff who performed similarly); however, the emergence of many of the former as such is consistent with Dean and Whyte's observation that those informants who are able to give -

'a generally accurate and perceptive account of relevant events are often to be found in key roles in the institution's communication structure in a leadership capacity'[33].

The significance of their role in the present study is readily testified to in Wood's terms of giving -

'perspective to the ..... methodological front from the very beginning .....'[34]

Curiously, as Burgess points out[36], a number of major case studies that have drawn upon an ethnographic perspective have failed to document the role played by key informants. Burgess himself gives redress to the situation and is expansive in his account of their role in his study of a co-educational comprehensive school.

In summarising their function in the present investigation it is possible to confirm their importance in facilitating -

'a grasp of the various rhetorics presented to the researcher'[37]

in their being -

'able to some extent to adopt the stance of the investigator'[38]

and in focusing data collection and orientation of aspects of data analysis by virtue of introductions to a wide variety of staff; facilitating access to particular areas of College; giving leads to follow, suggestions as to potentially useful documents to read, notification of meetings to attend, and reports of events both historical and contemporary. In addition they provided information relating to institutional structures and routines, answered numerous queries and in some instances, posed challenging questions regarding the topic of research, its focus and methodology. Informants who were able (or inclined) to do the latter, were not frequently staff who had themselves conducted research, or who had been closely associated with someone else who had done so.

In endeavouring to reduce bias, a record of informants was maintained; this allowed monitoring of gender, age, experience and subject background and enabled account to be taken of the relationship between these variables and the different perspectives offered. However, whilst the researcher was generally at liberty to select his informants in accordance with the principles of 'theoretical sampling' (discussed elsewhere), a number of constraints were observed.

These related firstly, to the limited numbers of female staff who held senior management or key post responsibility (1 in 7 on the senior management team at Settledon College, 1 in 9 at Newfields College, and none on the Heads of Faculty Team of 5 at Medley College); secondly, to emerging friendship patterns with particular staff to whom one felt able to refer; and thirdly to individuals who attached themselves to the researcher on the basis of some personal need which they perceived the latter could gratify (eg. in the case of one tutor who had responsibility for Staff Development, the offer of information appeared to stem from the need of an audience for criticism of the LEA policies which added to the complexity of role performance). In addition, wide variation in the usefulness and capability of informants had a partial influence upon reliance on the recommendation of these 'vetted' individuals who had earlier proved their worth. Hence a degree of 'direction' and 'manipulation' of the researcher was in evidence in talking to those staff who had been selected in this way.

Burgess categorises the role of key informant in terms of 'guide', 'assistant', 'interpreter' and 'provider of historical narrative'[38]. Each of these functions was exploited in the present study, with some staff performing a combination of roles. Critical appraisal of the value of the data acquired in each of these contexts was deemed necessary. Thus, account was taken of the peer network to which individuals belonged, the areas of college experience to which they had regular access and those aspects of it which they might wish to actively promote or refrain from promoting; policy documentation and minutes of meetings supplied by the researcher were supplemented by copies of materials acquired from other sources (eg. self-selected from interim reports, management plans, resumes on staff notice boards and the like) as well as being cross-validated through method triangulation (interviews and participant observation);

Interpretations, where provided, of the actions and ideas of others were similarly evaluated (as was the interpretation of all informants in the sense of the information selectively conveyed to the researcher).

The historical perspective which some key informants were able to provide assumed a particular relevance given the theoretical orientation of the study (ie a symbolic interactionist perspective). The contextualisation of data within an historical framework informed the focus on the observed present; thus particular features of institutional life were viewed at least in part -

'in the context of their wider outcomes and determinants'[39].

In the case of Newfields College in particular, 'the long-term sedimentation of institutional life'[40] with respect to parental expectation (and enjoyment) of high 'A' level pass rates gave rise to uncertainty among staff of the effect of far-reaching proposals for change in the structure and process of pastoral care and the entitlement curriculum. Clearly information of this kind, beyond the temporal present, was not to be derived from observation of day-to-day patterns of interaction (it was, however, cross-checked with regard to the accuracy of the claim in such documentary sources as the College Prospectus and examination pass lists, and with regard to the effect of restructuring via discussion with other staff). The issue is part of the micro-macro modes of analysis integration debate which is well rehearsed in the literature (cf Hargreaves[41]) and need not be discussed further here (although reference to it is made elsewhere in the study).

The early interviews outlined above were thus part of a preliminary exploration leading to the identification of key informants and an assessment of the services which they could provide.

Interviews with other staff

There is a sense in which the interviews with other members of staff continued to be 'exploratory', in that the researcher continued to monitor coverage of the topics on his 'hidden agenda' and to note emergent ideas to pursue elsewhere.

There is much that was common too in the interview strategies that were employed and indeed in the outcomes. However, in a number of respects procedures differed, and these are outlined below.

To some degree the term 'interview' would not perhaps be semantically appropriate throughout. In various social contexts (during lunch and staff breaks, at the close for daily sessions and in the course of shared travel) 'discussion' or 'conversation' would be a more appropriate description of the data-gathering activity (cf however, the paper by Burgess on the unstructured interview as conversation[42]). Venues for 'timetabled' interviews also varied: these ranged from staffrooms and general work areas shared by others, to offices in the individual's faculty block or those belonging to senior staff which were vacant at the time. Additionally, whilst as indicated above, key informants were approached on more than one occasion, recall of other staff proved more difficult and the researcher tended to pursue further matters on a more opportunistic and conversational basis throughout the course of the college day.

This relatively restricted access was also reflected in the fact that interviews with such staff were typically limited to fifty minutes or an hour - the time representing periods when individuals were free from teaching commitments.

In these respects the structural arrangements for interviews differed from the preceding ones; but there was also a sense in which the structure of the interaction with the respondent was markedly differentiated in some instances. Given that the subject was aware of the length of time that the researcher had been in College (announcement of his arrival having been made in staff bulletins) and often aware too of the areas to which he had had access and those individuals in whose company he had been observed, two particular reactions were noted (for which compensating strategies had to be devised).

The first of these related to the assumption of shared common knowledge between respondent and researcher and manifested in such phrases as '..... as you (ie the researcher) must have discovered' and 'well, I needn't say any more to you, need I?'. The second concerned potentially adverse reactions at the outset, eg 'can we keep it short?'; 'I suppose you've come to see me because X thinks I'm, anti-change' (X being a key respondent, senior management, with whom the researcher has no doubt been 'associated'). Both situations resulted in the taking of a more active interviewing role than had previously been the case.

Both situations, too, gave rise to the possibility of gaps in the available data and had to be taken into account accordingly (ie in terms of interviewer intervention). In these interviews, a selection of questions was employed to stimulate response: use was made of the following types of question identified by Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher and Sabshin[43]:

'Hypothetical'   -   attitudinal or behavioural projection to a given

                       situation.

'Devil's Advocate' -   requiring consideration of an opposing view.

'Ideal Position' -   description of an ideal situation.

'Interpretive'   -   seeking reaction to tentative interpretation by the

                       researcher.

Over forty staff below the level of senior management (ie Principal, Vice-Principal,
Senior Tutor) were interviewed - a ratio of about 3:1, and about half as many again
took part in informal discussion and conversation (the numbers quoted are deliberately
approximated as in Rudduck's report of the LASS Project[44], in order to avoid an
impression of a priori selection of cases per category). In interviewing a
significantly larger proportion of staff with a lower status in the College hierarchy
it was hoped that what Seiber has referred to as 'elite bias'[45] might be avoided. This
not uncommon source of error in qualitative investigation is occasioned principally by
the researcher's early association with and dependence on the 'gatekeepers' of the
institution, both with respect to the desired continuance of cordial relations and with
regard to their frequently appearing more articulate and 'better' informed. Thus not
only was it envisaged that more time should be spent collecting data from the
lower-statused, but also that corresponding weight should be given to the evaluation of
their views.

During the course of the study the following typology was developed to represent

analytic categories of all staff informants:

'THE DIRECTOR'   Those with key responsibilities in the area of concern who sought to

                        promote, develop and evaluate (often in the context of a critical stance

                        taken by others).

'THE CARETAKER'   Those similarly charged with responsibility, but who were content with the

                        status quo and who adopted a 'lower profile' than THE DIRECTOR in

                        maintaining the same.

'THE ACOLYTE'   Staff below senior or departmental management level whose support for THE

                        DIRECTOR appeared to derive from the opportunity for personal or

                        professional satisfaction or advantage.

'THE MISSIONARY'   Staff whose active support for THE DIRECTOR consisted in large measure of

                        campaigning for support amongst others without apparent reference to

                        personal gain.

'THE MALCONTENT'   Those whose professional dissatisfaction often precluded objective

                        evaluation.

'THE CRITIC'   Those who voiced dissent with regard to institutionalised norms, but whose

                      critical commentary was more articulate and informed than that of THE

                      MALCONTENT.

'THE VETERAN'   Those staff whose career position and outlook distanced them from the taking

                      up of ideological positions.

By using the typology to generate sub-samples it was possible to check the extent to which perspectives were representative.

Of the seventy-plus staff to whom the researcher spoke - either on a pre-arranged or a casual basis - approximately half were approached subsequently (although several assumed the initiative in this respect themselves).

Whilst as indicated, a significant number of these may not have participated in an 'interview' in the generally accepted sense of the term, the more systematic pursuit of particular topics through open-ended questions was not dissimilar to the 'guided' or 'focused' interview approach discussed by Moser[46].

Student interviews

Two principal factors distinguished the conditions under which staff and students respectively were interviewed: firstly, prior arrangements with subjects in the latter case were not made - ie an 'Opportunity' sample was taken (the exception being at Newfields College where a Group Tutor's absence resulted in an invitation to the researcher to approach the group - some thirteen pupils - as a whole); secondly, all students concerned participated in small group interviews (commonly involving three to four individuals, but see below). Both factors merit further discussion.

Students were approached in friendship groups in a variety of areas in College: these included refectories or dining halls (at coffee or lunch breaks), smoking areas, tutorial bases, concourses (public thoroughfares with seating facilities), student lounges or common rooms and teaching areas (before or after lessons). The policy of sampling across a variety of locations derived from the recognition of the possibility that groups of students with different outlooks might frequent different areas of College (substantiated in part by comments from students relating to both social interaction and study considerations).

The writer introduced himself to the group and briefly outlined the purpose of his visit. Students were told initially that the intention was to sample staff and student views of 'aspects of life in College'; this gave them the opportunity to address salient features of their experience and served to promote rapport in giving them a platform for their views.

Statements relating to the specific areas of the study were assessed differentially according to whether they were 'volunteered' or 'directed' (ie whilst students frequently passed unsolicited comments on General Studies provision and arrangements for pastoral care, on other occasions the researcher either introduced the topics through open-ended questions or pursued aspects of them).

Although as indicated above students were approached in groups of three or four, initial numbers were subject to 'incremental growth'; on several occasions those individuals that the researcher had identified were joined by others, usually at the invitation of one or more members who had noted their approach; on occasion by virtue of the researcher suggesting that interested bystanders participate more actively. In some instances this resulted in a doubling of the initial number in the group.

As a result of the flexibility of access to student respondents, interview times varied considerably; in cases (relatively few) where subjects had impending commitments elsewhere, ten to fifteen minutes was spent in the task; at other times (eg during the lunch break) up to three quarters of an hour's discussion took place.

In as much as consideration was given to the capabilities of staff as informants, so account was taken of Ball's point regarding the inability of some students to act as 'good respondents'[47], and in consequence, the possibility of distorted accounts being generated.

Therefore, whilst acknowledgement was made of the problem of -

'undue prominence being given to the statements of the very articulate or vociferous'[48],

and the subjective evaluation of the accurate reflection or inhibition of individual perspectives, it was decided that small group interviews would prove most effective. Several sources in the literature (cf the work of Woods[49], Ball[50] and Wragg[51]) draw attention to the benefits of peer interaction through such processes as prompting, elaborating, correcting, controlling, checking and supporting. Whilst a consensus which is established in this way is still subject to validation from other sources, it does, nonetheless, facilitate recall and analysis and 'cue' the researcher into the range of student experience (cf Woods[52]). Additionally, of course, a secondary consideration was the logistical one of sampling a greater number of students than would have been the case (given the time available) through single student interviews.

The existence and encouragement of friendship group unity, it was felt, would allow the researcher to address problems of rapport that were intrinsically different to those encountered with staff. In moving what Woods refers to as 'the power balance in the discussion situation'[53] in students' direction, it was considered that a more spontaneous response would result, thus generating the main attitude dimensions along which individual perspectives lay, and helping to facilitate the sampling of a domain of items which could be represented in the Attitude Questionnaire (cf McKennell's comments on the lack of agreed, rigorous procedures for drawing such a sample, but his preference for the method employed[54]).

Whilst the number of subjects interviewed represented from only approximately 5 to 10% of the student population in the institutions concerned, this was consistent with the strategy of sequential criterion-based sampling which took account of approaches (a record was maintained) to students who were at different stages in their course, who had differing subject backgrounds and who came from different 11 - 16 feeder schools; and which was terminated by the researcher at a point where repetition of students' views was sufficiently marked to suggest that such perspectives might be more widely represented and worthy of further investigation as described above (or alternatively, that perspectives not so far offered may be infrequent).

In investigating student perspectives through the process of small group interviews, consideration was given to Lang's discussion of the theoretical problems associated with determining the 'nature of reality'[55]. If it is accepted that students' responses might be dependent on contextual variables, then reality is multi-faceted and investigation of attitudes may reveal different patterns of perception. Such an argument would reject the 'subculture' view exemplified, for example, in the work of Hargreaves[56] and Willis[57] where pupil perspectives are represented as being based on a single view of reality, but would be in accordance with Furlong's notion of 'interaction sets'[58], defined by shared perceptions, serving as the various 'membership' groups to which an individual might be affiliated and both giving rise to and reflecting different perspectives on different occasions. In the present study the researcher's inclination has been to recognise the potentiality of the latter position; thus the Attitude Questionnaire was given to and completed by students in their tutor groups (evidence from the Pilot Questionnaire suggested that conferring had not infrequently preceded response to open-ended items) which the interviews had shown did not have a formative influence on friendship grouping;

additionally, participant observation in students' General Studies options groups extended contextual sampling.

Post-interview reflections recorded by the researcher in the case of both staff and student interviews incorporated insights that had been derived and notes on verbal and non-verbal behaviour. In addition to allowing monitoring of the data collection process and initial analysis of information, the field notes provided a check on the researcher's reactions, input and theoretical predispositions.

Convergence of the researcher's understanding of subjects' perspectives and the information actually revealed in interview was sought throughout by retrospective checking with the individuals concerned. However, it is emphasised that the interview strategies described above elicit statements that represent what Dean and Whyte identify as being -

'merely the perception of the informant, filtered and modified by his cognitive and emotional reactions and reported through his personal verbal usages .....[59]

and which give us -

'merely the informant's picture of the world as he sees it ..... only as he is willing to pass it on ..... in this particular interview situation'.[60]

Development of the attitude questionnaire

The survey instrument developed during the study for measuring the attitudes of college staff and students to the areas described (see Appendix I), comprised a Likert-type scale consisting of fifty items (twenty five in each attitude domain) and six sentence-completion items (three in each domain). Napior describes the functional characteristics of such a scale as follows:

'For each item in the battery (of items) subjects are confronted with a dimension of appraisal and an ordered set of response alternatives .....'[61].

In the present study the response alternatives for each item were:

STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE/TEND TO AGREE/TEND TO DISAGREE/DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE

In structuring the attitude rating continuum in this way, account was taken of Youngman's view of the analytic difficulties relating to use of the 'intermediate' response category[62]; the essential problem here is that of clearly differentiating failure to understand the item from the subject's response to the tenor of the statement. Thus whilst in Youngman's terms each statement in the questionnaire allowed for potentially varied levels of agreement, by omitting 'undecided' as an alternative, responses were dichotomized into broadly positively or negatively orientated categories. This gave rise to six positions on the attitude continuum (rather than the more usual five) and had the added advantage of providing more precise information about the respondent's degree of agreement or disagreement.

The twenty five items in each attitude domain were distributed randomly within the instrument in order to help counteract 'proximity error' (Guildford provides a rationale for the procedure in pointing out that adjacent items intercorrelate more strongly than distant ones[64]). Items were also counterbalanced in positive and negative terms in order to limit the effects of response bias or response 'set' (discussed in greater detail elsewhere).

In common with attitudinal research by Barker-Lunn[64], McKennell[65] and Smith[66] (among others) the sampling of the 'domain of items' or 'universe of content' derives from representative opinion statements generated through preliminary unstructured interviews and group discussions. By eliciting constructs from subjects in this way rather than 'imposing' them on a priori grounds, it was anticipated that the salient dimensions of attitudes would emerge from the sample population in a manner consistent with the ethnographic aspects of the study, contributing not only to methodological coherence but also to an increase in validity. The procedure for constructing a Likert Scale has been described in some detail by Thomas[67]:

1   Collect a large pool of statements.

2   For each statement the investigator first decides whether it indicates a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the object in question. Ambiguous statements or those indicating a neutral attitude are discarded.

3 The statements are then administered to a large group of subjects representative of those whose attitudes are to be measured (see Pilot Study). They are asked to respond to each statement (in terms of placing themselves on the attitude continuum described above).

4 A preliminary estimate of each respondent's attitude can then be obtained.

5 Responses to each statement are scored (in the present study by assigning simple weights in the numerical range 1 - 6 to the scale positions and orientating these so that a high score on the scale denoted a favourable attitude toward the area in question, ie strong agreement with a favourable statement was scored 6, strong disagreement, a score of 1 - 0 being reserved in the coding frame for failure to respond or some form of otherwise inadmissible response; scoring was reversed for unfavourable statements).

6 A preliminary attitude score is obtained by summing across all the subject's item scores; the higher the score the more favourable the attitude.

7 At this stage it is the statements that are under consideration, and to be retained a given statement must meet the 'criterion of internal consistency'. This implies that the more favourable a person's attitude the more likely he (or she) should be to endorse favourable statements and the less likely to endorse unfavourable statements.

8 In Likert scaling the relationship between attitude score and probability of item endorsement is assumed to be linear in character. Statements on a Likert scale will not be cumulative.

9 A correlation between attitude score and statement endorsement constitutes the criterion for inclusion of an item in the scale. Therefore a given statement meets the criterion of internal consistency if the item score correlates significantly with the attitude score. The preliminary attitude score is used and correlated with the item score.

10 The twenty or so items with the highest correlations, or the most discriminating items, constitute the Likert scale.

11 The scale can now be administered to the sample of subjects whose attitudes are to be measured in the manner described earlier with reference to the preliminary attitude score.

Thomas's account of the construction of a Likert scale, especially with regard to scoring procedure, is underpinned by the implicit assumption that such a scale is 'unidimensional' in character (see the writer's earlier discussion of methodological considerations relating to the construction of attitude scales). As Napior points out, however -

'..... the computational algorithm recommended by Likert for item selection and derivation of scores for respondents requires investigators to make assumptions about the dimensional ..... properties of their data that frequently cannot be supported .....'[68]

The present study seeks, therefore, to identify the true dimensionality of the data by defining the dimensions which actually underlie the set of attitude items and determining which items are most appropriate to their measurement. By undertaking multidimensional analysis in this way it is possible to generate (with a reasonable degree of certainty) homogeneous sub-sets which account for object proximities or item correlations (since the level of intercorrelation of items within a sub-set will be high and that between sub-sets will be low), and thus help establish, construct and content validity of the instrument.

In addressing the limitations of the Likert procedure as a single common factor model for attitude measurement, it was anticipated that the instrument would obviate concern for the omission of -

'distinct attitudes of importance to substantial numbers of informants .....'[69].

The analytic techniques used to operationalise this theoretical perspective are discussed below.

Multidimensional analysis of questionnaire data (factor analysis of scales)

The question of whether the attitude items in each set inter-correlated sufficiently closely to suggest a single unidimensional scale, or whether they clustered to form distinct sub-sets, thus giving rise to a multidimensional scale, was investigated through the use of factor analysis. This statistical technique enables the investigator to identify those variables that have high 'loadings' on the factor (attitude dimension) he wishes to measure, and which therefore define it.

Knowledge of object properties, ie item content, can then lead to correct interpretation of the attitude dimension concerned. In the present study, loadings of .45 and above were taken as the criterion for item allocation and evidence for scale homogeneity (cf the comments by Youngman[70]).

With respect to both the 'A' scale (General Studies) and the 'B' scale (Pastoral Care), the procedure revealed the existence of one predominant factor. In the case of the latter scale all twenty five attitude items loaded to a single factor. In the former instance the factor focused on twenty of the twenty five items; a further two of the 'unadopted' items loaded on a second minor factor which accounted for a very small percentage of the total variance. It was decided after conjointly taking into account 'alpha-if-item-deleted' values, to discard the five items which did not load to the major factor and to utilize the remaining twenty items as a single scale to which they clearly belonged.

The scales generated by the factor analysis were used to investigate the degree of agreement between staff and students and between selected sub-groups of the same within and across cases, as delineated in the research hypotheses.

Testing for significant differences

Where comparison of the attitude scores of two respondent sub-groups was undertaken, standard use was made of the t-test for significant difference. The inter-college analyses, however, necessitated differentiation between three groups; common statistical practice was therefore followed here in employing a one-way analysis of variance.

In cases where significant differences were found to exist it was then necessary to trace their specific location. This was achieved by means of performing the Scheffe multiple comparisons test.

As Selkirk points out, Scheffe's method is the simplest for the purposes of making multiple comparisons[71]; it also has the additional properties of being very conservative with respect to a Type I error rate (ie the acceptance of differences where none really exist) - and is, therefore, particularly appropriate given the relatively small size of some of the respondent sub-groups - and may be used where unequal numbers are involved. In effect, a calculation of t^2 is performed on each pair of groups (in the present instance for Settledon College and Medley College, for Medley College and Newfields College, and for Settledon College and Newfields College).

Calculating the reliability of the scales

Whilst factor analysis contributes to exploration of the validity of the attitude scales, it does not determine their reliability. For practical purposes it is often judicious to employ an internal consistency procedure such as the 'split-half' method, which allows for the total score of subjects on half the items to be correlated with score totals on the other half. However, the resulting reliability coefficient may vary somewhat in relation to how the items are allocated to the half-tests. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha[72], on the other hand, is the mean of all possible split-half coefficients; being more stable and less prone to bias, it was, therefore, used in the present study.

The calculation of 'alpha-if-item-deleted' values further served as an aid to item selection in addition to providing information about the effect of scale length on reliability.

The use of alpha for scale construction purposes (as discussed by McKennell)[73] requires scrutiny of the contribution each item makes to the reliability of the item set as a whole. The 'alpha-if-item-deleted' values reveal to the investigator the effect on reliability of discarding particular items, by giving him the alpha value for the remaining items after selective withdrawal has occurred. The final composition of the scale can thus be determined, by other than wholly intuitive means[74].

The use of sentence-completion items

The utility of incorporating 'indirect' approaches in questionnaire methodology has been well established. In general terms, Youngman[75] indicates that 'open' questions used as an 'adjunct' to the main theme of a questionnaire can provide respondents with a 'safety valve' and offer the researcher further information. Oppenheim[76] is more subject-specific in suggesting that indirect methods can provide deeper insights in measuring attitudes than the use of attitude scales alone, and that as a result it may be profitable to use both approaches in the same investigation.

The particular technique employed in the present study is the use of sentence-completion items, which as the name suggests involves the construction of a series of short sentence stems allowing scope to the respondent in their completion. Bene[77] points to the value of the device as a means of combining the advantages of projective techniques which allow freedom of expression and the more objective perspective derived from the use of questionnaires, and indicates its potential for facilitating both the conscious expression of attitudes and the intimation of respondents' covert feelings.

Latitude in respect of possible length of response was given in terms of encouraging subjects to 'use as few or as many words' as desired (although some degree of constraint was apparent in space limitation arising from layout of the questionnaire). Whilst all six sentence-completion items utilised contextual influence to guide response (consistent with a systematic approach to the consideration of emergent concepts and hypotheses), both 'directive' (or 'predetermined') and more 'open' types of item were used. In offering two items in each attitude domain with a positive and negative orientation respectively and a third inviting free weighting by the respondent, it was anticipated that advantage could be taken of both more narrow focusing and greater spontaneity of response, thus addressing concern for 'a judicious mixture' of items for optimum effect[78].

Despite the advantages of the sentence-completion technique, the researcher is confronted by difficult decisions relating to the interpretation, classification and coding of responses.

A common method of classifying and coding responses to open-ended questionnaire items, and that used in the present study, is to note all responses to an item from a representative sub-sample of respondents (say fifty) and to derive a number of classificatory categories to which responses are then allocated. This inevitably leads to partial loss of detail and information but considerations of statistical viability (with respect to the number of cases per category) necessitates compromise. Similar acknowledgment is made of the attendant problems regarding objective interpretation of responses on the one hand and considerations of meaning and significance on the other (the dilemma is well illustrated by a student's comment from the pilot study relating to the value of Tutor Periods which read: 'I can't think of anything else I'd rather do!').

Although unable to offer a comprehensive solution to such problems, the writer can perhaps indicate his awareness of the issues and record the consideration which was given to them.

Analysis of open-ended items

The responses to the open-ended items were examined in terms of their frequency distribution, percentage and cumulative percentage. The response codes were listed in rank order. The response patterning investigated by these means was observed in each of the sample group contexts referred to in the research hypotheses; differences between groups both within and across cases were also explored.

Piloting of the attitude questionnaire

The Attitude Questionnaire was piloted at a Sixth Form College in the North of England. Twenty five staff and seventy five students were selected by the writer's 'contact' (a Vice-Principal) as a 'purposive' sample - ie balanced in terms of gender, level of responsibility/experience and subject specialism in the former case and according to type/level of course taken, subject combination, year group and gender in the latter.

Of the one hundred questionnaires posted to the College and distributed as above, ninety four were completed and returned (twenty one staff responses and seventy three student responses). The high response rate reflects the value to the researcher in having indirect contact with an 'agent' and may perhaps also be accounted for in the present study by the latter individual's notification to the writer that some student tutor groups were reported to have - 'completed the task with enthusiasm'.

The College was selected on the basis of the similarity of its provision in the areas concerned (as evidenced by the information which had been sought from it amongst a number of other colleges) to those institutions where the writer had carried out his fieldwork.

Whilst it is acknowledged that it may not be possible to demonstrate complete correspondence between the pilot population and the characteristics of those to whom the questionnaire was finally administered, the strategy employed was dictated by the following considerations:

firstly, account was taken of the researcher's position in a teaching environment and the question of continuity in a college's working rhythm. Given that the distribution and completion of questionnaires and the collation of responses is a time-consuming process, and given the additional investment of staff and student time in the interviews and discussions conducted as part of the research, it was felt that administration of the instrument on successive occasions within the same institution would be an unreasonable proposition. Secondly, since in any particular institution the 'total population' of staff especially, was relatively small (markedly so in respect of specific roles assumed), their use as pilot respondents would have placed untenable restrictions on subsequent sampling procedure. Neither factor, however, invalidates use of the alternative pilot sample which was deemed to be 'comparable' in a number of generally self-evident, key respects.

An assessment was made by one of the pilot staff respondents as to how much time was required for completion of the questionnaire: under conditions free from interruption and giving 'instant' rather than 'considered' responses, it was found that all sections could be completed in approximately eleven and a half minutes; however, in order to allow for more leisurely perusal of items, the writer estimated that respondents might require fifteen to twenty minutes and thus recommended that a 'Tutorial Period', where available, be set aside for the completion of the questionnaire.

Consideration was also given at this stage to the quantification of the questionnaire data, ie to the possible computational difficulties and the methods of statistical analysis to be used.

Whilst numerous aspects of questionnaire construction are subject to appraisal, in the pilot stage, the actual wording of questions assumes, perhaps, paramount importance. In the present study a number of changes to questionnaire items were effected as a result both of respondents' comments and observations and inference from non-response, a narrow range of response, misunderstanding, ambiguity and similar indications of item inadequacy.

The following amendments to the wording of items in the section relating to General Studies (Section 'A') were made:

'General Studies should be regarded as irrelevant at 'A' level' (item 9) was seen to be ambiguous in respect of whether it applied to the existence of the examination or to the necessity for students studying at that level to take the subject. The item was therefore re-written to read:

'It is not appropriate to examine General Studies at 'A' level,'.

Item 10 -

' College staff have, on the whole, shown interest in and enthusiasm for General Studies', gave rise to uncertainty as to whether respondents had sufficient 'evidence' on which to base an opinion. Since the intention was to identify staff support and enthusiasm, the question was reformulated in a more oblique way to read:

'College staff should regard the active promotion of General Studies as an important part of their role'.

The phrase 'non-academic' in item 11 -

'General Studies would be best suited to providing a course framework for the non-academic student' - proved to lack sufficient definition to secure general agreement as to the level of ability referred to. The phrase was, therefore, replaced by the term 'One-Year', which identified those students who would reach their academic ceiling at GCSE.

The referent of 'provides a welcome break' in item 18:

'The General Studies course provides a welcome break from students' main subjects', was judged ambiguous. The item was re-worded to reflect the writer's intentions more adequately:

'The General Studies course provides a welcome break for students (from their main subjects).

Item 19 -

'It is often not possible for students to find a place on those courses in which they have a particular interest at a particular time', proved, in common with item 10, difficult for respondents to assess.

In revising the item, it was felt that a more evaluative frame of reference would tap respondents' perspectives more directly; rewording of the item therefore resulted in -

'The value of a (General Studies) course to students is not reduced by the fact that it may not be their first choice'.

Finally in this section, the use of an initial qualifying term in item 22 -

'Most staff appear unconvinced of the importance of General Studies' -

led to a variety of respondent amendments; the form of the item was, therefore, abandoned and its focus realigned, giving:

'Wide variations in course quality have limited the effectiveness of the General Studies programme'.

The remaining nineteen rating items in the attitude domain stood as found in the questionnaire (see Appendix I) as did the three sentence completion items.

Amendments to the wording of items in the section relating to The Pastoral Programme (Section B) are detailed below.

Respondents expressed uncertainty with regard to the extent to which Personal Tutors were (or could, in fact, be) 'fully aware' of their students' academic progress, as specified in item (B) 1:

'The Personal Tutor is fully aware of his/her students' academic progress'.

The phrase was, therefore, replaced and the scope of the item in respect of Tutor oversight broadened viz -

'The Personal Tutor is well-informed with regard to his/her students' overall progress'.

Use of the word 'essential' in item 7 -

'Opportunities for student contact with staff before coming to College are essential for a smooth beginning to the course',

appeared to call for a degree of 'commitment' that staff in particular were unable to give. Since the item sought to dichotomise opinion on the issue, it was felt that the word 'necessary' might prove more appropriate.

Ambiguity was perceived in the terms of reference of 'a 'directed' Tutorial Programme' in item 9:

'A 'directed' Tutorial programme does not prove helpful to students' personal development'.

In re-writing the item, consideration was given to the need for a sharper focus throughout, given by:

'A 'set' Tutorial Programme does not prove helpful in meeting students' personal needs'.

Tutors indicated surprisingly widespread endorsement of their 'basic function' in item 21 -

'The basic function of the Personal Tutor is to maintain a check on student attendance',

which gave grounds for supposition that their perception of the phrase was not synonymous with the writer's. Reformulation of the item took account of the need for greater clarity; additionally, less emphasis was placed on the 'mechanistic' aspect of the task viz -

'The main task of the Personal Tutor is to encourage a regular pattern of student attendance'.

Item 22:

'There should be increased opportunities for guidance and counselling within College',

was an item that was re-worded on the basis of a specific statistical strategy; in eliciting a distribution of responses that was markedly not significant, and in giving rise to a low loading on a major factor which was characterised by 'tutorial interaction', it was anticipated that specific association of the task with the role of the Personal Tutor might give a more statistically homogeneous solution on both counts. The revised version therefore read:

'There should be increased opportunities for guidance and counselling by the Personal Tutor'.

Difficulties of definition were encountered in item 23:

'Active Tutorial Work sessions have led to the creation of activities that do not meet students' real needs',

relating to the identification of tutorial work undertaken as part of a programme during a regularly timetabled period. (It will be noted that the item served as a check on item 9, and that alternative wording was, therefore, required).

A more 'inferential' approach was, therefore, adopted in re-writing the item thus:

'Tutorial work is best done in the context of subject teaching by those teachers with their own particular students'.

Finally in this section, item 24:

'The Personal Tutor has played a vital part in helping students to decide upon and achieve their educational goals',

appeared to encourage staff to err on the side of caution. Substitution of the phrase 'an important part' for a 'vital part', in the item concerned, was calculated to draw a firmer response.

As previously, the remaining items (eighteen rating items and three sentence completion items) stood as they appear in the final questionnaire.

The nature of participant observation: some methodological considerations

'In situations where motives, attitudes, beliefs and values direct much, if not most of human activity, the most sophisticated instrumentation we possess is still the careful observer'.[79]

Participant Observation has long been an important research technique in its own right, from its anthropological origins to its more recent employment in ethnographic-style educational case studies, such as the present investigation.

By observing behaviour in its natural setting and sharing or simulating the experience of its participants, the researcher hopes to achieve an appropriate understanding of their perspectives. It is a process as Becker points out[80], which is concerned with the interpretation of substantive problems and is typically associated with the generation of theory rather than the testing of a priori assumptions. Since it is a research strategy which seeks an holistic understanding of the setting, it is often combined with interviewing as a means of validating informants' replies (and more rarely, with document analysis). In relating actors' attitudes to observed behaviour, however, the researcher must acknowledge the complexity of the association; though notable inconsistencies equip him with further 'leads' to follow in the area in question.

Participant Observation gives the investigator an eyewitness perspective in interpreting data, allowing him to rely on his own expertise - advantages that are not available to him in relying on second order accounts from interviews. Issues of selectivity and inference must still be addressed, however, both in the process of observing and in the recording of data. In attempting to overcome such problems the researcher offers a concrete account of activities and differentiates personal reactions and value judgments from observed events.

The essential interaction between researcher and researched and the relationships that are formed over time also build in bias towards 'over-rapport' (adopting participant perspectives entirely). It is therefore necessary for the observer to remain detached to some degree through maintaining a reflexive attitude and keeping a careful record of his developing feelings, reactions and interpretations.

There is also the added difficulty that in becoming 'involved' in the setting the researcher faces the threat of what has been termed 'macro-blindness'[81], ie where consideration of external factors which may constrain present events is subordinated in favour of interpretations derived from participants' own perspectives. Whilst confronted by such problems in a marginal position that is personally difficult to maintain, the participant observer seeks to validate his accumulating awareness of actors' perceptions in a wide range of situations, in the context of what is not infrequently, 'a contradictory and emergent reality'[82].

Participant observation strategies

Discussion of the Participant Observation strategies adopted in the present study is likely to be of limited value if it is not located in the context of the debate concerning both definition and functional interpretation.

The widespread definition of the term ranges from the concise:

'..... collecting data from observing phenomena of interest'[83],

to the more expansive:

'..... a process in which the observer's presence in a social situation is maintained for the purpose of scientific investigation. The observer is in a face-to-face relationship with the observed and by participating with them in their natural life setting, he gathers data'.[84]

The lack of prescription and specificity inherent in these and other definitions, is held by those who subscribe to the qualitative perspective to be consistent with the researcher's task of 'seeing the operating situation as the actor sees it'[85], and hence, shaping his methodology according to the context in which he finds himself.

Gold[86] has outlined four 'master roles' for data collection through Participant Observation; these are: 'the complete participant', 'the participant as observer', 'the observer as participant' and 'the complete observer'. A number of researchers have endeavoured to locate themselves within this typology; thus, for example, Burgess[87] saw her role as that of 'observer as participant', a position which was 'appropriate' for the 'limited' time available since sustained relationships with subjects were not formed, but which as an overt role did not restrict communication with them. For other investigators there have been attendant problems: King[88] notes that his research strategy brought him 'close to' the role of 'complete observer'; however, he coins the term 'non-participant observation' as being appropriate to his activities whilst acknowledging that this is usually applied to covert observation. To compound the problem, King goes on to record that teachers did, on occasion, put on 'special performances' and, more frequently, offered explanatory 'asides' to him during lessons.

Similarly, Hammersley[89] assumed the role of passive observer at the rear of classrooms, only to discover that teachers tended to direct comments towards him and to engage in conversation when pupils had settled to work.

Somewhat by way of contrast, Delamont[90] consciously adopted a 'non-participant role' where class attention was focused on the teacher, and, where pupils were free to move around the room, assumed a more active role in talking both to them and the teacher.

However, Delamont concludes that the role she adopted could not 'usefully' be referred to as 'participant' observation since she did not participate in any 'meaningful way', but rather 'lurked' and 'watched' much as the student teachers in the school also did, 'often without any clear function'[91].

This latter difficulty for the participant observer is taken up by Wolcot who observes that in school –

'the widely-used technique of Participant Observation runs afoul of that organisation's own tradition. There are relatively few formal roles in schools and the roles available are not necessarily attractive for accomplishing research that must be based on limited rather than total involvement ..... Perhaps in time one can find additional avenues for enlarging one's perspective'[92].

There is difficulty, too, in the investigator having to reconcile his role with the dichotomy of 'hard line' and 'soft line' positions. Ball[93] notes that the former stresses the need to share in subjects' activities in 'a direct and complete way', whilst the latter emphasises –

'the necessity of the researcher's presence without specifying the need to do what the researched do'[94].

In the present study the participant observer role assumed was as much a product of circumstance as a process of conscious selection on the part of the researcher. Thus whilst it was the writer's intention at the outset to regard his primary role as that of gathering information, the degree of participation in a group's activities was frequently not under his direct control. A representative selection of instances from the numerous different situations experienced may serve to demonstrate the point in question.

Following a General Studies seminar which had been characterized by the researcher being offered an initial 'explanation' of the session, his observation of a task being set for the group and his circulating among students to discuss the ways in which this was being accomplished, the teacher concerned indicated that whilst she would normally deliver the same session to another seminar group the next period (assisted by another colleague), it was necessary for her to meet a guest speaker arriving shortly in College; the researcher was therefore invited to present the topic to the group on the basis of his involvement in the previous seminar and to co-ordinate discussion through team teaching with the designated member of staff.

In another General Studies lesson devoted to the multiple choice section of an 'A' level examination paper, the researcher adopted the role of passive observer at the rear of the classroom at the beginning of the period (having taken the opportunity to talk to the group about their reasons for opting for the course, prior to the arrival of their teacher);

he was thereafter engaged in conversation by the teacher, who as the member of staff responsible for general education in College was keen to 'justify' the value of the examination in question, and was subsequently invited to participate both in terms of attempting the paper and discussing the answers (serving additionally as a point of 'reference' where doubt about these was expressed).

General Studies courses (often those of a more practical or recreational nature) which featured in college 'options', lent themselves more readily to the assumption of a role which has been described in case study literature as that of 'researcher participant' where an individual –

'participates in a social situation but is personally only partially involved, so that he can function as a researcher'[95].

The mechanics of this role were consistent with the 'soft line' participant observer position described above in that the researcher generally did not undertake those activities in which subjects were engaged, although he did 'share' their experience in a vicarious way through discussion of them with the individuals concerned during the lesson (the initiative in this respect often being assumed by the subjects themselves).

Observation of pastoral work was usually in the context of a weekly period of about one hour's duration (although such work is clearly not limited to 'tutorial' time and was seen to operate in a variety of 'teaching' situations). The extent to which pastoral activities were 'structured' varied not only from college to college but also within the institution itself.

Hence one college used the development of Records of Achievement as a focus for tutorial work (although some staff gave scant acknowledgement to the fact whilst others pursued it religiously): another favoured a 'directed' programme of thematic work which was 'monitored' and 'evaluated', whilst the third offered a framework which staff were either free to accept or reject in favour of self-selected activities (both options attracting staff in accordance with a variety of factors).

Regardless of these variations in practice, however, the researcher's role as participant observer was more constant in the collection of pastoral data than was the case in gathering information concerning General Studies. There were fewer occasions when staff offered information or explanations to the researcher (other than en route to the tutor room) and fewer instances of interaction between students and the researcher; there were fewer occasions, too, when either materials were offered or an invitation extended to join in the activity in question. Thus whilst the role of passive observer had not been deliberately sought, the researcher frequently found that it was one to which he had been assigned. This is not to indicate, however, that the researcher viewed himself as an entirely neutral figure having a non-reactive effect on the situation observed; remarks from staff such as 'you're not normally as quiet as this' (to the group) and (in the case of a group who were somewhat noisy and unco-operative) 'they're reacting to the fact that they've got a visitor' (to the researcher) coupled with behavioural tendencies which signified teachers' consciousness of the researcher's presence, reinforced an initial recognition of the need to monitor such effects and take account of them in interpreting data.

It was intended throughout the present study to give due consideration to Patton's point concerning the need to combine participation and observation in such a way as to gain an understanding of actors' perspectives whilst remaining sufficiently detached to offer objective description of the case[96]. As outlined above, this was not achieved through performance of a uniform participant observer role as envisaged by Gold[97] (cf criticism of the typology by Burgess)[98]; nor was it enacted by virtue of a marked shift in the participation/observation ratio as Patton[99] suggests is likely, as the researcher becomes increasingly familiar with the case (either assuming the role of 'spectator' and becoming more actively involved, or gradually withdrawing from the role of 'complete participant' and assuming that of 'occasional observer').

As previously observed, the freedom enjoyed by the researcher in determining the extent and pattern of his activities as participant observer was constrained by the contexts within which he chose to operate (which, it is, suspected is more frequently the case than is apparent from accounts in the literature).

With the possible exception of those few occasions when the researcher assumed the function of 'honorary teacher' (one college had in fact offered a teaching commitment which had been declined on the grounds of limiting the writer's function as 'researcher participant'), it was possible to exercise greater choice in the structure of observational method than in role selection, or maintenance of the same. Thus the researcher began with what Hammersely refers to as 'general relevancies'[100], scanning in an informal, impressionistic way for information which would help determine progressively focused patterns of observation, and moving as Ball[101] did to more systematic methods of recording the same. In accomplishing the latter, the researcher adapted a data recording sheet devised by Fuller[102], to accompany the full field notes recorded daily in his fieldwork diary (See Appendix II).

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Meetings

The researcher attended all college meetings deemed relevant to emerging data and conceptual parameters of the study. These included: consultative committees and working parties, steering committees, tutor team and tutor team leaders' meetings, student councils, Heads of Faculty and Senior Management meetings. A number of these related directly to discussion of policy documents to which the researcher had been given (or was given) access.

In general, the researcher did not participate in the proceedings of these meetings, save in addressing queries to his immediate neighbours at opportune moments (although in one particular pastoral meeting, an open question that he raised did in fact result in a proposed change in Student Review procedure which related to feedback to Personal Tutors). In all cases the researcher either introduced himself to the meeting through invitation from the Chair, or was introduced via the Chair.

The problem of 'familiarity'

'The obstinate familiarity of what is being observed has been a formidable difficulty in classroom research, leading too many observers to trade unreflectingly on what they already know'.[103]

The generic problem of familiarity highlighted by Edwards and Furlong[104] (cf Becker[105], Galton and Delamont[106], Atkinson[107] and Spindler and Spindler[108]), alerted the researcher to his own particular potential difficulties as a sixth form tutor.

King notes that the more he observed 'the more familiar and predictable events became'[109], and that as initial interest gave way to partial boredom, shorter observational records gave rise to limited opportunities for quantification and cross-case analysis of pupils' behavioural response.

In the present study the researcher endeavoured to produce a disciplined record of the routine and unremarkable whilst being vigilant for the unusual, the problematic or the deviant. His efforts in this direction were facilitated through the wide variety of contexts in which he participated and the range of participant roles that he was required to perform.

In addition, the selection of institutions at different stages of historical development (in terms of a contrast between Settledon College and Medley College, and Newfields College), the social differences in student intake and the diverse initiatives relevant to the parameters of the study which they pursued, helped to render case and situation sufficiently novel to avoid the diminution of interest which King[110] appears to have experienced, with consequent effect upon collection of data. The researcher also took account of Merriam's point concerning early observations in the field and the need to keep these relatively short in order to avoid being overwhelmed by the newness of the situation[111]. Correspondingly, since the collection of data was regarded as secondary to developing familiarity with the setting, observational records took a fuller form as the investigation progressed.

In attempting to 'make the familiar strange', the researcher adopted a questioning attitude towards that which he observed, and raised issues with subjects during subsequent interviews and discussions where such points were not addressed by them.

Data from staffroom observation

In marked contrast to the overt scheduled participant observer strategies outlined above, the researcher also collected data through what might be described as 'semi-covert' activities in college staffrooms.

In common with Hammersley[112], the researcher regarded staffrooms as important settings in which data might be collected; and in a like manner, took the opportunity to listen to and make a written record of conversations that appeared relevant to emerging data and the developing contours of the investigation. As Hammersley points out, what is said in the presence of the researcher and in the company of colleagues is subject to possible variance[113]. By 'eavesdropping' in this way, under the guise of taking notes from a book or staff noticeboard for example, and generally at some distance from the speaker or otherwise inconspicuous in relation to him, the researcher hoped to have access to information which might otherwise not have been available in providing corroborative or discrepant evidence (this is not to render staff interviews and discussions invalid, but serves to indicate that data are treated differentially).

Whilst the researcher has described his role in this respect as 'semi-covert', it is difficult to determine reactivity through staff awareness of the situational relevance of the writer's latent researcher identity (that some staff were at times conscious of this, was apparent in the case of one teacher, for example, who remarked: 'Are you finding plenty to write about? Do we get to see what you've written?').

The researcher did, however, attempt to monitor staffroom situations for indications of modified teacher behaviour in response to his presence; conscious that this had inevitably -

'stimulated talk, produced response and encouraged concern'[114].

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ANALYSIS OF PERSPECTIVES DERIVED FROM UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

(GENERAL STUDIES)

In reporting data from both individual and group interviews with staff and students respectively, consideration has been given to the need for coherent classification of participants' perspectives, in order that cross analysis between groups of respondents and between the institutions themselves may be undertaken.

Clearly, therefore, whilst seeking to offer an accurate representation of the perceptions, motivations and 'world view' of the informants themselves, the classification is informed both by the researcher's own values and predispositions and by pragmatic expediency.

Informants' statements were initially coded as units of information and grouped according to topic; these were then arranged into broad thematic categories which reflected the preoccupations of those to whom the statements were attributable and which facilitated analysis of the dimensions of the data.

The following themes were derived from the interview data in question, with respect to the General Studies programme:

1   Students' optional participation.

2   The question of accreditation (external examination/internal award).

3   The need for course re-structuring/increased quality of courses.

4   Attendance factors.

5   Successful aspects/value of courses.

6   Marketing strategy.

7   Personal involvement.

8   Perception of the concept/name chosen by the college.

9   Course organization/orientation.

10 Miscellaneous issues of concern.

Whilst it was intended that the classification should account for all relevant statements made by participants, the categories are, often inter-dependent rather than mutually exclusive; since they all relate to the same attitude object, this is, perhaps, to be anticipated - however, the guiding principle for categorization of given content has been the perceived 'focus' of the statement or unit of information.

It should be noted, in addition, that the interview data are analysed both for what they reveal about the context or situation in which the actors function (the informant perspective), and for what they say about the actors themselves, their perspectives and contextual effects upon these (the respondent perspective).

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA FROM NEWFIELDS COLLEGE

A number of the themes identified within the data, derived almost exclusively from staff sources (approximately one-third of the teaching establishment participated at some stage in the interview programme). Those aspects of General Studies provision which emerged as issues of concern for teachers rather than students, are examined collectively below.

Perception of the concept/name chosen by the college

For some staff (about one in five), there was an evident concern for the concept of general education as it related to and was reflected by, the term that college gave to the programme it offered. Those who made reference to this fell into two clearly defined categories: staff who had taught at the college for a considerable length of time who were not involved in management of General Studies, and those who held posts of responsibility for the development and oversight of the General Studies programme, or who appeared to play a prominent part in its promotion.

Within both groups there was perception of an 'image problem' for General Studies which remained unaffected by choice of nomenclature; the current position was summed up by a tutor who was undertaking a review of existing arrangements, who remarked:

'We called it "Central Studies" in the hope that it would assume central importance, but it hasn't worked out that way in practice'.

Another tutor expressed the view that -

'for students, 'A' levels are seen as being central, so the current term isn't very apt'.

whilst others, who made reference to the terms successively adopted throughout the college's history, observed: 'nothing seems to change' and again, that -

'Whatever we call it, the image problem remains'.

Thus, while most of those who identified this issue would defend the centrality of General Studies to the sixth form curriculum (as evidenced by their comments elsewhere), something of a conceptual dissonance was seen to exist reciprocally between what the choice of programme term conveyed (either currently or historically) and the response that the programme itself engendered among students.

Although as stated above, this particular theme assumed virtually no significance for students, it is perhaps worth noting in passing a solitary reference from a member of the Lower Sixth, who on 'joining' a discussion group and being informed of the 'topic' of conversation by her peers remarked: 'What?' and being prompted by a friend - 'Oh that! It's called so many different things' (perhaps referring to the various elements of the General Studies programme).

Marketing

A second theme to which importance was attached solely by staff, was that of the 'marketing' of the General Studies programme. The issue was one which had a close correspondence with the 'image problem' referred to in discussion of the previous theme, since doubt was frequently expressed as to the success of current strategies. Comments ranged from the tentative:

'Whether it's a marketing problem ..... I don't know';

to more certain assertions such as:

'Marketing for Central Studies is a weak area';

and

'There is a marketing problem; running Central Studies is a thankless task'.

If Central Studies was to be 'sold' to students successfully, as opposed to the experiencing of a 'constant struggle' or 'difficulties in convincing students' referred to by some, several staff saw a need for new initiatives and revision of marketing policy. Ideas along these lines included, for example:

'..... the chance to go into schools to talk about them (the courses on offer) rather than just send a leaflet'.

and the notion of a 'circus' as part of Induction Week, where students 'could sample what was on offer', as opposed to doing - 'A Cooks' Tour'. Others looked to the key role that might be played in the marketing process by the Personal Tutor. Staff in senior management roles in particular, drew attention to envisaged changes to the Tutor's brief which would encompass 'the responsibility for balance in students' courses'. Central Studies and extensions to the tutorial system would -

'dovetail together through a "negotiated package", which would offer a coherent curriculum for the individual'.

There were clear implications here for the management of tutors' capacity for change; one Senior Tutor, for example, considered that -

'New ideas could be sold on the basis of benefit to students',

whilst another saw time as the key since it was felt that -

'Three to four years would bring a considerable shift of emphasis'.

By way of contrast to the perception of attendant problems and a concern for their resolution, a minority who identified this issue, took as their terms of reference the status quo. The comments of two senior members of staff exemplify the point:

'We present the college programme to the students and tell them how we see the package. Most are happy to accept things if we say that it's broadening or whatever',

and in similar vein:

'Students tend to become institutionalised and go along with what's on offer. In a sense we get them in and then we tell them this is what they're going to do!'.

Irrespective of the dimensions which staff chose to explore, the theme itself proved to be of some significance, being referred to by almost 40% of those to whom the researcher spoke.

The question of accreditation

The discrete separation of Core Studies leading to examination at 'AS' level and options at the College (as elements of the general education programme) gave rise to divergent emphasis on the issue of accreditation among those staff whose comments embraced it.

Whilst those who saw the matter essentially as it related to Options (or general interest courses) were outnumbered two to one by those who focused on examining the 'Core', the former were almost equally divided in their support for, and opposition to, internal certification.

Two members of the Senior Management Team had strong reservations regarding the value of internal validation and accreditation of such courses; one stressing that acceptance might be countenanced only on the basis 'of currency in the outside world'.

Another senior member of staff, however, espoused a not uncommonly held view that 'students liked their bit of paper' and cited his previous involvement in the 'Young Enterprise' scheme where students 'really looked forward to their award', as an illustration of the point in question.

Others 'recognised the argument for examining general education', although adding a rider in one instance that, 'in some senses', this was 'contrary to the purposes of General Studies'.

A similar range of opinion was evident in respect to the perceived value of external assessment. Whilst some staff expressed the belief that few saw the General Studies examination as having any worth, or in other cases, that weaker students may attribute some importance to it but the remainder saw it as 'a waste of time', a small number felt that the fact that the subject was examinable 'provided an aid to motivation' (though there was some evidence of this being seen as dependent upon how imminent the examination was for students).

Yet another small group advocated the merits of the present 'AS' level paper as against the old 'A' level examination. Reasons for the 'change' included the 'sterility' of the latter and the fact that it was -

'not universally accepted by universities, even within the examination board area'.

The present paper by contrast was -

'a nice one, with something for everybody',

the same observer going on to proffer the view that -

'Someone doing two 'A' levels and an 'AS' level can do General Studies and get three 'A' levels, but the ones who really ought to be doing it are those capable of four 'A' levels'.

Personal involvement/course organization

Interactive consideration of these two themes is undertaken on the basis of their direct association by college staff and - the general analytic framework notwithstanding - consequently, by virtue of the need for contextual coherence.

One of the first tutors to be interviewed sketched out the present structure of the Central Studies programme, the role of given departments within it and the part played by certain individuals owing to particular expertise or related skills. Another member of staff who held a post of responsibility for Central Studies, took it upon himself to provide a resume of staff motivation and to identify constraints upon involvement:

'There are about a dozen staff who actively seek involvement in the Core and help run it - there's Pamela*, for example, and Stuart*, who you saw in the hall doing the presentation the other day. They arrange their timetables so that they are involved. Then there are about twenty or so who would like to be involved - I guess Angela* would be one[#], but whose timetable commitments may not make this possible, since departments timetable their academic work first as their priority and then fit Central Studies in afterwards. The rest see the situation not, perhaps, so much as a free period, but as relaxation from subject teaching'.

Others volunteered explanations of the mechanics of compiling the programme via approaches to departments and commented on the range of outcomes offered.

In documenting this kind of background information, it is particularly interesting to note informants' perceptions (conveyed perhaps more clearly here than anywhere else in the study) of researcher expectation. This belief on the part of actors as to what constitutes material of interest has been described in terms of -

'taking over the relevancies of the ethnographer'.[1]

Whilst such concerns are advantageous in the sense that the investigator is able to accumulate data to which he might not otherwise have access, account has also to be taken of the extent to which participants' perspectives are skewed as a result.

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* Names are changed to protect the identity of those involved.

[#] A key informant.

A number of staff offered insights into their own contribution to the Central Studies programme and their reflections on this. There were those who outlined their input within departments to the rolling modular 'AS' level programme in the Upper Sixth; others who had undertaken to pursue one of their interests as the basis for a course, but who had then voluntarily acknowledged - or been obliged to take account of, extrinsic factors which had, in the final analysis, shaped delivery of the course (such as the tutor who offered to 'do a Rock Music Workshop', but tended to 'do Classical Music instead, with students taking examinations'; and a staff representative on a senior committee who ran a Bridge Club, but - 'lost a period in order to attend meetings').

Perceptions of how individuals drew comparisons between their own situations and those of others were also revealed; the following comment was not untypical of the sentiments expressed by those who looked for greater involvement from their colleagues:

'While some staff are involved in the Department's contribution to the 'AS' modular programme, I'm the only one willing to participate in the Core; the only one willing to stand up in the hall and do something';

whilst a wider view of the 'demands on staff' was uppermost in the thinking of another informant who expressed concern at a situation where some might -

'get "frees" in academic time and, say, six periods of 'B' Block (Central Studies) time'.

As with later themes, staff also took it upon themselves to depict and sum up student experiences and viewpoints: one senior member of staff spoke for others (particularly at this level) in describing a range of student involvement facilitated by a philosophy which held that - given appropriate guidance - students were to be encouraged to assume responsibility for their own decisions:

'Lots of students, for example, have driving lessons, which is fine; some look after their horse at home - which is also fine; some cycle home and perhaps stay there - but it's with their parents' blessing, as it were'.

Finally in this section, participants gave their rationale in adopting control mechanisms for student involvement in aspects of the Central Studies programme:

'We try to steer the one-year people out of 'B' Block if we can; we tell them it's only for one year, then they're off'.

and again:

'The GCSE one-year students (as distinct from those only staying one year) are not included in the Core. We argue that they will become 'A' level students, so they will get their "dose" then'.

Of the ten themes derived, therefore, from the unstructured interview data, half were issues that related almost exclusively to the perceptions of staff.

The consequence is that of a relatively narrow range of student perception by comparison, since there were no data derived from themes solely identified by students.

The remaining themes which were identified reflected the perceptions of both staff and students - albeit to varying extents. Of these, two appeared to assume an overriding importance and are discussed below.

The need for re-structuring/increased quality of courses

As with the theme of accreditation, actors' perceptions ranged across the constituent elements of the Central Studies programme, but exhibited a more marked pattern of concern for these as parallel issues. For ease of evidential aggregation and reader interpretation, however, wherever possible they have been distinguished and considered separately.

Core Plenary and seminar arrangements in particular, attracted a good deal of criticism - frequently of a negatively-orientated kind. One in four of all staff interviewed made related observations in this way. The Core Plenary was seen to have: 'dubious value'; its 'usefulness' as preparation for the future 'AS' level examination was 'questionable' - students would be 'better off reading a good newspaper'; the format, that of 'mass presentation', was respectively: 'inappropriate', 'an altogether too passive experience', 'often boring' and 'a waste of time'.

Whilst the session might be of 'occasional interest' in the opinion of one group, quantified by another as: 'perhaps one in ten' - students' views by and large were concordant with the perspectives of their tutors on the same issue.

Preferences were for 'something more active'; and for speakers which they themselves might recommend. Duplication of material occurring in other areas of student experience, either prior to or within college, added nothing, in the opinion of those students who made the observation, to an event that was 'boring' and 'generally pointless'.

There were corresponding reservations with regard to current arrangements for Core Seminars. Staff commented, for example, on matters such as 'the nonsensical timing of the period' (at a later point in the week), its unusual character:

'an odd session when one has to entertain',

and the cases of individual students who attended the seminar but were not timetabled for the Plenary, or who went to the Plenary but were unable to participate in the seminar (an issue that was taken up by the students themselves).

Perspectives of this kind led, in turn, to reflection on the need for change: 'variety of practice in Core Seminar' was -

'a sign of necessity for the re-examination of Central Studies'.

Current arrangements needed to be: 'overhauled completely'.

A period which sanctioned -

'the completion of quizzes which could be done at home'

- ought to be: 'looked at again'. Senior staff who were involved in reviewing the arguments for an 'extension' of the tutorial system, and in monitoring the existing pilot, foresaw the likelihood of 'replacing' the Core Seminar with a Tutorial Period as part of -

'a more rational and coherent approach to the whole question of Central Studies'.

Students were proportionately more concerned to express dissatisfaction towards the Options programme than were their tutors. For some, Central Studies Options were an encumbrance; they were:

'the kind of thing which one would do outside College';

Others, however, were content to argue the case for constructive change, to identify constraints in course delivery and to cite personal disappointments as evidence of the 'shortcomings' of present arrangements. One group of mixed-age students, whose views proved representative of a larger body of opinion among their peers, was at pains to draw attention to - 'the list of options available' courses to which, it was felt, 'no-one would want to go'.

For a significant number of students -

'Better courses would result in more people being keen to attend'.

Such sentiments were, on occasion, underpinned by a sense of inability to effect change: one female student, for example, said she had: 'desperately wanted to do Drama'.

- but had been told she couldn't since the course was: 'full up, or whatever'. On being asked whether she would be inclined to pursue a place, her response was:

'I don't think I would consider asking for priority next time, or anything like that'.

A number, though aware of a possible vehicle for student criticism in this area, appeared resigned to the fact that -

'Nothing gets changed through Student Council, so it's a waste of time'.

Taking the wider perspective, a group of Lower Sixth formers summed up a viewpoint held by a significant number:

'If the climate in College altered - more choice, listening to students' views, etc, the Central Studies programme here would be more effective'.

Informing such criticism, however, was an awareness demonstrated by some students of the notion that the present range of courses was -

'probably determined by what staff could offer',

and that the quality and appeal of Options varied according to the tutor concerned.

There was evidence also of explicit dissatisfaction among staff regarding the intrinsic interest of courses; and in relation to the 'inflexibility' of some tutors in -

'offering their interest regardless of student interest'.

This was balanced, however, by a body of less radical opinion which showed concern for the development of existing courses and opportunities; for example, linking 'Driving' to 'Traffic Studies'; and arrangements whereby students might be 'wooed away' from 'safe areas of choice' linked tangentially to their subject specialisms.

In looking to a developing dialogue with students, members of the Senior Management Team perceived 'a better way of organising things', via a system which 'would win College more friends' and which would -

'help students to realise why they are being asked to do what they do'.

Successful aspects/value of courses

Not surprisingly, perhaps, in the light of widespread comment by students on the previous theme, they were limited in number as advocates of the benefits to be derived from the Central Studies programme. There were, however, those who acknowledged their enjoyment of individual options; in particular, courses which had a practical emphasis. For others, Central Studies was at best 'OK', and for some GCSE students at least, 'preferable to extra lessons'.

Certain Core Plenary speakers had been 'interesting' according to both Lower and Upper Sixth groups and a small number agreed with one Lower Sixth student who suggested that -

'Plenaries and seminars are useful since communication skills are improved and individuals can develop confidence'.

Staff themselves also laid claim to being able to distil student opinion: thus, for example, Central Studies was thought of by students to be - 'a break from their academic studies'; and a chance to do something they might not otherwise do. It was further felt - that they enjoyed 'working on such things as the College Play', and that 'good debates' arose from examination of Core Plenary issues in Pilot Tutor Groups. Whilst some students were -

'undoubtedly just interested in doing their two or three 'A' levels'

a few staff felt that 'most' recognised: 'the value of Central Studies'. Students were -

'good at getting the best out of the system'

and enjoyed -

'visiting speakers and practical topics'.

Others, generally those who held more senior posts, offered the view that 'failure' among students to support the merits of the Central Studies programme ought, perhaps, not to be taken at face value. One tutor commented:

'Students' perceptions are sometimes at odds with what they believe; most will be critical of things if given the opportunity. Talking things through on a personal basis reveals new insights sometimes';

whilst another observed:

'Students complain - all sixth forms do don't they? But we find they often remember such courses best when they've left'.

There was evidence of widespread agreement among staff regarding the value of the Central Studies programme as a whole. It was 'important'; said to 'counteract a narrowing of the curriculum'; to give students 'an awareness in areas in which their knowledge is often deficient'; to 'provide both staff and students with a welcome break from academic work'; to facilitate 'the delivery of a large part of Personal and Social Education'; and to offer 'a variety of benefits in later life'. To a lesser extent there was a degree of support for retention of both components of the Core Studies course. Tutors here were, individually -

'Happiest with the longest established aspects of the general education programme',

or found themselves -

'satisfied in respect of the way in which things are structured at present'.

There were: 'some very good Core Plenaries' and Core Seminars were deemed to be: 'an acceptable element of the programme'.

The perceptions of those staff responsible for the organization and review of Central Studies revealed an avowed concern for response to student need:

'We try to accommodate student interest in both Core and Options. If students want to get a particular speaker or address certain issues, we try to comply. Similarly, if they want a particular option, eg Photography, that's fine - we encourage that, as long as they give an indication of outcome, eg a display in the foyer'.

Correspondingly, it was claimed, students were -

'encouraged to do their own courses with nominal staff presence';

and were afforded: 'a chance to pursue their interests'.

Where students were unable to secure a place on their first-choice course ('although about 80% do') the facility was said to exist for those 'who really wanted to do that course', to approach the programme co-ordinator, who would: 'make sure they got it next time'. In addition, a paternalistic concern appeared to permeate provision for students since it was accepted that -

'Certain issues need to be addressed; College would be likely to be accused of neglecting its responsibility towards students otherwise';

Reference was further made to the desirability of being able to -

'put old heads on young shoulders and make students aware of the benefits that might accrue from involvement in the Central Studies programme'.

College had to 'content itself, by and large'; however, with -

'offering a range of experiences which students may not get elsewhere and leave it at that'.

Given the scope of staff comment on the need for re-appraisal of the general education programme, it is significant that almost 55% of those interviewed were also prepared to signal their support of some aspect of it.

Students' optional involvement

The theme of students' optional involvement in the Central Studies programme, frequently served as both introduction and corollary to that of 'attendance', in the disclosure of actors' perceptions. It is, therefore, firstly considered as a key issue for about one in three participants and then in relation to the theme with which it corresponds.

Much the greater proportion of those who made reference to the issue (both staff and students) favoured some kind of optional participation for students. For the few who saw no advantage in this respect, two factors were apparent; firstly -

'the problem of what else students would do to fill their time (ie those periods allocated to Central Studies)';

and secondly, the likelihood that -

'no-one would bother to attend'.

The remainder tended to identify the question of compulsion as being at the root of the current difficulties in effecting a shift in student opinion. They were, however, approximately equally divided in addressing the issue in relation to some aspect of provision and in relation to provision for Central Studies per se.

Those in the former category (generally staff) focused, by and large, on the compulsory Core Studies component and the associated 'AS' level examination. One key informant revealed that College was -

'considering making 'AS' level optional so that a contract can be negotiated with those who opt, rather than enforcing attendance'.

Staff who were more peripheral to the process of review in this area offered respectives which would substantiate concern for the need for change: typical observations were -

'Students ought not to be obliged to do 'AS' level; it merely creates resentment',

and -

'Optional attendance would result in people turning up who were keen to go'.

There was a more evenly-balanced distribution of opinion between staff and students in relation to optional involvement and the programme as a whole. Staff perceptions here appeared quite closely attuned to students' views:

'There's a reaction to the compulsory nature of things - Core Plenary/Seminars/ Options';

'Compulsion is undoubtedly the problem';

'Students' response to Central Studies - and one with which some staff have sympathy - is that it is an imposition; they are forced to do it':

since the latter were often of the opinion that -

'if Central Studies were optional, this would improve things';

'a voluntary structure would be better';

'people came to College for qualifications - why should Central Studies be compulsory?':

and were at pains to cite, in the case of one group, the instance of one student who -

'took four 'A' levels, but still had to do Central Studies'.

How the College might consider resolving problems such as these was indicated by a member of the Senior Management Team, who observed that -

'If a student doesn't feel that something from a given range of experiences on offer is relevant/necessary, it may be that they have a free period, or go home, or do something else. The overriding consideration is: this arrangement, for that student, at a particular time'.

Attendance factors

The perceptions of staff on this theme gave rise to three clearly-defined areas of informant data, which were as follows:

1   data from those who commented on attendance at Core courses for which they had an element of responsibility;

2   data from Personal Tutors reporting their tutor group's response (or the response of students known individually to them) towards Central Studies in general;

3   data from those who offered their perspective of the College-wide response to the Central Studies programme.

The following observations and comments, representative of the data as a whole, serve sequentially to illustrate these parameters. Two science teachers described how matters stood in respect of the 'AS' level module in which they had both been involved; one remarked:

'Sessions are not generally well-attended - a 60% turnout perhaps. Students don't really give it a chance, despite the fact that the aim is to make things topical - "genetic fingerprinting", "green" issues and so forth';

his colleague noted that -

'It was the Arts students who were not attending; the scientists were fairly keen; we drew material from the SATIS project, so there was little duplication (of the 'A' level syllabus)'.

Personal Tutors depicted a variety of situations that were familiar to them. Among these, were references to the issuing of 'absence slips' to students, described as -

'mostly the result of non-attendance at Central Studies'.

One tutor acknowledged that it was -

'difficult to motivate the Upper Sixth towards Central Studies',

but felt unable to offer an explanation as to why her group did not attend. Another tutor reported counselling difficulties with a student in his tutor group who was not willing to participate in Central Studies, whilst a third mentioned a female student who -

'wanted to do Typing at a sister institution - only two out of twenty six students originally attending went; although no absence slips were issued, the student openly admitted her absence; she said she needed time to focus on her 'A' levels but was still prepared to do Central Studies Options on a restricted basis'.

Finally, there were those who looked to the wider context to put the issue as they saw it into perspective:

'Officially, nine hundred and fifty students should be on site for Options; if a check was made, there might be one hundred and twenty here'.

'Some students have learned to play the system - it depends on the staff member concerned; those who aren't bothered, allow students to drift off'.

Students themselves made overt reference both to their reluctance to attend Central Studies on a compulsory basis and their not infrequent failure (and that of their peers) to do so. Several groups of both Upper and Lower Sixth were critical of the absence slip system which, in their view, did nothing to improve attendance and 'served no useful purpose'. Little of any consequence resulted from non-attendance, it was suggested, and 'most students', therefore, tended 'to play the system'. Some students commented that they had raised the question of attendance with their Personal Tutor, and there were occasional instances where individuals had expressed their dissatisfaction (after only two or three Options sessions) to the latter, who, it was claimed, allowed them to 'drop out' (the circumstances of such 'dispensation' were not, however, revealed). Factors which would, in the opinion of students, improve attendance included: 'better courses', 'an optional structure', 'more choice', 'a flexible response towards student priorities' and 'more time in which to get on with 'A' levels'.

A further factor was implied rather than made explicit in an interview with a Lower Sixth tutor group, where the consensus of opinion appeared to be that most of those present (some thirteen students in total) were 'supposed to be doing Options courses' but that 'preferred choice' was 'not always possible'.

Miscellaneous issues

Among the data which did not fit readily into the preceding thematic categories, 'A' level examination priority was the issue most commonly alluded to. Staff felt that students were -

'concerned to get their qualifications',

that they -

'just wanted their examination results',

and would not -

'come to place equal value on their academic and General Studies'.

Students who addressed the issue professed to hold views that they saw as being shaped by institutions of higher education, since it was commonly thought that only examination results were of interest to such bodies. For these students, therefore, anything which distracted individuals from 'A' level studies was, essentially, 'a waste of time'.

Another notion here which had relevance for staff, was that of Central Studies forming part of 'a curriculum audit' for the individual - a process whereby a student would decide jointly with his/her tutor which learning experiences, from the range the college had to offer, would be most relevant and desirable. Further references of a miscellaneous nature included: the generally supportive attitude of parents; the absence of Core Studies team meetings (and ad hoc alternative forums for discussion); the need to evaluate student participation as part of Records of Achievement; the potential 'fallacy' of all 'A' level courses being regarded as inherently 'limiting' (vis-a-vis Central Studies having an essentially 'broadening' influence) and an expressed interest in the perceptions of other actors, using the researcher as a central point of reference (a function the latter declined to adopt).

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA FROM MEDLEY COLLEGE

In Medley College, it was noted that fewer themes were associated solely with staff perspectives than in Newfields College. Of those that were characterised in this way, however, none were additional to those that had been identified previously. The three themes concerned are delineated successively below.

Marketing strategy

This was an issue that was addressed only by Senior Management and the tutor responsible for oversight of the general education programme. It was also the only theme to be limited to comment by staff at this level.

Owing perhaps in part to timetabling arrangements by which students had access to some 30% of the full range of courses at any one time, marketing as part of the college's pre-enrolment strategy did not assume the degree of importance for participants as appeared to be the case in Newfields College. The perspectives offered here revealed a concern for 'publicising' the programme on the basis of -

'drawing attention to those courses a student can actually attend, ie those that are available'.

This focus of attention appeared to derive from dissatisfaction (on the part of both staff and students) with previous publicity arrangements, which highlighted the wide range of courses (over eighty) 'available'. Students discovered, however, that, post-enrolment, many of these were timetabled during periods when they had examination classes, and were thus, not available.

There was, correspondingly, a less-explicitly articulated link between the college's initiatives in this field and its commitment to an underlying philosophy of general education, than was evident in the previous case study. Rather there was an exposition of the means by which students were made aware of the content of courses and the constraints upon this process. The college's current practice was summarised by the Senior Tutor who was responsible for the general education programme:

'We don't have a very sophisticated marketing policy; students see a paragraph or two describing what listed courses in half - timetabled blocks are like - what they're about - in advance, and that guides their choice. They're free, of course, to enquire when they go to sign up - and some staff will have talked a bit about the course at Personal Registration, although there wouldn't have been much time for this; most people, by and large, however, decide from reading the course description'.

Although as indicated previously, students' perceptions did not reflect a direct concern for the marketing of courses, groups did on occasion profess to have a lack of understanding as to why such courses had to be undertaken. Whether such observations are a corollary to the issue per se is, of course, entirely dependent on 'interpretation' - either with respect to genuine ignorance on the students' part, or alternatively to their disinclination to accept the various 'arguments' that may have been advanced by the College.

Perception of the concept/name chosen by the college

Whilst the researcher was 'advised' of the college's term for the general education programme by a key informant during an exploratory interview (ie at the outset of the study); and although an interview was subsequently undertaken with a member of the 'College Studies' Working Party who claimed to have coined the term initially, neither of these actors (nor any subsequently) made reference to how it had been derived, or what connotations it might carry. There were, however, varied staff perceptions of the concept itself in evidence, the view of those who occupied senior management posts notwithstanding, that staff as a whole would not wish to see the institution become -

'a purely examination-orientated college'.

The range of perspectives on this theme (one of some significance, since it was addressed by about one in three of the staff interviewed) may be illustrated by reference to the following views which define its dimensions.

Some felt able to -

'subscribe in a generally unqualified way to the philosophy of College Studies',

and were frequently, though not exclusively, found among those who were offering courses which appeared to have a broad base of appeal. Others looked to the notion of 'balance' within the range of courses on offer and saw -

'a need for different kinds of College Study courses: some as subject support, some just for fun, etc'.

There were those, too, who questioned the tacit assumption of the benefits that students might derive from such courses and their underlying rationale; one tutor, for example, remarked:

'We were told these courses would "enrich", "enhance", "deepen", etc, but students resent them and staff resent them, so why are we doing them?';

whilst another observed that:

'The philosophical basis upon which such courses are offered needs to be re-examined; concepts of "the whole person" and "personal development" need to be defined'.

Finally, a concern was demonstrated by some to identify and preserve the concept of general education as -

'non-examination education'.

Although the College entered students for 'A' level General Studies, the examination had, according to a member of the Senior Management Team -

'very little to do with anything College might do in the College Studies programme, or could conceivably do'.

As in the case of Newfields College, so too in Medley College, staff felt able to claim (though perhaps more tentatively in this instance) some familiarity with students' views:

'Probably the second years will be more cynical about the idea of College Studies than the first years are, for example; but there are some I think who really do value what's going on. To a certain extent it depends on how much you see the sense of the philosophical approach which supports general education and rounded education; and if you can see the value of that as opposed to educational certificate gathering, then you're more committed to the courses'.

In addition, passing reference was also made by actors to such issues as: the question as to whether some of the courses currently offered under a 'free-choice' system for staff who ran them could actually be considered to broaden education; whether enrichment or broadening of experience was not already apparent in the lifestyles of many students who attended this particular college; and rejection of the case for a compulsory 'Core' element in the programme (although opportunities for some commonality of experience were being piloted on a voluntary attendance basis).

Course organization/orientation

This theme merits a briefer examination than those considered previously, in the light of its association with the comments of only three members of staff. Of these, however, one was a key informant who held a senior post, and for whom the historical evolution of programme scope and structure and the current mode of organization, served as a focus of attention (similar perceptions of researcher expectation perhaps appertaining here as in the previous case study). Within these parameters, reference was made by the informant to the consideration that had been given to categorizing courses according to a given curriculum model (a notion that was subsequently not pursued); the legacy of a wide range of courses generated by an operating criterion of staff interest and enthusiasm (and, therefore, the absence of any 'vetting' procedure); the advantages of a 'Personal Registration' system, in terms of administration, student choice and commitment; and the periodic rotation of such courses around timetabled blocks in order to facilitate greater student access to them.

The way in which the College Studies timetable operated and the resulting range and availability of courses at any one time, were aspects of this theme that were raised by the second member of staff involved. Concern in this instance appeared, essentially, to be for differentiated access and opportunity that current structuring of provision created. As a consequence, the range of choice for students, it was suggested -

'may be eight to ten courses in a good block; perhaps as few as three or four otherwise'.

Finally, a third participant elected to outline an organizational problem which had been addressed at a 'Management Meeting' - namely, that of GCSE students who dropped subjects in lieu, whereas 'A' level students who were 'marginally light' on their overall study programme were expected under the current system to undertake such courses 'irrespective of their commitment to them'.

This latter issue had a reciprocal correspondence with the theme of 'Personal involvement'; it now seems appropriate, therefore, to examine this area of joint relevance to students and staff.

Personal involvement

It was noted that several patterns of perception underpinned the theme as a whole. Among these, comments relating to 'interests' and the associated issue of 'commitment', were particularly prominent.

In addition to volunteering information about College Studies courses for which they were currently responsible, some staff referred to personal interests which might conceivably have formed the basis for a course, but in the delivery of which they foresaw practical difficulties. These included: 'a lack of confidence', 'the communicating of content' and 'the time, as the sole specialist, to do other things'. Other criteria of choice in offering courses were specified: a few staff were concerned to -

'move as far away from the subject area as possible'.

One tutor, however, suggested alternative considerations:

'Staff look to ways of organising things so that convenience is the keynote'.

There was some correspondence here with a group of students' views regarding the motivation of their peers: since it was suggested that -

'Most students choose a course on the basis of the easiest commitment'.

Such courses were commonly said to be those that were 'recreational' or 'practical' and which served as a contrast to the demands of academic study.

This appeared to be linked to students' generally widespread perceptions concerning the 'demands' which the College Studies programme made on them and their implied disapproval of -

'having to do as many as three College Studies courses at any one time'.

The requirement was one that was ratified by a Senior Tutor who observed that three College Studies courses was:

'perhaps typical provision for students in any given week';

but who went on to comment:

'however, a significant number will be doing sufficient examination work under the "points" system to correspondingly reduce the time spent on College Studies'.

Varying student involvement, though not commonly cited, was an issue to which some students referred (perhaps almost in 'mitigation' of criticism levied by others). Thus, for example, it was pointed out that if Work Experience was being undertaken, no other College Study course may be necessary in the case of some students, and that for 'A' level candidates, college gave priority to preparation for examinations after Christmas in the Second Year, 'in any event'.

Other aspects of the theme of Personal Involvement alluded to by participants included: the contrasting numbers of students being accommodated on different courses (from single-figure attendance to thirty plus); the need to persuade students to move away from courses solely linked to their subject specialisms; the dispensation granted to students involved in some activities (eg College Magazine and the Orchestra) to pursue these for longer than the customary duration of College Studies courses; and the question of 'A' level General Studies students still being required to participate in College Studies in cases where study programme 'commitments' were not being fully met.

The need for re-structuring/increased quality of courses

Among the aspects of this theme that were selected by students, there was particular concern for the content of College Studies courses and a variety of opinion as to the need for and means of change.

A frequent comment in general terms was that courses ought, simply, to be 'more interesting' (which in itself, would 'make them more valuable'); other students, however, had more specific criticisms in mind:

'Staff should not choose boring subjects just so they can get time off; they must enjoy what they teach or do';

and again:

'Many of the courses are too academic; more practical ones are needed'.

The consensus elsewhere, was towards a fundamental change to the way in which the College Studies programme was drawn up; a range of students across year groups, ability levels and subject backgrounds felt that:

'Student interest should be the basis for the courses that are run - not staff expertise';

that they should be -

'created with more of a mind to what students want to do with their spare time';

and that the means whereby this would be achieved would be to -

'carry out a survey of student interests and preferences'.

A second issue to which widespread reference was made was that of the amount of time devoted to College Studies. Students' perceptions in this respect were related both to the need for a general reduction in the number of courses to be taken at any one time - 'a maximum of two' was a popular notion - and to alternative uses to which the time so generated might be put:- 'study of examination subjects', 'revision', 'College work in general', being commonly suggested.

Finally, there were those who addressed the need for radical change without offering comment as to how this might be effected. For these students, courses needed to be 'organised very differently'; required 'serious alteration' before they could 'really achieve credibility'; and merited 'much improvement' if they were to 'fulfil their potential'.

Amongst staff also there was both acknowledgement of the need to re-examine current College Studies provision and identification of those areas where change was deemed necessary. In general terms, therefore, there was recognition that the College Studies programme was: 'an evolving part of the curriculum'; that there remained, 'still a lot of work to be done'; and that College had, 'as yet, not got things right'.

The expressed attitudes that corresponded to this general perspective may be divided into three specific areas of concern. Firstly, there were some staff for whom the structuring of course provision was a key issue: one, for example, spoke of the need to have -

'more College Studies courses linked to examination subjects',

whilst another supported the line of argument but felt that 'complementary' courses could be -

'of interest to people specializing in those subjects and non-specialists alike',

and might constitute 30 to 40% of overall College Study provision. By way of contrast, it was suggested, departments might also offer courses designed not for their own students, but instead, for students doing other subject options. Others, however, echoing the views of some of the students referred to earlier, were of the opinion that courses might be 'more beneficial' if linked on a wider scale to 'practical skills'.

A second aspect concerned participants' perceptions of resourcing and funding; an issue which, in general, was felt to be 'problematic' in some areas. Demands on staff in this respect could, it was observed, prove 'considerable' over an eleven week period (the typical duration of a course). As a consequence, questions of planning, design and preparation of courses were, it was suggested, 'of major concern'. For a few staff, the essential terms of reference were an evident incongruity between the support given to College Studies at a theoretical and philosophical level and 'a commitment in practical terms'.

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Thirdly, some staff attached importance to the facility to respond to the need for change as a result of monitoring and evaluating existing provision. Feedback on courses from students to tutors and from tutors to those responsible for programme organization was thought 'desirable' (and had been undertaken by some), whilst those who were interviewed who sat on the College Studies Working Party, found it 'a useful forum' to examine such issues as 'student choice and course access'.

Successful aspects/value of courses

Students' perceptions here fell into two broad categories: those that were 'qualified' by the kinds of observations reported under the last thematic heading and those that were not accompanied by such considerations. In both of these categories it was noted that there was a more significant input from students who were in the first year of their course (and who as a result of the timing of the research had just one term's experience of College Studies), than from individuals in their second or (more rarely) third year. Thus, in the first category, typical perspectives were that the notion of College Studies was: 'a good idea in principle', that it 'could help to balance the timetable'; that it was 'useful on the whole'; and was 'beneficial' to those who were 'able to take full advantage'. For a smaller number of students in this group, a more marginally supportive view was in evidence: courses were 'useful sometimes', and offered 'a fair amount of enjoyment'; one might 'occasionally learn about things of interest' but value to the individual would 'frequently depend' on the 'particular course taken'.

Students in the second category, though less commonly encountered, were more emphatic in their endorsement of the benefits to be gained:

for those individuals courses were, for example, 'worthwhile', 'an excellent way of passing time which would otherwise have been wasted', 'a good recreational activity' and 'interesting' in their 'range' and 'variety'. In addition, 'practical' courses provided 'a welcome break from academic subjects'.

In the light of the college's developmental stage and staff perceptions relating to evolving forms of College Studies provision, it is, perhaps, not inconsistent to find few instances of unqualified claims regarding the programme's success, amongst staff themselves.

Rather there was reference to aspiration and endeavour and to a measure of success in certain areas, such as 'lighter courses' which had a popular appeal; those with 'an end product'; or which gave students 'confidence as autonomous learners' - for example, those that involved study of a foreign language. The perceptions of senior staff (Senior Tutors and above) did, however, reflect a belief that College Studies courses were helping to provide 'balance' and 'breadth' in the curriculum and were contributing to students' personal development via -

'opportunities to integrate with others outside their own subject areas, and who have different interests and enthusiasms; different levels of knowledge and skill'.

Other staff looked to the successful aspects of courses for which they were personally responsible: one tutor, for example, felt that a major benefit of the 'module' that he offered was that it was, essentially, 'experiential' - which, in his opinion, was:

'how such courses should be taught';

another highlighted -

'the wide range of learning experiences found in the course'.

(though it was suggested that some other courses were dissimilar in this respect); whilst a third proffered the view that the 'nature of the subject' (Information Technology) meant that 'no problems' were experienced in terms of student response.

In addition, several staff made reference to 'relevant' aspects of the visit to the College by HMI and, in particular, to the approbation given to the 'wide variety of College Studies courses offered'.

Beyond these contexts, however, there were no further perceptions which related to the quality of College Studies provision or to the degree to which programme objectives were being realised.

Students' optional involvement

There was a less obvious correspondence here between the theme of 'Students' Optional Involvement' and that of 'Attendance' than was evident from actors' perceptions in the previous case study. Where such associations existed, it was generally students who so constructed them, although a small number of staff adopted the perspective also.

Whilst this latter group constituted only a small minority, it is perhaps worth recording that one tutor who saw 'no value in compulsory College Studies', had made representation to Senior Management regarding the notion that -

'If participation was optional, more students would be likely to attend'.

Reportedly, however, the response had been -

'a lack of confidence that anyone would turn up'.

Students whose perceptions established a link between the two issues came from a mixed age and course background, and shared common ground in a belief that 'most' of their peers would 'do a College Study' (implying more limited involvement than that currently necessary for many students) if participation was not compulsory.

A second difference noted was that staff appeared more or less equally divided in their views as to whether College Studies should be optional or compulsory. For a few staff in the former category the issue was a fundamental one; one tutor's comments exemplify the perspective:

'We need to examine our right as teachers to impose what we see as valuable on students, when the rest of the curriculum is supposed to be subject to negotiation'.

Others espoused a 'practical' view that 'the majority of students' would derive greater enjoyment and benefit from -

'something that they had chosen to do on the basis of its being relevant and necessary'.

Of those who advocated the need for a compulsory programme, most saw the issue in terms of how students would otherwise occupy themselves. Such perspectives ranged from firm assertion:

'If given the alternative, students would not do anything',

via the faintly rhetorical:

'How would they spend their time if they didn't attend?',

to the speculative:

'It's questionable as to whether students would devote more time to their 'A' levels'.

There was the suggestion also from amongst staff within this group that, although students had been 'made' to do College Studies, 'a proportion' had, on looking back, 'enjoyed the experience'. Concern that this should increasingly prove to be the case was evident at Senior Management level:

'At the end of the day we don't really want to get students there by bludgeoning them or guiding them; they ought to be there because the last lesson was exciting and they want to go back again ..... it's not entirely unreasonable to suppose that's how courses can work, if we find the right courses - though not for all the students all of the time'.

The predominant view advanced by students themselves (other than those previously referred to) was for some form of change with respect to compulsory involvement. Although a majority were in favour of participation being 'wholly voluntary', 'up to the individual concerned', and courses being 'available only for those who want them', a number put the emphasis upon their disagreement with -

'being required to take a certain number of courses, even if some of them don't appeal'.

The occasional student, however, shared the perceptions of those staff who expressed concern as to whether students would make profitable use of additional time granted to them. For these individuals the likely outcome of a system of this kind would be that students would -

'just hang around in College'.

Finally, the perceptions of a significant number mirrored those of staff who had also addressed the issue - that a compulsory programme of general education was at 'variance' with the kind of relationship that the College claimed to maintain with its students, who were -

'supposed to be treated as adults, but made to do College Studies'.

Attendance factors

The extent of student perception on this theme was limited to just two issues of concern. On the one hand, several groups volunteered the information that a number of their peers were signalling their views by 'ducking out of College Studies', or by -

'failing to make up their "points total" when dropping subjects'.

In some cases this appeared to give rise to informant resentment, since either those of lesser conviction, or those who were simply better placed to exploit the system, were, reportedly, able to avoid further commitment.

On the other hand, personal case history revealed that forms of 'sanction' were operating (or could operate), to students' evident disapproval:

'It seems pointless having to repeat a course as a result of some of it being missed';

and, more generally:

'Getting into trouble because you've missed College Studies doesn't solve anything'.

Although there was some discrepancy here with 'college-wide' philosophy articulated by one Senior Tutor who suggested that researcher investigation would probably reveal -

'a different system to other colleges which do have yellow cards or red cards for attendance - it would actually go against the grain here to do that; we're trying to insist students are adults - we can't do that and then introduce some sort of sanction system and expect them to take any of that seriously';

- there was 'recognition' at this level that it would be 'inappropriate' to view enforced student attendance as a criterion by which to measure the programme's success.

Other staff offered their perceptions of student reaction, which were in accord with the general consensus among those students who expressed an opinion on the matter. Students, it was suggested, did 'not want to turn up', despite 'much personal effort' being put into courses by staff, and 'were voting with their feet'. A few staff had 'reconciled' themselves to a position of 'acceptance', whereby 'resources and time' were devoted to those who did attend.

In contrast, however, some staff felt able to claim success in term of certain courses (both their own and those of colleagues) being: 'well-attended', 'popular', 'in demand' and 'oversubscribed'. As intimated under earlier headings, staff identified courses which 'put bodies on seats' as being those of a 'practical', 'recreational' or 'non-academic' nature.

Two further issues were identified: the first concerned the 'target population' for particular courses and the audiences that they subsequently drew. One tutor, for example, had offered a science 'foundation course' which had -

'really attracted the wrong clientele',

whilst another undertook to run two courses within the one discipline -

'only to find that the same students were attending both'.

Such situations were accounted for in terms of the fact that although tutors were -

'supposed to offer guidance in the choice of courses to be taken',

it was 'inevitable' that in a 'large institution' a few students would 'slip through the net'.

The second related to means by which college sought to encourage attendance. A senior member of staff outlined the organizational considerations:

'Although clashes between timetabled examination subjects and College Studies would be avoided if there were certain parts of the week devoted to each respectively, this was decided against some time ago on the grounds that, given students are going to be less committed to College Studies, it would be easier for whole cohorts to opt out simultaneously';

whilst a member of the Senior Management noted the potential of a planned Record of Achievement which -

'might be one way to persuade students to attend courses that contrast with their major specialisms - since this would look better',

and which would serve as a further incentive since -

'modules would not be recorded on the document at all unless students had gone to classes'.

Although students themselves made no reference to the issue, two other staff participants who did so expressed uncertainty in the one case as to whether a Record of Achievement would -

'necessarily attract students to courses',

and 'recognised' in the other, that the latter -

'do not respond to the pressure of such a record reflecting attendance at College Studies'.

Actors' perceptions on this particular topic here merge with and were also developed in relation to, the theme of 'Accreditation', and are, therefore, explored further below.

The question of accreditation

It was commonly recognised by those who supported the general education programme that the 'intrinsic quality of courses' should be the major motivating factor for students. Additionally, however, one key informant offered the view that although college was not providing internal certification, it was confident of 'making extrinsic factors secure' by notifying students that references for both higher education and employment would incorporate reports on courses 'satisfactorily completed'. This was a perspective endorsed by one member of the Senior Management Team who acknowledged that there was 'a bit of stick' to accompany -

'what one hopes is the "carrot" - the lesson by lesson enjoyment that students ought to derive'.

The same respondent took as a contrasting theme the issue of external accreditation:

'The other "stick" that we don't and won't use, is the 'A' level General Studies examination. We do enter students, but we don't sell our College Studies programme as being a preparation for that: (a) because I don't believe that's the way to do it and (b) it would be false anyway ..... For those who do wish to do it we give them a bit of coaching in what to expect and after that it's up to them - if they've got the general knowledge then good for them'.

For other staff who addressed the issue, however, the examination had the potential for 'expanding' College Studies provision - where 'proper accreditation' was needed - and for serving as:

'perhaps a better vehicle for broadening education, than College Studies'.

'Separate' or 'internal' certification, however, was largely perceived as being problematic since it would -

'lack currency on a national scale';

prove -

'difficult to apply across a wide range of courses';

and be -

'of limited interest to students intent upon 'A' level qualifications'.

Students' perceptions of the question of accreditation were overshadowed by their concern for other themes considered previously. Where views were offered, therefore, they were generally infrequent and, in addition, were restricted to the 'A' level General Studies examination. These students, usually General Studies candidates themselves, saw the value of the course as twofold: it was -

'advantageous to those going on to Higher Education, in terms of supporting an application',

and it led to -

'an additional 'A' level pass'.

Other than views of this kind, no further perceptions were offered.

Miscellaneous issues

Residual data were connected almost exclusively with the place of College Studies in relation to academic qualifications. Staff perspectives reflected both purely personal standpoints on the issue, and student values. One senior member of staff, for example, commented:

'It's probably right that the examination curriculum be staffed first and College Studies afterwards; it's probably right in as much as for most students the examination results do count more than College Studies courses (and for parents and teachers it's probably that way round). I don't think I'd want to disagree with that to be honest';

another tutor observed -

'Many students are here to do their 'A' levels - that's all they're interested in';

whilst a third remarked similarly -

'Students think College Studies are a waste of time. They come to get qualifications - but it was always the same when I was in 11 - 18 schools'.

For other staff, constraints of one kind or another were the operative consideration. These were, variously:

'insufficient time to cover the subject syllabus';

the outlook of university admissions tutors who, 'by and large' saw -

'no value in a broad general education';

and less-clearly defined factors alluded to in such statements as -

'It would be nice to think we could place equal emphasis on academic courses and College Studies, but in practical terms, perhaps that's not possible'.

That such weighting was actually being signalled to students was apparent at least to one group of students who were agreed that -

'College Studies should not be regarded as of equal value to examination courses'.

Others confirmed that their perspective on the issue was as staff had largely indicated - typical preferences being for:

'getting on with examination work',

and a common argument against current provision that of being:

'too busy with 'A' levels'.

A few students did, however, suggest that College Studies could still find a place alongside 'a hectic examination programme', for 'those who were interested', or where 'something useful might be learnt'.

This focus of perception apart, only one other issue was touched upon by participants. Two groups of students made independent reference, in the one instance to participation in the programme reflecting 'the reluctance of some staff', and in the other to -

'the need for enthusiasm on the part of both staff and students'.

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA FROM SETTLEDON COLLEGE

In contrast to the two other case studies, the data from Settledon College produced a single theme that was derived from the perceptions of staff actors only (although one other theme was largely so constituted). However, this particular theme - that of 'Marketing Strategy' - was common to all three colleges in being identified in this way.

Marketing strategy

Staff perspectives indicated that the marketing of College Studies derived its essential impetus from two sources or initiatives.

The first of these, staff liaison visits and Students' Admission Interviews, was alluded to solely by staff at Senior Management level, who gave uniform emphasis to the notion of the 'package' which College offered - ie the range of experiences deemed appropriate to students' needs - and which it conveyed 'explicitly' prior to applicants' enrolment.

By implication, therefore, marketing of College Studies appeared to be conceived here in terms of establishing the commitment of students to a broad view of the sixth form curriculum - a commitment which it was felt ought not to diminish following initial acceptance of the educational argument:

'Students are under no illusions as to their obligations in respect of the whole package on offer - we do not spring it on them when they come here'.

A second strategy was associated with the role of the Personal Tutor, who was seen as being -

'the key to the whole business in terms of reinforcing the importance College attaches to College Studies'.

Such aspirations were not wholly viewed as being without attendant problems, however: the senior member of staff responsible for General Education commented -

'Tutors are supposed to discuss the balance of choices with students - they have time to do this at the beginning of term - although some don't';

whilst a more junior colleague observed -

'One tries as a Tutor to support general education, but there's only so much that can be done personally'.

The difficulties of the task in this area were further outlined by a member of the Senior Management Team:

'I would guess that we are failing at the particular hurdle of convincing students of the value of general education. Nor are we likely to be able to do so; each year the task begins afresh - unlike the 11 - 18 school where what goes on in the sixth form is a carry over from what goes on in the Lower School; we have nothing to carry forward'.

These, in turn, governed the College's criterion of attainment in respect of marketing effectiveness, since it was felt that -

'If College Studies can be sold to 50% of the students, that is a yardstick of success'.

Perception of the concept/name chosen by the college

As proved to be the case in Medley College, no reference was made by staff participants to the significance of the term given to the general education programme; its underlying philosophy, however, prompted concern on a wider scale than in either Medley College or Newfields College, in being addressed by over 50% of staff approached and by a small number of students also.

Perceptions on this theme were directed towards four attitude objects: staff perceptions of the views of colleagues; staff perceptions of the views of students; students' perceptions of the commitment of staff; and staff disclosure of personal commitment.

The first of these categories reflected, in part, actors' judgements of the degree of support that College Studies attracted. These judgements were offered at various levels of responsibility. A member of the Senior Management Team estimated that the proportion of staff 'uncommitted to College Studies' was 'perhaps 20%', whilst the tutor responsible for the general education programme commented:

'50% of staff are less than committed; only one-third put maximum effort into the programme; 10% are actively looking to avoid making a contribution by putting on courses where no-one attends and then not giving notification of their availability.

Subject commitment is not a factor in the education - some of the best courses are delivered by those who are often the busiest academically; nor are staff on Main Professional Grade necessarily the ones who don't pull their weight'.

A junior member of staff on the other hand, offered a more general assessment:

'Some staff are unconvinced, but in the main, staff see perhaps slightly more

pro-arguments than con'.

With regard to those who were seen as being 'unable' to offer their 'full support', the

question of subject teaching commitments re-emerged for the College's Senior

Management:

'There are staff who find that the work involved with four 'A' level sets leaves

them with a perceived code of priorities';

however, there were 'others' who were -

'dismissive of "breadth", "width", and anything unrelated to teaching their

subject'.

Staff self-perception on this issue revealed a range of standpoints - one of which

provided confirmation of the sentiments of Senior Management: as a Head of Department

remarked -

'To be honest, there isn't the time to bother much about College Studies when

you've "n" 'A' level groups to teach'.

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Among other staff there was a more compliant view: one tutor (who currently had perhaps untypically limited involvement in the programme) observed -

'The philosophical argument for doing College Studies was determined by Senior Management; and, speaking personally, I'm prepared to go along with it'.

In so far as overall College policy relates to the commitment of those who determine it, it also seems appropriate in this section to record the general education programme objectives quoted at Senior Managerial level; these were respectively:

'(a) To provide a core of experiences which college believes meets the needs of students; and to persuade them that how College sees them is how they ought to see them. Students should, we believe, pursue a course that has greater breadth than three 'A' levels.

(b) To provide a package that is coherent and unified.

(c) Although not a main objective, to provide components for those students who wish to do 'A' level General Studies'.

Staff perceptions of students' views were consistent in both orientation and emphasis - at least with respect to initial response. Student perception, it was felt, was: 'a problem area'; there was -

'an obvious divide between those having a positively orientated view .....';

and those whose reaction was: 'a negative one'. They appeared, reportedly, 'very narrow in their view' and had -

'not been persuaded as yet of the value of general education'.

Interestingly, the position according to one participant was not 'the rosy one' where students -

'came in for their Main Studies (general education) and weren't bothered about 'A' levels',

which was depicted in one particular college by a visiting Principal. Rather they came for -

'access to higher education, personal development, social confidence and career interests; not with a view to broadening their outlook or recognising that education is life-long and life-wide'.

Although staff participants at Senior Tutor level and above were of the opinion that students 'dislike' of general education moderated substantially as time went by, for others, a fundamental problem remained:

'Students have to accept the concept of a broad education or they will end up being very dull people. College cannot sanction the 'three 'A' level' mentality - we cannot go down the road of the lowest common denominator'.

By way of inference from some students' comments on the success of individual courses (documented elsewhere) there was clearly some support for the notion that given staff were committed to the courses that they delivered (and perhaps as a corollary to that, to the philosophy underpinning the programme as a whole). However, the only direct references to staff commitment were made by two groups of Second Year sixth formers, who commented respectively that 'lots of staff' were 'not supportive', and that there were individual tutors who actively promoted the idea that regular attendance at courses for which they were responsible was neither required nor desired.

Attendance factors

A second wide-ranging theme to which participants turned was that of 'Attendance'. However, it was noted that whilst the proportion of staff for whom it assumed particular relevance was almost identical to that recorded above, the number of students whose views were similarly categorized was substantially greater (than in the previous instance) - in effect, by a factor of four. The sub-issues that were identified were as follows: maintaining checks on attendance; the reasons for students attending or failing to attend; the proportion of those attending; and students' 'obligations' in respect of attendance. Each of the issues was addressed by both students and staff.

According to Senior Management, attendance in given areas within College had been 'problematic' but had 'now been tightened up'. Within the particular context of general education, as elsewhere, the College's 'only written rule' was specified as being 'that of attendance'.

The process of monitoring and checking the same gave rise to reference to the 'absence slip' system; for a few members of staff, this was synonymous with the notion of 'sanctions'; one tutor, for example, commented –

'Attendance is unsatisfactory though I do issue absence slips; there has been discussion of bringing parents in if sanctions don't work';

whilst another observed –

'Current sanctions are insufficient; students opt out because of lack of consistent follow-up. I'm not convinced that alerting students to the fact that absence from College Studies will be noted on their final report, will carry much weight with them'.

There were also those for whom the absence slip system did not 'work' from 'a personal point of view', as well as those who saw the need to 'check up on absentees', but who found –

'the majority to be genuine absences'.

Several groups of students – both Upper and Lower Sixth – made reference to the 'follow-up' to absence, alluded to above, and offered corroboratory perceptions of its –

'variation from group tutor to group tutor'.

A few thought that matters 'should be stricter in this respect'.

As one Head of Department pointed out, the potential number of students attending any given College Studies course varied according to 'its slot on the timetable'. However, the same participant indicated that in his own specialism, it was perhaps the compulsory nature of the subject to the age of sixteen which accounted for -

'so few students taking advantage of support',

(ie the kind of course which was being delivered). Rather, students were -

'encouraged to try new subjects',

and this would, he suggested -

'account for attendance differences in other areas'.

In one such area another Head of Department offered the view that whilst the majority of those attending a course relating to his subject specialism also took the subject at 'A' level, students from other subject areas were -

'coming along as a result of having heard about it'.

Further staff perspectives on the issue related to the 'limitation' of choice of courses; the anomaly of students taking 'A' level General Studies support courses and failing to attend; and the discrepancy between the attendance records of 'A' level and non-'A' level students respectively (being reportedly 'better' in the former case than the latter).

Students' perceptions of where their priorities lay, provided additional insights. A group of second years felt that -

'Time could be used more profitably at present'.

College Studies were found to be 'disruptive' if one was 'busy with academic work'; however, there was a consensus that second year students had been 'prepared' to do courses in the first year, since at that stage it was possible to 'coast along' with respect to academic study. A group of first year students who 'enjoyed College' provided support for the notion that some students may well adopt such a view since they 'confirmed' that they 'generally attended'; another group, however, whilst attending if they 'had nothing else on', saw a more pressing need to complete subject essays if these were due for imminent submission. Other motives were also in evidence: some upper sixth students attended courses in the morning but left College early if they were timetabled at the end of the day; whilst others suggested that the whole question of attendance was bound up with the type or quality of the particular courses that students were required to attend.

The proportion of those attending, it was claimed, varied considerably, although low attendance was often cited. Staff assessments ranged from that which was seen as 'acceptable' -

'seven "regulars" out of ten or eleven',

or -

'two-thirds to three-quarters of the twenty two who should be here - although that would be judged unacceptable for any 'A' level lesson';

to situations where -

'on occasions only two out of twelve might attend',

and where 'some' had 'never been' and 'many' were 'missing'.

Students themselves typically thought that attendance was 'poor, really' and made reference to several courses where attendance figures corresponded to the lower levels quoted above.

Finally, members of the College's Senior Management highlighted students' 'obligations' in respect of attendance. In the view of one participant it was -

'not unreasonable to expect students to attend'

- for something they had 'signed up for'; College could not, it was maintained -

'sanction part-time students'

- the same commentator going on to declare:

'Fifty industrious students would need to make representation in my office to convince me of the need for such an arrangement'.

A second actor reinforced the perspective in stating that when students had put down their names for particular courses -

'albeit with a lack of enthusiasm'

- they had 'a contract to attend'.

In those instances (not widely encountered but sufficiently so to identify a body of opinion) where students were conscious of any such obligations, it was the question of 'enthusiasm' that proved a key issue, since it was suggested that although there was a preparedness to 'give things a go', 'ten weeks' (the typical duration of courses) was 'a long time' if something didn't 'appeal'.

Personal involvement

In common with Medley College and Newfields College, staff participants invariably provided information about courses for which they were responsible; however, fewer additional issues were raised (by staff and students, where applicable). Those that were so identified were student involvement in course delivery and constraints, influences and reflections on the reasons for current personal commitments.

In the former instance, consideration appeared to be being given to a major shift in students' contribution to College Studies courses. At Senior Management level, a two-dimensional perspective was in evidence: firstly, there was speculation that students' 'more positive response' as time went by might be inversely correlated with a possible decrease in staff involvement; secondly, that an extension of such arrangements 'might provide an answer' to the problems of student motivation and commitment.

One head of Department in fact indicated that she had discussed with the tutor responsible for general education -

'the possibility of an increased number of student-led courses'

since there were 'none really so far' except where staff had -

'asked students to take a session'.

Students themselves made no reference to any inclination to be so involved, although as recorded elsewhere, some did express a view that more account should be taken of students' interests.

With respect to the second issue, some staff revealed that they had taken the opportunity -

'to move away from the subject base',

although others were 'happier' with the 'familiar ground', that, for example, the area of support courses could offer.

Whilst staff on the whole were viewed by Senior Management as being 'excellent', it was felt that 'some' courses offered had -

'clearly involved no work at all'.

Others were subject to constraints of varying kinds: indications being given, for example, of academic timetabling commitments limiting individual involvement in the programme; of, in the case of one department, 'a range of courses' having been offered, but time now being spent in covering the Multiple Choice section of the 'A' level General Studies paper for students 'anxious' about their ability in the relevant subject area; and of logistical problems affecting delivery of the particular course which staff had intended to offer.

Student take up of and continued participation in a number of courses had, it appeared, resulted from the inherent quality of those courses (communicated via peer recommendation and determined by personal experience); although some participants 'confessed' to not knowing why they had taken given courses, whilst others had found that their expectations of content were not realised - as in the case, for example, of one course which from its title students had anticipated as being orientated towards 'beginners', but which in the event reportedly required a 'background' in the skills area concerned.

Students' optional participation

This was another theme which assumed particular significance for students, in relation to the attention devoted to it by staff. However, neither group of actors' perceptions were expressed in these terms to the extent found in either of the other two colleges. One possible explanation for this may be the prominence here of the theme of 'Attendance' to which the theme currently under discussion has been shown to have (to varying extents) a correspondence. In other words, it is conceivable that the one has, to some degree, been subsumed within the other and that 'participants' perspectives have been manifested preferentially in this way.

In like contrast to the other case studies, no advocates of optional student participation were found among staff participants. Among the few staff who did comment directly on the question at issue, the position adopted was a generally adamant one with clear cut terms of reference. One senior member of staff, for example, declared that College would -

'not be able to accept that students could not find something to interest them from the range of courses on offer. This would suggest how limited their interests were';

whilst another observed:

'a tutor should not accept that students cannot find two courses from a list of twenty; they would be requested to look again'.

Although Senior Management acknowledged that 'negotiation' was 'feasible up to a point', it was suggested that there were some students within College who would -

'argue forcibly against doing anything on a compulsory basis'.

By way of illustration, the case was cited of one student who presented her position 'articulately and justifiably'; as a result, College had accepted the argument and 'acceded' to her request. Such an instance was, however, regarded as 'an exception'.

Students themselves drew attention to a range of issues, which gave rise to more differentiated views within groups of participants than was often the case in other thematic areas.

These perspectives were divided into four broad areas of concern. Firstly, in accordance with the pattern established in the case of Medley College and Newfields College, there was a strong current of opinion in favour of optional participation which was not subject to elaboration with respect to how such arrangements might be managed, or what benefits they might bring.

Secondly, there were those who saw in an optional commitment the 'disadvantage' of students having 'too much free time' - an argument that also dismissed the notion that the time so 'saved' could profitably be spent on 'A' levels.

Thirdly, some doubted whether the student body as a whole would react in a 'responsible' way to the choices before them - rather; it was suggested -

   'people would be inclined to abuse the system'.

Finally, Upper Sixth students in particular were conscious of a 'realisation' that time in the Upper Sixth was needed for -

   'study upon which success depends'.

This was, however -

'not a suggestion that participation should be compulsory in the Lower Sixth and optional in the Upper Sixth - the First Year students would want the same arrangements'.

Successful aspects/value of courses

The most marked feature of student perception in this area was the 'acknowledgement' by most participants of the success of some aspect of the general education programme. Thus, there were comments on the overall benefits of College Studies, the value of support courses and recognition of the quality of individual courses. Respectively, College Studies courses had -

'provided a change and relaxation'

from academic study; they had -

'brought about student integration - of which there would otherwise have been very little',

and their number and range had -

'been drawn up with a view to trying to produce interesting courses'.

Support courses were considered to be 'useful'; they afforded 'much needed practice' and offered 'help in passing examinations'. The majority of College Studies courses on the whole merited restrained accolades from students: collectively they were judged to be 'OK' and 'reasonable'; individually, or by defined type, however, they drew more enthusiastic approval: some courses were deemed 'interesting', others 'enjoyable', and 'fun courses' proved to be, reportedly, 'the most popular of all'.

As a parallel issue, it is perhaps worth emphasising here the pronounced absence of expressed views among students relating to 'condemnation' or 'dismissal' of the value of general education, as reported among other participants in the study (although 'preferences' are declared). For these students (on this evidence) there appeared to be a tendency not so much to wholly reject the ascribed benefits of the programme, as to see the issue in terms of deciding which aspects appealed and were of relevance to them.

Staff perspectives were closely allied to those outlined above. Accordingly, it was suggested, College Studies were -

'a complete change from examination work';

a 'welcome break' from 'mainstream activities'; and, in some cases - '100% fun'. Supplementary courses had offered 'valuable opportunities' to students and 'extended coverage' to sometimes 'crowded syllabuses'. There were some 'good', 'interesting' and 'popular' courses - the latter evidenced in 'at least one instance', by 'two courses having to be run'.

In addition, the senior member of staff responsible for general education offered the view that in his experience of visiting recreational activities, there had been:

'some splendid things going on';

he further argued the case for the value of the 'A' level General Studies examination:

'The cynics would say that it's just a general knowledge test, but I feel it's a good test of awareness - a good discriminator between those who have a good general intelligence and those who perhaps have it but are not using it. It's not an easy option'.

Finally, Senior Management intimated that College sought to provide what students preferred most (within the bounds of what was 'practical' and in terms of College's expectations as a whole):

'We try to ask students what they want from their courses, and some are involved in the delivery of them. Probably 80% of students get their first or second choice College Studies course'.

The need for re-structuring/increased quality of courses

This particular theme had noticeably less relevance for both staff and student participants than proved to be the case in Medley College and Newfields College.

The few staff who looked to the need for change spoke only in general terms about instinctive reservations concerning the 'appropriateness' of the programme as a whole, or aspects of it.

A notion that was common to perspectives on both a college-wide basis and within given areas, was that of having 'not got it right as yet'. As a corollary it was suggested that those who were charged with overseeing provision would -

'feel that College wasn't offering students what they wanted at present'.

However, actors did not communicate any well-defined strategies for change; rather such evidence as was presented, for example, in relation to the nature of some support studies, revealed uncertainty as to the 'remedial' action that might be taken, although in one or two instances there was conjecture regarding the possible benefits that might result from the adoption of Royal Society Arts courses, and the greater involvement of students in assuming responsibility for College Studies modules.

Students themselves made relatively few proposals for change beyond their perception of College Studies as 'an area for improvement'. Two aspects of programme organization and delivery were, however, referred to in these terms. Firstly, 'greater choice' was felt to be needed since -

'In some timetable periods there might be only three to four courses available'.

To compound the 'problem' as they saw it, students expressed 'frustration' both at there being 'things of interest' to which they did not have 'access', and the periodic 'dropping' of courses when 'a chance to do them' presented itself.

There was some concern, also, for courses to be made 'more relevant' to students' needs - for example: in relation to the various aspects of 'life at university'; and for them to make fewer 'demands' when students 'already' had -

'enough to think about without doing anything strenuous in College Studies'.

The question of accreditation

As suggested in the data derived from the other case studies, the theme of 'Accreditation' was similarly not dominant in Settledon College. Of those participants for whom the question did assume some importance, all but a small minority viewed it in terms of the General Studies examination at 'A' level, its status and value and the motivation of those undertaking it.

For students, the benefits of accreditation in this respect were narrowly prescribed: it served the function of 'a third 'A' level' although three 'A' levels plus General Studies was not unprecedented; in similar vein, it was seen as giving students a further opportunity to -

'get as many 'A' levels as possible',

although for a few it was simply: 'something to do'. One small group of female students proffered the view that students –

'should be allowed to take the examination in the Lower Sixth',

but the line of argument was not developed or pursued subsequently.

By way of contrast, several staff (generally those who were involved in the teaching of the course) readily testified to the examination's merits. The comments of one tutor so engaged, serve to give the overall view:

'The examination is a difficult one. It's a pity that the universities don't accept it, since an "A" or "B" tells you a lot more than a subject grade'.

(Another more senior member of staff, however was at pains to cite one university which now accepted the examination as: 'a full-blown "A" level').

With respect to identifying students' views of the General Studies examination, the staff concerned made an assessment which apparently corresponded with what students themselves revealed, and which is exemplified in the following observation:

'Students don't do the examination because they see the value of broadening their education – it's just another qualification'.

Implicit within the perspective, of course, are values in accordance with those of the previous respondent and those articulated in broader contexts elsewhere.

Only a very few small number of students addressed the issue of internal certification - those who did, generally, thought it 'valuable'; no reference was made to the issue by staff participants.

Course organization/orientation

The emergence and subsequent discussion of data relating to this theme in the present case study is mirrored in different ways in the analyses conducted previously. All three reflect a lack of independent 'weighting' by participants: one, Newfields College, demonstrates an explicit inter-affiliation of theme and the other two, Settledon College and Medley College, exhibit an interwoven or 'sub-structural' effect.

In the case of Settledon College the end product has been that of a comparatively small amount of residual data. Exploratory interviews with senior staff revealed a concern for exposition of organizational arrangements in respect of the amount of general education undertaken and with regard to the guidance given to 'A' level General Studies candidates in selecting from the programme (which students themselves often reiterated).

A number of students (predominantly those in the Upper Sixth) further drew attention to their perception of Course 'quotas' being variously determined by the number of students that staff 'wanted', and the effects of 'blocking' arrangements on access to courses.

Miscellaneous issues of concern

One issue of common concern among students and staff was that of 'feedback' on course quality, value and so forth. There were differing views, however, between the two groups of participants as to the opportunities for such evaluation. The senior member of staff responsible for the general education programme, for example, commented:

'Students give us feedback in their comments and have the opportunity to make observations in their Student Reviews'.

Students themselves appeared less conscious of both opportunity and process, suggesting instead that there was no form of feedback other than attendance figures and continuation of a course in the event of it being well-subscribed.

Staff acknowledged, however, that College had -

'not gone very far down the road of monitoring courses'.

Questions as to who would be responsible for this and what further administration it might generate were raised as pertinent issues which had not yet been addressed, or resolved.

Fewer references were made by participants to 'examination priority' than proved the case in Medley College and Newfields College, but the tenor of comment was essentially the same.

Both students and staff noted that the concern of 'many' in coming to College was 'to pass examinations'. For some students, the terms of reference were more precise: there was 'pressure' to 'achieve the necessary grades' if career choices and plans for higher education were not to be 'threatened'. In consequence, such participants viewed general education as being not only peripheral to the process by which success might be secured, but also as an obstacle thereto.

Finally, whilst some staff appeared 'resigned' to students' perceived values in respect of the place of general education, there were few who declared empathy with the same. Rather there were references to 'missed opportunities' which in retrospect staff themselves would have appreciated as students, to the 'demoralising' effect on tutors of continued student apathy and to the problems of accommodating some students who appeared to want little other than something to which nominal commitment need be given.

The issues which arise from analysis of these perspectives offer an insight to the extent to which General Studies was, or was not, part of a curriculum that had become - in the words of the Principal -

'..... a monument to initial aspirations'.

Whilst all three colleges provided evidence of some consideration of changing priorities in accordance with potential benefits to students, the scale of envisaged change was greatest in Newfields College. This seems commensurate with the impetus generated by the (then current) climate of institutional evaluation of long-established curricular practice, and centres upon the optimal effects of appropriate marketing and reassessment of students' compulsory involvement.

Since increased choice and listening to the views of the 'consumer' were matters of particular concern to students in this college, there is within the process of review, a clear sense of concern for effective and successful forms of organisation which will provide meaningful experiences for them.

Developments of this kind at Newfield College, however, would not, it seems preclude the retention of core experiences which were deemed part of the institution's role in discharging its obligations towards those who chose to study there.

Strong commitment to early ideals by senior staff at Settledon College - and to students identifying with these - appears to have limited the evolutionary growth of General Studies. Interestingly, however, students there are less prone to be dismissive of the concept than those in the other colleges (despite low expectations on the part of senior management of their support).

It is possible that on this basis infusion of the ethos behind General Studies had met with more success than in the other two colleges. However, future progress in allaying student dissatisfaction with the organisational arrangments that attend it may, conceivably, be linked to developments in negotiating student involvement.

Medley College might be regarded as being interposed in terms of its outlook between the positions represented by the other two colleges. This is exemplified by the fact that whilst 'optional' student involvement was favoured by staff at Newfields and opposed by those at Settledon, there was a more-or-less equal division of opinion at Medley College. This is consistent with the broader range of perspectives which relate to issues of change there than in either of the other two institutions and to the general climate of the college (of which mention was made in Chapter 1).

Additionally, whilst not seeking to review current practice as rigorously perhaps as Newfields, Medley College was able to acknowledge partial success and the evolving nature of this part of the curriculum. In common with Settledon College, however, there is perhaps a sense of self-fulfilling prophecy regarding expectation of students' lack of commitment.

In pursuing its goals within the enrichment curriculum (and elsewhere) in essentially diverse ways, Medley College may, it might be suggested, set itself an optimal criterion of success of pleasing 'some of the people, for some of the time'.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER 6

1   Hammersley, M. 'Analysing ethnographic data', in The Open University, <u>Research Methods In Education</u> <u>and the Social Sciences</u>, Block 6, Part 1, Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1979, p 18.

ANALYSIS OF PERSPECTIVES DERIVED FROM UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (PASTORAL GUIDANCE)

The following themes were derived from the data with respect to the provision of pastoral care:

1   Perceptions of the concept of pastoral care.

2   Benefits arising from current provision.

3   Problems arising within current provision.

4   Tutorial activities.

5   Individual and group relationships.

6   Change and development.

ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM NEWFIELDS COLLEGE

The consideration of both informant and respondent perspectives in Newfields College revealed differentiated facets of the structure and provision of pastoral care. Ten Lower Sixth tutor groups with a cohort of TVEI students distributed among them, were involved in the piloting of a tutorial programme which sought to develop Records of Achievement.

Since staff and student participants who were interviewed were drawn from amongst both those who were affiliated to the programme and those who were not, the range of experience of these actors was potentially less uniform than in Settledon College and Hedley College. Students within the Pilot had a timetabled fifty minute tutor period once a week, whilst the remainder of the Lower Sixth and the whole of the Upper Sixth had daily 'Registration' periods only (with occasionally extended sessions for specific purposes, eg applications for Higher Education).

Individual/group relationships

Of the six themes previously identified, that of relationships between tutors (both 'Group' and 'Senior') and students, and among students themselves, assumed more importance for participants than any other. The patterning of perspectives revealed a dimensional structure, and these 'sub-issues' are characterized and considered successively.

Staff within the Pilot Tutorial Programme were divided in their views with regard to the effect that this had had on their relationships with students in their group. For a minority, it was felt that no 'significant' change had taken place.

Teachers who offered practically-orientated subjects in particular, were of the opinion that the 'nature of the subject' was such as to generate throughout, the kinds of relationships that the 'Pilot' sought to promote. Thus these particular tutors had, for example -

'always enjoyed close relationships with students';

had -

'usually found the time to talk and discuss';

and had habitually exhibited their -

'readiness to respond to individual problems'.

A larger number, however, were conscious of 'improved' relationships with their group: for some it was the re-orientation of their tutorial function which had led to 'getting to know one another better' and a shift in students' perception of them as 'figures of authority'. 'Confrontational situations' and -

'merely putting ticks against names in the register',

had given way to -

'more students approaching their tutor than ever before'

and tutors doing 'far more' than -

'merely providing the opening for the student to take the matter to the Senior Tutor'.

'More time together' had, reportedly, brought tutors and their students 'closer' and had helped the latter to 'get on well' with each other. Students in one Pilot tutor group were able to confirm the social dynamics of the group in terms of increased inter-personal skills; by way of contrast, students and their tutors in non-pilot groups made reference to 'associations' on 'an ability basis' and noted the tendency for situations to emerge -

'where people go into little huddles'.

Some Pilot tutors drew attention to the developing awareness of students' abilities to 'assess themselves' and 'negotiate'. In one group, for example, 50% of students had re-negotiated their choice of course within the first term.

A further consequence of the closer relationships seen by most to have been fostered by extended tutorial provision, was the increased proportion of parents who consulted group tutors on College Parents' Evenings.

In constant interplay here was the extent to which students felt able, or were seen to feel able, to approach group tutors with their problems. It was an issue to which widespread reference was made by staff and student participants alike.

With few exceptions, students perceived their tutor as someone -

'to whom a problem could be taken, if one arose';

someone who was sufficiently receptive to -

'allow viewpoints to be aired';

and who was -

'always available to discuss things at other times (ie outside tutor period) if necessary'.

The perception was one that was common to both Pilot and non-Pilot tutor groups, even though in the latter instance some reportedly saw relatively little of their tutor.

Tutors themselves were frequently of the opinion that they were 'accessible' to students and drew attention to the arrangements made to resolve 'the very personal problems' that they brought, either in terms of immediacy of response at group tutor level, or in referring matters to Senior Tutors.

For several staff the issue assumed further importance with respect to the perception of part of their tutorial function being -

'a point of reference outside a student's subject area - someone else to whom they (sic) can turn'.

Although Senior Tutors typically saw themselves as being 'available' to students; knowing them 'quite well'; and being able, as a result of the Pilot, to 'put names to faces' at an early stage in the College year, the perceptions of the majority of other staff and student participants revealed -

'a sense of seeing them still as rather remote management figures';

whom students -

'might lack the confidence to approach';

and who may be known - initially -

'only from their name at the bottom of the report'.

Underpinning the theme was the issue of 'Personality'. Tutors 'outside' the Pilot programme were credited in some cases by their Pilot tutor colleagues in making -

'a real effort to get to know their students';

the extension of tutorial provision was not, however, widely seen as being likely to alter the perspective of those staff who were -

'presently disinclined to know students on a personal basis',

who would -

'not make that effort if additional opportunities existed'.

As a corollary to this, there was a view among Senior Management that since the success of any tutorial scheme was -

'dependent on the personalities of those involved'

provision needed to be made for -

'those staff who were less confident about the relationship side of things, to have the opportunity to find their own level of involvement in the tutorial programme'.

Finally, there was reference to the issue of 'student autonomy'. Staff perspectives here were varied. For some, the question was simply one of knowing 'a few' students 'less well' (than their tutor group peers) since they appeared to have -

'sufficient autonomy to solve their own problems'.

A smaller number expressed doubt as to whether students were encouraged to be independent. For these participants, students had come to 'rely' on their tutor rather than being -

'allowed to assume responsibility for their own decisions'.

Cases were located among students to confirm these perceptions. Some were content to resolve personal difficulties without recourse to their tutor, whilst others were of the opinion that current levels of guidance and support were 'unnecessary' and that tutors were 'unlikely' to influence students' thinking at a time when decisions had 'already been made'.

Benefits arising from current provision

Whilst a number of the benefits of current pastoral provision were articulated in the context of the previous theme, and are implicit within it, a common and separate focus of attention was the function and value of a Record of Achievement which was compiled and discussed in Tutor Period.

Staff in particular drew attention to the purpose of such a record in -

'giving students short-term objectives';

affirmed their belief in self-appraisal as 'an important skill'; and saw the exercise of reporting experience as -

'helping students both to make a realistic assessment of their own ability, and to decide what is best for them'.

The benefits of ROA were deemed by a few staff to be more evident for some students than others.

Thus it was suggested that GCSE students would profit since there was a tendency for them to 'lack such skills', and that those taking CPVE courses were more easily able to accommodate the initiative as a result of their experience of the certificate's assessment framework.

Students who were in fact doing CPVE, corroborated tutors' perceptions of their response and acknowledged that through ROA they were -

'becoming more aware of individual strengths and weaknesses'.

Other issues related to the further opportunities within the Pilot Tutorial Programme. Tutors felt that increased contact time with students facilitated discussion of reports and career aspirations in a 'meaningful way'; that common concerns had 'brought tutors together' to discuss what had 'worked' with students and what had not, and that such forums had given them a 'sense of optimism' about the future; finally, the tutorial system was -

'giving students a broader base through which College might infuse its ethos',

and was creating conditions in which students could be helped to 'improve their academic results'.

Whilst not welcoming their 'separate identity' in being part of the Pilot Programme, students in these groups were conscious of the benefits they had derived, which were variously identified as: 'developing confidence', the emergence of 'leadership qualities' and 'broadening individual outlook'.

Finally, there was (albeit less commonly encountered) a perception of tutorial sessions as being 'interesting' and 'more relevant' than some of the Entitlement areas in which students were encouraged to participate.

Perceptions of the concept of pastoral care/change and development

As a consequence of the college's undertaking of a major review of pastoral provision immediately prior to and during the present study, participants almost invariably viewed the concept of pastoral care in the context of current change and proposed future development. Accordingly, the issues which emerged are reported in these terms.

About a third of staff who were approached made reference to the need for a tutorial programme. It was suggested that at present, Records of Achievement constituted the 'main thrust' of Personal and Social Education, but that 'as things developed' a programme would be 'necessary'. Tutors were, however, divided in their view of its possible orientation and emphasis: the position adopted by those who saw a need for prescription was exemplified by one Senior Tutor who remarked -

'There will have to be a structured programme for Tutorial; you can't just leave "n" tutors to do whatever occurs. People need support and guidance - especially the inexperienced'.

Others left the issue as a rather more open-ended one, referring to the possibilities of -

'extracting elements from the Central Studies Programme',

or including a 'core' of what was deemed 'valuable'. Among these staff there was a view that goals could be achieved -

'without the imposition of a rigid structure',

and that any such programme would appear more appropriate if tutor groups -

'addressed issues as they assumed relevance'.

Tutorial work from this perspective was seen to be -

'not so much about delivering content, as concerned with inter-personal relationships'.

Elsewhere, there was uncertainty as to what would be done with tutorial time. Several staff who were not involved in the Pilot Programme felt that although they seldom had sufficient time to talk to students in their group, there would be -

'a lot of time to fill' (fifty minutes)

under the proposed arrangements for a weekly Tutor Period.

Such anxieties were linked to a need for re-structuring to be -

'seen to have value for students' -

a notion which was further elaborated by one Head of Department and Liaison Tutor who observed -

'Tutorials can generate artificial activities that are designed to meet objectives that someone else has identified. If the idea is to be sold to staff, it's got to be shown that it's working and worthwhile. If students say they find it valuable, then we'd have to go along with it, since we're here to cater for them'.

Reservations were also expressed with regard to the specific place of Records of Achievement in this context. Although Senior Management offered the view that, whilst these should 'play a part' they -

'should not constitute the be-all and end-all'

of tutorial provision, there was concern among some participants that increased reporting of achievement may not 'justify the time spent'. Whilst the idea was 'not without merit' and the process 'potentially valuable', for these tutors the -

'usefulness of the end product'

was not proven, since few employers or institutions of higher education attributed 'importance' to it.

The role of the Tutor was conceived of in a variety of ways: several staff viewed counselling/teaching/guidance as 'synonymous' activities and were 'not conscious' of a dichotomy in role performance;

these individuals, generally Pilot group tutors, were, reportedly -

'interested in, enthusiastic about and committed to'

- the development and extension of pastoral provision within College; others were said to be -

'happy with the role of clerk',

to -

'feel unqualified to write references or to counsel students';

and to be content to leave matters to Senior Tutors, who had been given -

'both the time and the remuneration to attend to them'.

The latter's role was, however, seen by both Senior Tutors themselves and by Senior Management, as being likely to change. There were 'likely to be fewer' such posts - 'perhaps 5 or 6' - and incumbents might be expected to -

'lead teams of tutors in an active way, rather than just supporting individual staff'.

The management of change was a subsequent issue which attracted wide-ranging attention.

Those who were instrumental in effecting pastoral innovation, or who were ultimately responsible for it, revealed an awareness of the 'likely demands' that would be made on those who had -

'been in College for a very long time'.

Although extension of pastoral provision would be 'done gradually', until 'full integration' was achieved, particular consideration would, it was felt, have to be given to those staff who were respectively described as 'the substantial rearguard' who would 'resent change' and 'the half-dozen' who would be -

'apprehensive about the move toward greater tutor responsibility'.

The issue was one which Senior Management recognised as needing to be -

'handled with great sensitivity, with staff being carried along stage by stage, and with the arguments being presented carefully and discussed'.

Additionally, it was observed that the -

'implications of extension to the Pilot in terms of in-service training'

were 'considerable'. Much training, it was suggested, would need to be 'in-house', although the substance of what was currently being debated was, allegedly, largely left to the decisions of the Staff Working Party on Pastoral Care as to the identification of staff needs in this respect.

Whilst students' generally positive perceptions of the 'infrastructure' of pastoral care were implied in their accounts of relationships with tutors, relatively little reference was further made by, or to them, with regard to their perspectives on the issues discussed above. Students within the Pilot Programme were thought by some of their tutors to be 'generally tolerant' of it (their differentiated 'treatment; notwithstanding), although doubt was expressed as to whether they fully appreciated its purpose. Students themselves, although conscious of some of the benefits (previously reported) which had accrued, tended on the whole to substantiate their tutors' appraisal in being unaware of the 'point of the exercise'.

Those students not included in the Pilot Programme who offered an opinion on the value of a Tutorial Period, suggested that 'the half-dozen, or so, per year' that they were required to attend were 'not looked forward to'. Thus 'on this basis', an extension of tutorial provision was, in their view, not merited. A number were however agreed upon their preference for Group Tutors to make an overall assessment of students' achievement at College, since it was felt that Senior Tutors couldn't 'really know' individuals on the basis of 'a ten minute interview'*.

There was less support for greater reporting of achievement as a formative activity in tutorial time, since it was said to be the case that reviews of progress took place in subject areas.

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* Some staff did, however, indicate to the researcher that 'a verbal account of the student' was given by Group Tutors to Senior Tutors, prior to the writing of a reference.

Problems arising within current provision

Some of the problems which participants saw as facing college in planning the development of pastoral provision are set out in the context of change outlined above. Those that are reported here are not essentially divorced from this process of change, but rather perceived practical difficulties which attended current arrangements.

Both students and tutors alluded to 'negative perceptions' of tutorial content which stemmed from previous student experience in feeder schools. Tutors made reference to instances where suggested activities that were undertaken had -

'been done by students already',

and of disinterest in the work in general following prolonged emphasis on PSE in the 11 - 16 phase. Motivating students in these circumstances proved 'difficult', especially, it was suggested, when many students appeared to need no motivation other than the 'objective of passing examinations'.

Other problems of a similar nature were identified as -

'the overlap between Core Plenary and the ground covered in Tutorial'

(although it was stated that the issue was one that was 'being worked upon'); the perception and use of 'icebreaker' activities, which were 'misunderstood', taken 'too prescriptively' and 'not adapted' as necessary; and the 'undue amount' of time spent by some tutors on 'paper exercises'.

At Senior Management level there was a view that additional difficulties had arisen from the 'lack of progress' made by the Working Party on Pastoral Care, where, it was felt, that 'in many ways' matters had currently -

'gone no further than at the same time last year'.

This corresponded to the opinion of some of those involved, that there had been -

'too much consultation at this stage';

and that pending changes to the Senior Management of the College, there should have been 'a directive' for the duration of the Academic Year.

However, staff at all levels of responsibility and experience were conscious of 'the speed of events' in relation to the implementation of a Record of Achievement within a framework for extended pastoral provision, and of the consequences of 'insufficient time' for training, discussion of objectives and dissemination of information.

Arrangements for Student Induction were thought by several senior staff participants to be 'unambitious'. A 'more elaborate' format which facilitated greater integration between existing and prospective students would do more to inform the latter -

'what College had to offer in broader terms'.

Students themselves confirmed on occasion that contact with subject tutors had been a major focus for Induction and that opportunities for increased contact with existing students would have been to their advantage.

Tutorial activities

As indicated earlier, differentiated tutorial provision within the college gave rise to a range of participant experience and, correspondingly, to a variety of perspectives on tutorial involvement. The contrasting perceptions which were revealed were not, however, confined to a broad division of those who took part in the Pilot Programme and those who did not.

Within the Pilot Programme itself, there was said to be -

'some commonality of approach, but much diversity of practice'.

In practical terms this variety was seen to be reflected in -

'a number of tutors sticking very closely to materials issued by the Pastoral Vice-Principal (and who would be lost without them);

whilst others were, reportedly, 'independent in their approach', or were seen only to -

'fall back on them as an aid, in the absence of anything they might wish to do themselves'.

For both of the ascribed categories, cases were found of staff participants who chose to illuminate their experience in these terms.

Students in Pilot Tutor Groups focused on the use of Tutor Period in relation to Records of Achievement. Some had completed –

' a whole six months of statements and reviews'

and had 'done very little else', whereas others commented that they had 'just discussed things' and had –

'not actually done any recording as yet'.

In those tutor groups where time was perceived as being spent in –

'doing Records of Achievement to the letter',

staff appeared agreed upon their rationale as that of –

'bringing students to an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses'.

Students in such groups, however, tended to express a preference for opportunities for talk and discussion.

Although Tutors 'outside the Pilot Programme' had, reportedly -

'asked for materials to use with their own groups',

the self-perception of a number of non-Pilot Tutors was that they 'did very little at present', 'gave out notices', 'saw one or two students', 'chased bits of paper' (in relation to meetings, trips and absence), 'chatted to the group' and allowed tutees to 'chat amongst themselves'.

This focus of activity was similarly depicted in the declared experience of non-Pilot student participants, who 'sat and talked to friends', 'did homework', 'received information about college' and 'sometimes spoke to the tutor'.

ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM MEDLEY COLLEGE

Although all students in Medley College were subject to tutorial arrangements in a way that students in Newfields College were not, ie all were timetabled for daily registration, a longer weekly administration period and a fifty-minute weekly tutorial period, participants' perspectives suggested considerable diversity in the conception and practice of pastoral provision.

The responses detailed below appear, at least in part, therefore, to be a function of experience derived from personal interpretation and the preferences of individual staff (although some common issues are identified).

Two views related to this lack of commonality, though dissimilar in casual attribution, were articulated at Senior Tutor level and above. The first emphasized the need for specification of -

'an agreed philosophy for what's supposed to be going on and what the objectives of the tutorial programme are'.

since such matters had, reportedly, not been clarified. The second focused upon the implementation of policy which had been agreed but not realised:

'Feedback from several quarters makes it quite clear in many cases Tutors have not fully understood what it is they're supposed to be doing'.

Both illuminate the context which is explored through analysis of the themes listed.

Perceptions of the concept of pastoral care/problems arising within current provision

As the quotations above imply, an area of weighty concern for staff in particular, was the concept of pastoral care and the implications of this for the performed role of the Personal Tutor.

Since participants' perspectives on this theme frequently related to the problems arising within current pastoral provision, the resulting issues are presented in like manner.

Exploratory interviews with members of the Senior Management Team provided personal

overviews of staff attitudes and response. One participant commented –

'The single weakest thing that we have as a college, is that in many cases staff

do not take their tutorial role as seriously as their teaching role. The problem

isn't quite so much that of tutors knowing what they might do, but more one of

their basic attitude .....'.

Other interpretations were in evidence, however, in respect of emphasis:

'There are many things which we rely on Tutors to do and which are perfectly

soundly done. Most staff don't naturally gravitate towards the enhancement of

that role, but I don't think it's a weak link particularly. In terms of time

commitment, however, subject teaching is always going to be a priority'.

Staff themselves offered a range of perspectives which underlined an 'on-going debate'

within college and the efforts made to secure consensus. Those who looked to questions

of 'philosophy' made reference to such diverse issues as the involvement of pastoral

concerns in subject teaching; the need for these to underpin the curriculum and

a narrowing of the tutorial role as a consequence of the pursuit of broader

cross-college objectives; whether the concept of pastoral care had been 'sufficiently

thought through' rather than absorbed as 'accepted wisdom'; how far tutorial provision

might help 'bring together' students with 'differentiated areas of experience'; and

how college might address the issue of response in an area where students' attitude on

the basis of their experience in 11 – 16 schools typically gave rise to a lack of

enthusiasm and interest.

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Equal attention was focused on day-to-day arrangements and the practical issues of tutoring. College policy in respect of tutorial grouping was declared as -

'a deliberate strategy in having each tutor group as a microcosm of college as a whole - necessary in order to give the institution some sort of cohesion'.

Two problems arising from these arrangements were, however, perceived by some participants. The first of these concerned the allocation of prospective students to tutor groups prior to the commencement of their course. Pre-term student withdrawal reportedly disturbed the balance of these groups in some cases, rendering the strategy less effective. Secondly, a 'vertical' tutor group 'mix' created difficulties for some, in respect of offering activities that met the needs of all students (a majority of staff participants were, however, in favour of this form of grouping).

At Senior Management level, students' general perspective of the Personal Tutor was seen to be that of -

'someone whose job it is to mark the register, and little else'.

The model which had been conceived in the setting up of the college was, however -

'much more that of the Personal Tutor at University'.

Close personal contact with students, being 'keyed into' them as individuals, had been felt necessary in order to avoid study programmes 'coming apart'. The Personal Tutors' essential task in these terms was, therefore, that of trying to take an 'overview' of the experience of particular students for whom they were responsible.

Translating this in practical terms was not without attendant difficulty, however, in respect of the variety of professional background and outlook of staff:

'We've got tutors in all kinds of positions: those who know exactly what they're supposed to be doing, have fully understood what the aims and objectives are and have spent a great deal of time and trouble making it work for their group; those who do understand what they're supposed to be doing, but aren't - either because they don't have the skill or the will; those who are extremely well-meaning, but who despite all the in-service training, have still not understood quite what we're trying to do (because in some cases they've had twenty five years of bad practice to get out of their system); we've got some staff who simply don't value this sort of thing; and we've got those who feel somewhat bewildered, and who feel that they're being pulled in too many directions at once, and we continue to support them as well as we can'.

Opinion among tutors varied with regard to the need for guidance in performance of their role. Some enjoyed the 'flexibility' of operating according to their own predispositions; others saw a need for discussion of tutorial objectives in tutor team meetings which were 'all too frequently' given over to matters of administration; a third group looked for greater consistency in the provision of support in respect of resource materials - one tutor team had, reportedly, been 'inundated with material initially' and then subsequently 'left' to 'pursue individual interests', whilst members of another group claimed to have had no materials made available to them by senior colleagues.

The function of the weekly tutorial period was also subject to a variety of emphases:
though -

'a prime area of student criticism'

according to one Senior Tutor, the period was -

'necessary to do some of the things like talks, careers, etc, which could not be
done in a shorter session';

alternatively, in another tutor's view it was -

'a valuable opportunity for people to catch up on their administration';

or yet again -

'a chance for extended contact with students, though not to do the activities
suggested'.

An issue which revealed a broadly-based divergence of perception between staff and
students, was that of 'counselling'. For the former, there was a general understanding
of the notion that whatever was entailed was part of the tutor's brief, although
according to several sources, the practice and effectiveness of the same 'varied' as a
result of -

'different staff attitudes, involvement and expertise'.

This 'inconsistency', which arose from dependency on the individual tutor, had further given rise, in the opinion of some staff participants, to -

'some student resentment of tutorial programme time'.

For students, however, there was a markedly less uniform association between the activity and its source. A significant number expressed uncertainty as to whom they might approach and were critical concerning the lack of information on the matter; others viewed it wholly, or principally, in the context of careers advice and Higher Education destinations; a few were conscious (or indicated as such) of facilities for 'student welfare' and of a 'specialized' role which tutors generally did not appear to fill.

The cyclical nature of the essential problems inherent in the delivery of the pastoral curriculum was clearly evident in students' observations. Tutorial work was identified by one group of Second Year students as -

'What everyone dislikes most'.

The basis for this aversion was variously articulated as its being 'a waste of time', 'uninteresting', 'not relevant to students' personal needs' nor mindful of their interests. As a result, it was suggested, students were reluctant to participate and, in consequence, did not derive the benefits they ought.

Though explicit reference to the developmental goals of the pastoral curriculum was seldom made, some students alluded to their expectancy of their being some clearly-defined point to timetabled tutorial sessions and appeared frustrated at not being able to identify this. Additionally, there was some awareness of the necessity for an individual interest to be taken in students so that personal needs might be met through the work undertaken.

Although the issue is one that is examined further under the heading of 'Tutorial Activities', it is pertinent to note here the extent to which students' perceptions highlighted the diverse approaches of staff to use of tutorial time - resulting at the one extreme in an apparent lack of any form of structured activity and at the other in an unremitting succession of 'set tasks' which precluded student contribution or negotiation in the selection of the same.

Whilst two staff referred to the 'discussions' they had had with their students concerning the way in which tutorial time might be used, there was little further evidence from students themselves that this practice might be widespread, despite the importance that the latter appeared to attach to its adoption.

An overview of the problems in this area which faced the college at the time of research, was offered by the Principal; given the perceptions outlined above, it seems both informed and realistic:

'Despite our efforts, it's still not working right; we've still got a long way to go'.

Change and development

A number of the issues identified above have clear implications for change and development. Those that are examined here sharpen the focus upon some of the solutions perceived by participants. An insight into the process by which the college sought to address the problems of managing the pastoral curriculum was gained from those at Senior Management level, who claimed that 'considerable time and effort' had been invested in trying to -

're-educate colleagues into a more advanced view of what a Personal Tutor is'.

Tutors reportedly 'got together' and talked about what was 'going on'. These meetings, chaired by Senior Tutors, were also said to incorporate discussion of 'what was to be done' in respect of improving the delivery of pastoral care. It is interesting to note here, however, the contrasting perceptions of some staff participants of the use of tutor team meetings referred to in the previous section.

Whilst there was an undercurrent of dismissive opinion among both students and staff concerned the 'inoperability' or 'inappropriateness' of present arrangements, a significant number took modification of the same as their terms of reference. One issue so addressed was that of the need for greater emphasis on meeting students' individual needs and dealing with their individual problems. For some, the solution lay in the provision of more time or increased opportunity; for others, the targeting of the work undertaken was seen to be the remedy - either in terms of directing it toward those who appeared to be in greatest need, or in making it more 'individualised'.

A third group were of the opinion that the particular could be manifested in the general in respect of more time being devoted to discussion of students' overall personal development from 16 - 19.

This theme of 'intimacy' was further apparent in students' preference in a number of instances for smaller tutorial groups, more time and opportunity to 'get to know' others in the group (including activities that would help them cohere as a social unit) and more extensive employment of guidance and counselling 'interviews', which were 'too often' left to student 'self-motivation'.

The question of optional attendance arose in connection with 'talks' that had been given by visiting speakers during tutor time. Whilst it was frequently felt that a number of these had proved 'useful', their relevance and interest to all was deemed to be questionable by some.

There was a general desire among students in particular tutor groups for tutorial work that was 'more exciting', 'more relevant' and 'more structured'. Alternatively, it was suggested that students would prefer to be left to 'their own devices'.

In consequence, perhaps, there was a not insubstantial body of student opinion which held that a fifty minute period was 'too long' and various distributions of tutorial time were suggested, with a shorter unit or units as their common theme.

For many of the students interviewed, their experience of tutor periods needed, simply, to be a 'more interesting' one.

Individual/group relationships

In common with Newfields College, the theme of 'relationships' attracted participants' attention on a fairly wide-ranging scale. One aspect of this was that of peer group interaction and association. For one member of the Senior Management Team there was -

'a sense in which the tutor group has, or can have, an identity, which is useful and gives students the opportunity to make friends with people they might not otherwise have known'.

This view was supported by several other staff participants who perceived that both the tutor group as an organizational unit and the provision of activities that might be made within it, had the potential to develop, in the words of one tutor -

'a feeling among a diverse body of individuals'.

There were discrepant cases, however, where it was 'acknowledged' that the current form of tutorial grouping (ie 'vertical' structuring) would not counteract the tendency of students of similar academic background to 'seek one another out'.

However, this premise was not proven in the observations of students themselves; where evidence of association was apparent, it related to the opportunities that students had (and clearly appreciated) for 'getting to know' those whom they would under other circumstances not have known.

The tutor group context had, for a majority of students, promoted firm friendships; helped to 'break the ice initially' and subsequently cultivated a sense of social ease and social awareness; facilitated skills in groupwork and provided a point of extended contact when discussions could be undertaken or more informal talk indulged in.

Staff varied in their evaluation of the time taken to 'come to know the group' and to 'develop a relationship' with them. For some, familiarity and rapport was 'quickly established'; for others 'the beginning of the second year' had brought a closer affinity. In a number of cases staff were conscious of the extent to which they knew 'extrovert' students or 'those with problems' rather better than the general majority.

Nearly all, however, welcomed both the collective and individual contact with students that tutorial time afforded and the opportunity that the role of Personal Tutor offered for a 'different kind of relationship' from that experienced in subject teaching.

Inevitably, perhaps, tutors were also aware of the small number of students who were 'happy to be autonomous', sometimes to the extent of them remaining relatively isolated from the general social focus of the group.

Whilst the Personal Tutor was acknowledged by Senior Management as -

'someone who is officially available to students when the need arises',

it was pointed out that students were free to approach (and reportedly did approach) members of staff with whom they felt 'most comfortable'.

Most tutors were 'happy' to offer advice to students and generally 'confident' in doing this; of those who volunteered an opinion on the question of counselling, however, none felt 'qualified' to do so, though there was some suggestion that one might (perhaps 'erroneously') be considered 'skilled' if a training course in the same had been attended.

Students' perceptions of their relationship with tutors tended to demonstrate that the balance of help/guidance/autonomy was 'about right' and that they were treated in 'an adult way'. Although 'some staff' had, reportedly -

'the same attitude towards students as in 11 - 18 schools'

the majority encouraged a relationship that was markedly different. Tutors could, on the whole, 'be regarded as friends'; 'be approached with a problem'; 'be talked to easily'; be 'relied upon to offer care and support' and to 'give freely of their time' upon request.

The role of 'Induction' in 'setting the tone' for staff/student relationships within college was referred to on a relatively limited scale, but for those staff for whom the issue proved a sufficiently prominent one, existing arrangements were considered to be 'very effective', 'friendly' and of such a duration as to allow student integration into college without an 'inordinate amount' of tutorial work.

Tutorial activities

Examination of the practical issues relating to the delivery of the pastoral curriculum (in terms of the tutorial work undertaken), has already been informed by points raised in the introduction to the data analysis and subsequently in the section on **Perceptions of the concept of pastoral care/problems** arising within current provision. What follows serves to further illustrate the range of practice and experience referred to there, in the context of the framework described by the Principal:

'To encourage good practice we've put it together as a ten-minute meeting on three days, which really is just Registration and notes for students; one day of the week we have half an hour - and we try to schedule the administration for that; then we've got about an hour when good things should happen. It's supposed to be a planned programme of experiences, but it's not prescribed. By the end of the year it's expected that certain things will have been covered - that various activities will have taken place. That will include things such as careers, study skills-type activities - where appropriate to a subject-free context, health and moral education, socialising into the college way and just getting people to feel happy and settled and to keep them on an even keel'.

This 'loose framework' was conceived as a means of -

'trying to support tutors of varied experience and competence',

since there was, reportedly, 'a set of activities' available for selection (and adaptation where necessary) by those staff who found tutorial work 'extremely difficult', and the flexibility for others to devise their own where they so wished and had the necessary expertise.

As noted elsewhere, staff's notions of the purposes to which tutor time (ie the 'extended period') might be put, varied considerably. Some staff used the session 'mainly to talk to individuals', although this was not generally countenanced by Senior Management, who saw a need for involvement of 'the whole group', since the timetable offered sufficient flexibility to make it possible for students and tutors to -

'get together at some point without using the period for that purpose'.

Others had embarked upon a more 'contractual' arrangement with students in respect of putting ideas to the group for adoption or rejection. In some cases this involved an agreement concerning the overall structure of the session - for example: whether a 'set programme' should be followed with predetermined discussion topics and so forth; in others, whether a particular activity was deemed relevant or useful. In one group, students themselves had assumed the initiative in introducing role play situations. Both 'formal' and 'informal' approaches were adopted, with some tutors advocating a combination of the two.

Tutors from different tutorial teams revealed differing emphases upon the provision of resource materials, although Senior Tutors - according to one Senior Tutor - followed the common practice of offering materials to staff, but left it up to them to decide what to use.

Students referred to a range of tutorial activities which included: 'discussing individual progress with the tutor', 'playing games', 'having lots of things to fill in', 'doing homework', 'role play', 'sitting around', 'discussing things as a group' and 'attending talks'. Additionally, both students and staff made reference to particular ideas which had proved 'successful', such as the construction of flow charts and team approaches to 'practical problem solving'.

The targeted areas of experience envisaged by the college's Senior Management and quoted at the beginning of this section, were not referred to in explicit terms by participants. Their interpreted significance and the extent to which they featured in tutorial work can, therefore, only be guessed at.

Benefits arising from current provision

As in the previous case study, the benefits arising from the current pastoral provision in Medley College are particularly demonstrated by participants' perspectives on the theme of **Individual and group relationships**. The data pattern in this section indicated that the role of the Personal Tutor and the tutor group itself facilitated a close bonding between students and their tutor and among students themselves. In these terms, tutorial time had provided a welcome opportunity for extended contact of a qualitatively different kind from that of subject teaching. For a significant number of Lower Sixth students, additional benefits related to -

'keeping in touch with college and its changes'.

The highlighting of this essentially administrative tutorial function is interesting in respect of what it reveals about the value placed by this group of participants on the acquistion of 'relevant' information, and its relationships to research which has identified students' anxiety on a newly-instituted sixth form induction course to seek guidance of a 'utilitarian' rather than a 'personal' nature[1]. Along similar lines, the same students expressed their approval of vertical tutor group arrangements which allowed them to seek information from Upper Sixth students. There was general agreement among students regarding the quality of Careers guidance, which was felt to be 'helpful', 'well-informed', 'really useful' and 'sympathetic'. Particular talks had been enjoyed and were thought by students to be valuable on the whole, given freedom of choice in attending. Several staff participants also endorsed the concept of talks and were 'happy' to accept group withdrawal for the same (although one participant voiced uncertainty as to whether this 'qualified' as 'tutorial' work).

Additional benefits cited by staff included: the overall view of progress which the role of Personal Tutor afforded and the capability to aid progression; the authority invested in the Personal Tutor (co-existent with support from Senior Tutors, where required or requested); identification of the needs of the age-group; the adoption of a more widespread practice of negotiation with students and their greater co-operation and participation - particularly with regard to decision making processes; and the personal attention, care and support which it had been possible to give.

ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM SETTLEDON COLLEGE

Perceptions of the concept of pastoral care

Of the staff participants in the three colleges, those in Settledon College demonstrated the greatest concern for and commitment to the principles of pastoral care. Over 60% of those interviewed made reference to a philosophy to which 'College as a whole' subscribed, although the aims and objectives for the same had –

'only just been documented for the College Management Plan'.

Senior pastoral staff (ie Senior Tutors) and the Senior Management Team emphasized that the pastoral system within the college was 'more directed than some'. There was a declared belief in genuine equality of opportunity for students in respect of access to:

'quality of care not merely dependent upon whom students happen to have as Tutor'.

The 'ideal goal' of quality across the tutorial team was, it was felt, therefore, one which should be 'pursued', despite being an 'ambitious' one.

Central to these aspirations was the notion of education being –

'life-long and life-wide';

care, it was suggested, did not cease at a given moment in time, and students were, perhaps 'somewhat arrogant' if they were of the opinion that their time in 11 - 16 schools had adequately equipped them for everything that lay ahead.

The 'way forward' for one Senior Tutor was seen to be via the -

'pastoralization of 'A' levels';

yet whilst this had proved feasible in the case of his own personal teaching programme, it was acknowledged that such an approach was -

'unlikely to be fully achieved'.

In respect of matters of organization, three issues were identified. Firstly, there was an acceptance of criticism from schools that colleges had artificial divisions between 'pastoral' and 'academic' - but, it was argued, some students were in college for as short a period as nine months, and a 'slot' for care had, therefore, to be created. This did not presuppose, however, that the college had to focus on either 'care' or 'teaching' (a point emphasized elsewhere by other staff, who saw a need for 'equal emphasis'). Secondly, as in the other case studies, a 'core' of activities was deemed necessary within the tutorial programme. This would include such topics as 'Health Education' and 'Study Skills' and would be incorporated irrespective of students' enthusiasm for or appreciation of the same. Thirdly, 'vertical' tutorial groupings had, reportedly been favoured by all staff, with, according to one Senior Tutor, an 'emphasis' on 'interchange'.

This unanimity is interesting in the light of the College Principal's revelation of his pointing out to staff that a 'year group' would provide a 'homogeneous audience', and his belief that staff had felt that this particular form of organization was what they 'should agree to' rather than 'what they wanted to do'.

The role of the Personal Tutor was also of significant interest to staff at this level. Tutors were -

'needed to maintain information about students';

someone to whom they could -

'turn as a friend, or a guide in times of uncertainty'.

It was considered important for staff to be 'three-dimensional' - to be seen as 'teacher', 'tutor' and 'an individual with outside interests'. The route to success as a Personal Tutor was not necessarily via the 'celebrated wisdom' of 'standard' works on pastoral care in the sixth form, by which some were 'overwhelmed'. Instead, staff might seek to adopt a visible 'vulnerability', which whilst, perhaps, not an 'objective' was nevertheless important in respect of students' perceptions. There were, however, attendant problems with regard to those staff who could not -

'cope with this level of personal interrelationship'.

A number of staff participants at lower levels in the management structure were content to 'go along with' pastoral provision in terms of what had been decided regarding the tutorial programme. Several different reasons were offered for this 'compliance', including the flexibility for tutors to approach matters in their own way, a reduction in the pressures or onus of responsibility, the intrinsic interest of topics which had been selected, and the obligation to investigate the usefulness and relevance of material which had been compiled 'with some care' by the Pastoral Team.

Discrepant cases were, however, encountered - the common ground to which was that the tutorial programme was 'too intrusive'. Several staff also offered the view that colleagues 'subconsciously acknowledged' that -

    'perhaps tutorial work was less of a priority than subject teaching',

although those that did so professed not to espouse similar views themselves.

Staff frequently advanced the idea that students 'probably' saw the tutorial programme as 'a waste of time', or regarded it in much the same light as College Studies, ie as 'an irrelevance'. It was also suggested, however, that whilst the value of the programme might not be acknowledged, students did tend to 'accept' what was offered.

Students themselves referred, perhaps surprisingly in view of the 'directed' nature of the programme alluded to earlier, to a 'lack of organization' which tended to limit the programme's value, and hence in their view to obscure the purpose in there being one.

Additionally, how useful tutorial time proved to be was seen to be dependent on the tutor concerned, whether students attended in sufficient numbers and whether those who did attend were prepared to be involved in a given activity.

Individual/group relationships

Although participants' perspectives on the theme of individual and group relationships have much in common with respect to the findings in all three colleges, one issue in Settledon College was particular to that institution. It seems appropriate, therefore, that it should take precedence in the record which follows.

Several groups of second year sixth students drew attention to the 'atmosphere' amongst the student body at large, which it appeared, was qualitatively different from that of the preceding year, when a single year group had been in college during the transitional phase of educational re-organization. This was perceived as an exciting and enjoyable time when students had shared much common ground in coping with the challenges that faced them. Latterly, however, it was suggested that there was a lesser sense of cohesion and corporate identity and that the student community had fragmented into 'cliques'. Whilst the data available indicated that these social dynamics related more to students' recreational and leisure time than to those occasions when they met in timetabled groupings, there were, nonetheless, (at the time of the research) some implications with regard to how tutorial groupings and the activities undertaken within them, might affect any such patterns of social association.

Students' perceptions of their relationship with senior pastoral staff also indicated a sense of 'remoteness' for some. This was made apparent in students' reference to the infrequency of visits to tutor groups by Senior Tutors, and by a lack of confidence in approaching them (exceptions where an individual relationship had been built up notwithstanding).

As previously, however, close relationships had been forged between students and their Personal Tutors. The latter were seen as being 'approachable' and 'sympathetic' to students' problems; disciplinary issues were handled on a 'low-key' basis, with 'explanations' being given careful consideration and contractual agreements being sought; students were appreciative of the 'adult treatment' they received, but were also conscious of the part they were expected to play in 'behaving in an adult way'. A majority confirmed that relationships were 'better' in college than in the 11 - 16 schools from which they came, and felt they were treated as 'equals'.

For a significant number of second year sixth students, matters in respect of tutor interest and support had, 'if anything', improved over the course of their fourth and fifth terms in college.

Staff had, in the main, a reciprocal view of their relationships with students. They felt 'at ease' with their groups; were aware of a lack of inhibition in the voicing of opinion and were often 'surprised' how 'open' students were prepared to be in revealing personal problems.

A number declared their support for Senior Management's notion of a multi-dimensional profile, and stressed the need for staff to be -

'someone other than a subject teacher'.

Some were conscious too of the 'special relationship' which sixth form colleges could engender and rejected alternative arrangements such as those in Further Education, where students were -

'not seen from one lecture to the next'.

As with staff participants in Medley College and Newfields College, tutors in Settledon College emphasized the 'close personal contact' that they had with tutees. This had characterized the kind of relationship which had been formed and resulted in enhanced personal development and the adoption of appropriate strategies in dealing with students' problems.

It had also facilitated a climate in which -

'matters of concern to young adults'

could be aired and presented in -

'a supportive rather than intrusive way'.

As an adjunct to this, some senior key informants perceived a link between the 'direct' support within college via, for example, the Careers Service and the initiatives which students took themselves in seeking support in other more personal situations.

The structure of tutorial groupings (ie 'vertical' sets) and the 'social nature of tutorial work' were regarded by staff and students as valuable in promoting inter-personal relationships between first, second and third year sixth formers, both with respect to 'social mixing' and to interaction on a wide variety of college and 'external' issues.

Benefits arising from current provision

In common with the analytic pattern observed within the two other case studies, there were perceived benefits of provision complementary to those reported in the previous section. These benefits were asserted perhaps most vigorously by members of the Senior Management Team.

One issue which assumed prominence in this respect was that of maintaining the quality of pastoral provision throughout the college. It was suggested that delivery of the pastoral curriculum was monitored through 'feedback' to Team Tutors. Termly team meetings were, at least in part, devoted to a process of 'review' and issues raised here were then passed on to the Senior Pastoral Team who discussed such matters in their weekly meeting. 'Checks' on delivery were maintained and 'questions asked' where agreed aims were not being pursued. It was also the 'self-support' nature of team-tutoring which spread pastoral expertise - not all tutors could be 'charismatic and dynamic', but help was available and frequently offered.

'Virtually all staff' were thought to be 'committed' to pastoral initiatives and a 'network of good will and personal relationships' was said to support common provision. By investing 'authority' in the Personal Tutor and devoting 'much time' to tutor training, Senior Management had declared its concern for an undifferentiated quality of care.

Other less senior staff were conscious of the advantages which tutorial contact brought. These ranged from -

'an opportunity to just chat to the group',

and -

'the constructive, though often critical reaction (by students) to everyday aspects of college life',

to:

'interaction of mutual benefit to students and tutors'.

The role which tutors had assumed had facilitated -

'an overall view of students' educational progress',

which in turn had aided development through the interest taken in the individual. Students for their part had relatively little to offer that was not encompassed by the theme of 'relationships'. Some reference was, however, made to the 'usefulness' of having practised interview skills and to the value of the Careers sessions. A number confessed to 'having learned something' from various tutorial topics and demonstrated a particular enthusiasm for the inclusion of such issues as 'Apartheid'. Inter-group competition activities had also been well-received.

Problems arising within current provision

Within the context of this theme, the issue of 'time' was one that gave cause for common concern among both staff and student participants. For students, there was to a generally widespread degree, a belief that 'too much time' had been allocated for tutorial purposes. Others questioned the distribution of the time and suggested that alternative patterns (of varying kinds) would be more acceptable. A number of staff found it difficult to match the tasks which needed to be undertaken to the time that was available on given occasions; sometimes too little time was at one's disposal and sometimes too much.

The pressures of 'a substantial amount of administration' were also cited and for some staff this had left insufficient time to address tutorial topics 'properly'. Another dimension of the issue was that of time as a 'commodity'; in the second term of the Academic Year resource materials were in shorter supply for some tutors than in the preceding term; the reported view of the team tutors was that 'free-time' was now available for an individual approach by group tutors. A number of staff were of the opinion, however, that one could -

'only do so many things in this way'.

Additional difficulties were seen to be attributable to the 'legacy' which the college had inherited from feeder secondary schools. The problem was one which could be defined in terms of students' perceptions of PSE as something which they had 'done before'. The views of Senior Management reported earlier notwithstanding, however, several staff were aware that the topics selected for the tutorial programme could not be said to be:

'ones that students weren't aware of'.

Particular issues provided a basis for consensus among staff and student participants. Of these, perhaps the most significant was that of the design of the tutorial programme in relation to the developmental needs of students currently attending the college and those of the college itself, rather than the needs of students aged 16 - 19 in general. For students, the programme presently on offer tended to be 'predictable', 'prescribed' and 'inflexible'; activities needed to be matched to -

'the feelings and outlook of individual tutor groups - which differ considerably'.

Staff were less critical but agreed upon the necessity for -

'tailoring a package to college needs, rather than adopting one from well-thumbed sources'.

(Both perspectives are interesting when considered in the context of the joint proposals for the tutorial programme referred to in the final section on Tutorial Activities).

Other areas of common ground included inadequate dissemination of information to students. Much depended on how seriously individual tutors treated the processing of material, which was perhaps a 'mundane and routine' aspect of their role, but, nevertheless, a 'necessary' one; and the initial size of tutor groups, which were 'too large' to facilitate optimum management of the tutorial programme and 'not sufficiently intimate' to cater for a more individual approach.

Students frequently expressed disappointment at the lack of emphasis on their 'future', especially in relation to careers and further education, in their discussions with tutors. There is an interesting parallel here with the observations of a member of the Careers Support Service who was working with the college at the time of the research, and who noted that tutors appeared to -

'lack confidence in their expertise in giving careers advice'.

Other problems which were seen as attending the provision of careers advice were the implementation of related topics in the tutorial programme during 'the college's first frantic year', the extent to which details of career officers' availability tended to become -

'submerged in the volume of information generally';

and the higher education/vocational divide between the careers service's work in college and that undertaken by the college itself (ie in terms of the college's perception of where its responsibilities lay).

As in Medley College, students and staff who singled out counselling as a significant issue, gave evidence of differing perspectives. For a good number of the former, such support was 'not well advertised' - those who were 'persistent' in investigating such matters would 'discover' whom to approach; those who did not take the initiative might fare less well. Staff, however, saw the problem as one of persuading students to take advantage of established procedures - implying that these were both communicated and understood.

Further problems of a miscellaneous nature perceived by students were: the limited contact between tutor groups; the lack of 'practical' activities during tutorial work; insufficiency of student choice concerning areas for discussion; the amount of 'form-filling' required; disparity of response among the tutor group as a whole (in terms of interest and involvement); and inadequate planning and ineffective use of the Tutor Periods available.

The improbability of being able to meet the needs of all students was clearly articulated by the Principal of the college who observed -

'There will always be some students for whom a given activity is seen as superfluous; those who see the careers advice as inappropriate; who are not interested in making application for higher education; and who feel that they are already well-rounded, outgoing individuals'.

This is not to suggest, however, that from an investigational point of view all the issues raised by students can clearly be accounted for in these terms.

Change and development

There was a similar emphasis to that in Medley College upon staff training as a vehicle for change and development. Despite the efforts made to meet staff requests in this respect, however, it was commonly felt that additional provision needed to be made for tutor training and preparation.

Whilst some staff and a considerable number of student participants made reference to alterations to the distribution of time for pastoral purposes (with reduction either of administrative sessions to ten minutes - rendering them more appropriate for 'information purposes' - or shortening of the one hour session, as a common theme), there was no desire to devote any time so generated to subject teaching programmes.

The single most important issue for the great majority of staff and for a small number of students also, was the need for a more substantial commitment by students as a whole. Students needed to 'participate fully', 'take matters more seriously', 'show willingness to co-operate' and 'exhibit more interest and enthusiasm'. Those student participants who offered their perspectives on the issue were conscious in particular of the necessity of -

'everyone putting in the same amount of effort',

if profitable use was to be made of the time available. For a few staff, initial improvements could be brought about by the assurance of stricter attendance. Students saw this as a corollary to the need for 'more interesting presentation' of material; for prior notice of discussion topics being given - thereby increasing the chances of greater student 'input'; for emphasis, where possible, on examining issues from 'first hand experience'; for targeting 'everyday aspects of college life' as a basis for discussion more often; and for utilitarian consideration of 'day to day' personal needs which tended to be effaced through exploration of wider social issues.

Other issues identified by staff included the 'uncertainty' that pastoral provision through 'vertical' tutorial grouping was 'entirely right' - and the 'probability' of reverting at some time in the future to 'year group' arrangements; the need for college to be 'better informed' about course choice and subject mix and to offer alternatives to students; and the potential for greater utilisation of tutor team meetings as a forum for discussion of student response.

Tutorial activities

The framework for tutorial provision at the college was outlined by a member of the senior pastoral team in an early exploratory interview. With respect to the 'extended' weekly period, this took the form of three-quarters of an hour of 'structured' activity, with a quarter of an hour being reserved for 'personal interviews', if required. The 'set programme' of tutorial topics had been devised by a working party of staff and students - certain elements had to be covered but choice had been 'built in'. Whilst this 'flexibility' was 'confirmed' by other members of staff, it is interesting to note the observation of another member of the senior pastoral team:

'Tutors here welcome guidance; they want to be led - more so than in other institutions of my experience. At some colleges I could name, however, materials are simply made available and staff are left to decide whether they want to do anything or nothing'.

Members of the team were conscious that some tutorial topics were 'inevitably more interesting than others'; some issues could 'run for a term at least'; others, such as Study Skills, were 'less entertaining', but given a general lack of awareness of them among students, they were 'a necessary imposition'. There was an acknowledgement also of the need for second year sixth students to avoid repetition of aspects of the tutorial programme examined during the first year; the 'pairing' of tutor groups was seen as one way of approaching this particular problem.

For some second year students, however, activities subsequent to the previous year's programme had 'tended to phase out' and a greater proportion of time was, reportedly, now spent 'sitting around' or chatting informally with tutors. First year students by contrast, referred more commonly to tutorials usually being 'quite busy' with discussions cited as a frequent activity.

Although as reported earlier, there had been the implication by some staff that students' previous acquaintance with social issues rendered their inclusion in the tutorial programme less valuable, students did make the point that some issues had been 'looked at more deeply' than in their experience. (This did not, of course, give the assurance of an intrinsic appeal, since in common with members of the senior pastoral team, students perceived some topics as being of interest - others less so).

There was very little reference by staff to how tutorial periods were structured in organizational management terms. Some had discussed the demands that college made upon students and concepts such as 'responsibility'; one or two indicated that administrative periods were also used for 'discussing things' with individuals. One member of staff suggested that tutorial activity drew its varied character from the manner in which the senior pastoral team acted as 'the sole source' of resource material:

'Some staff dot every "i" and cross every "t"; others work within the broad framework; and the remainder don't do it'.

On a concluding note it is perhaps worth pointing out that the remaining issue, that of Induction, appears under three different analytic headings in each of the respective case studies. This is probably a good example of how analysis of data has been informed by the theoretical underpinning of the research. In Settledon College the focus appeared to be upon 'matching' (or possibly 'moulding') the individual to what College had to offer (the 'package' to which reference is made elsewhere). Thus Induction procedures were described in terms of 'taster days', personal interviews and a set programme with group tutors over two days, based on 'staff perception' of what students 'needed most'.

In drawing together the implications of the data, three common issues are worthy of particular note. Firstly, the quality of tutor-student relationships within each of the colleges provides the fundamental basis for creating a successful climate of care. However, the structure and process of existing systems as represented in tutorial functions and pastoral programmes does not appear, for significant numbers of both students and staff, to facilitate its further growth and development.

Secondly, there is a critical tension between recognition of the need for (continued) staff training in this area in order to improve student access to quality of care irrespective of one's assigned tutor, and senior management's 'resignation' to the fact that individual staff interests, predispositions and personal qualities function as variables that will continue to affect this.

Thirdly, as with General Studies, the data suggests evidence of considered change and development within the pastoral programme; the vigour with which such matters are being addressed, however, ranges from restructuring from first principles, through an 'on-going' debate, to the acknowledgement of possibilities. These respective stances on the enrichment curriculum are consistent with the general characteristics of the three colleges as outlined in the introductory chapter to the research.

They are further exemplified here by the extent to which a 'collective wisdom' informs pastoral practice and organisation. This is most evident where 'reinforcement', 'persuasion' and 'directed activity' are deemed appropriate, and least apparent where consideration of putting students' expressed needs at the centre of what it is hoped will be achieved, precedes revision and review.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER 7

1   Doherty, K., 'A framework for the evaluation of pastoral care', in D.H. Hamblin (ed.), <u>Problems and Practice of Pastoral Care</u>, Oxford: Blackwell, 1977.

<u>RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY (LIKERT SCALE ITEMS)</u>

<u>Factor analysis of the 'A' Scale (General Studies)</u>

As noted in the section 'Development of the Attitude Questionnaire', twenty of the twenty five items on the 'A' Scale loaded on the first factor extracted. Those items which did not inter-correlate at the level of .45 or above are summarised as follows:

A2   Student integration as main benefit of programme.

A9   General Studies to be non-examinable.

A11 Suitable as a framework for one-year sixth.

A22 Variable course quality leading to limited effectiveness.

A23 Further links with examination subjects not advantageous.

(The items appear in full in the questionnaire survey in Appendix I).

The loadings of all twenty five items on Factor 1 are given in Table 8.1 (which also shows the significant loadings on the second and third factors of the five items above).

The proportion of the variance accounted for by the the principal factor[*] was 29.9%; two points should be noted: firstly, the listed 'alpha-if-item-deleted' values confirmed a strong association between the items in the (refined) scale ie that the patterns of attitudes represented were consistent with the existence of an underlying structure; secondly, the sampling of the attitude domain gave rise to constructs that had been elicited from respondents themselves and which were not derived on a priori grounds. Thus, while the factor analysis tends not to lend strong further support to the utility of the 'A' Scale, neither in this case does it negate it. Additionally, of course, whether analytical outcomes are positive or otherwise, the possibility of statistical artefact has to be considered[f].

What serves, perhaps, as a linking feature among the five items omitted from the refined scale, is their potentially 'hypothetical' character - that is to say, for a significant number of respondents, the statements may depict situations or present concepts that do not relate directly to their personal experience.

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* Vernon[1] points out that if the amount of variance explained by the first factor is four times that of the second, uni-dimensionality is established (cf the data in Table 8.3).

f Napior[2], for example, cautions that occurrence of interpretable dimensions in factor analytic scaling configurations may be more a function of the mathematical procedures involved than a function of the properties of the data.

Whilst shaping of respondent viewpoint through awareness of the experience of others was anticipated (and more manifestly apparent in group interviews recorded elsewhere in the study), the attitudinal structure reflected in the principal factor does not appear to be consistent with this.

Table 8.1 Factor matrix of 'A' Scale (General Studies) variables

VARIABLE		FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3
A1	EBC	.74024	-.06622	-.07810
A2	ESI	-.11205	.52882	.21559
A3	PFR	.58309	.32064	-.17287
A4	IAQ	.47915	.26016	-.36432
A5	ACVI	.76184	-.13663	-.02533
A6	RPEI	.60477	.18665	-.07647
A7	IAS	.51280	.54297	.01591
A8	DIC	.51922	-.24063	.02099
A9	AAL	-.16119	-.03567	.61548
A10	NSE	.73828	.05419	-.09067
A11	ROYS	.27167	.53073	.19693
A12	NCT	.49009	.31276	.03307
A13	ESP	.71544	-.18820	-.03519
A14	VCC	.70323	-.03993	-.24845
A15	PITN	.43294	.12434	.04471
A16	UPP	.53433	-.02079	-.00727
A17	DECI	.60763	-.16463	.28812
A18	PVSC	.61742	-.25068	.22024
A19	PSR	.70354	-.24459	.09180
A20	ECCV	.44756	-.09820	.20053
A21	CAAS	.59912	.18846	.05934
A22	QVPE	.13875	.42553	.34084
A23	DLES	.22516	.02353	.62324
A24	SOI	.51456	-.46841	.25128
A25	SPPAS	.60571	-.08953	-.21960

Note

Six factors were extracted in total from the analysis, but the five items which did not load to the first principal factor loaded (with one exception – item A22) on either the second or third factor and are thus revealed accordingly.

'A' Scale Variables

1	EBC	Effects on balancing the curriculum.
2	ESI	Effects on student integration.
3	PFR	Priority of funding and resourcing.
4	IAQ	Importance of academic qualifications.
5	ACVI	Added course value and interest.
6	RPEI	Replacement with 'practical', 'everyday' information.
7	IAS	Increased academic study.
8	DIC	Desirability of internal certification.
9	AAL	Appropriateness at 'A' level.
10	NSE	Necessity for staff endorsement.
11	ROYS	Restriction to One-Year students.
12	NCT	Number of courses taken.
13	ESP	Effects on study profile.
14	VCC	Value as course component.
15	PITN	Programme involvement through negotiation.
16	UPP	Understanding of programme philosophy.
17	DECI	Development of extra-curricular interests.
18	PVSC	Planning via student consultation.
19	PSR	Promotion of student relaxation.
20	ECCV	Effects of choice on course value.
21	CAAS	Compulsory attendance for all students.
22	QVPE	Quality variation and programme effectiveness.
23	DLES	Direct linking to examination subjects.
24	SOI	Students' organisational input.
25	SPPAS	Students' perceptions of parity with academic subjects.

Factor analysis of the 'B' Scale (Pastoral Care)

As indicated in the section on dimensional analysis of the questionnaire data, all twenty five items on the 'B' Scale loaded to one predominant factor - emphasizing 'unidimensionality' of the attitude complex. The salience of the items was also more pronounced than on the 'A' Scale, with most loading on the factor at .6 and above. The percentage of variance accounted for was substantially higher than previously, at 43.4%, and only three factors were extracted.

Table 8.2   Factor matrix of 'B' Scale (Pastoral Care) variables

VARIABLE		FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3
B1	TAP	.73052	-.22212	-.20178
B2	BATW	.72122	-.30155	-.23801
B3	VMTG	.78969	-.09945	.10796
B4	VCC	.64730	.17910	.30477
B5	TRSP	.78547	-.24951	-.15889
B6	ASA	.63531	.35530	.16599
B7	PCL	.64323	-.09045	.32917
B8	APT	.64061	.17451	-.27095
B9	LSTP	.61902	-.06449	-.34499
B10	ETGN	.75183	-.04865	-.01003
B11	TACA	.70650	-.18982	-.11968
B12	TPAR	.60189	.46339	-.07904
B13	SAC	.59280	.36541	-.01137
B14	ASN	.65288	.01376	-.17785
B15	VIP	.67759	-.10946	.28322
B16	RMTG	.66977	.22759	-.27698
B17	SRCR	.55914	-.23820	.35594
B18	EPD	.55177	.47322	-.08623
B19	PDST	.66473	-.18929	.18486
B20	TAC	.75049	-.16976	-.16189
B21	TARC	.53394	.39302	.05577
B22	TAMC	.69308	.00618	.39271
B23	TWTAC	.64446	.14417	.04137
B24	TAAG	.71138	-.26395	-.22632
B25	SAT	.61575	-.17399	-.27105

'B' Scale Variables

1	TAP	Tutor's awareness of progress.
2	BATW	Benefits of Active Tutorial Work.
3	VMTG	Value of 'mixed' tutor groups.
4	VCC	Variation in quality of care.
5	TRSP	Tutor's review of student performance.
6	ASA	Appropriateness of support arrangements.
7	PCL	Pre-college liaison.
8	APT	Authority of Personal Tutors.
9	LSTP	Limitations of set tutorial programmes.
10	ETGN	Effects of tutor group numbers.
11	TACA	Tutor's awareness of career aims.
12	TPAR	Tutor's pastoral and academic roles.
13	SAC	Staff as counsellors.
14	ASN	Assessment of students' needs.
15	VIP	Value of Induction Programme.
16	RMTG	Restrictions of 'mixed' tutor groups.
17	SRCR	Student representation and college relationships.
18	EPD	Emphasis on personal development.
19	PDST	Personal development and subject teaching.
20	TAC	Tutor as communicator.
21	TARC	Tutor as registration clerk.
22	TAMC	Tutor as mentor and counsellor.
23	TWTAC	Tutorial work through the academic curriculum.
24	TAAG	Tutor as academic guide.
25	SAT	Students' adult treatment.

The factor contributions for scale variables

The factor contributions for the variables on each of the scales ('A' and 'B') may be noted from Table 8.3. The predominance of the first factor extracted in both analyses is clearly illustrated.

Table 8.3   Summary of factor contributions for scale variables

Scale A	(General Studies)					
	Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Eigenvalue	7.48	1.90	1.51	1.20	1.15	1.01
	% Variance	29.90	7.6	6.1	4.8	4.6	4.0
	Cumulative	29.9	37.5	43.6	48.4	53.0	57.0

Scale B	(Pastoral Care)		
	Factor	1	2	3
	Eigenvalue	10.86	1.40	1.22
	% Variance	43.4	5.6	4.9
	Cumulative	43.4	49.1	53.9

Reliability analysis of 'A' Scale (General Studies)

As detailed elsewhere, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used to calculate the reliability of both sets of attitude items (ie the 'A' Scale and the 'B' Scale). The reliability coefficient for the 'A' Scale (General Studies) was found to be .90 for the 'refined' set of twenty items. The effect of deleting each of the five unadopted items (numbers 2, 9, 11, 22 and 23) can be seen in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4   **The effect of item deletion on the reliability of the 'A' Scale (General Studies)**

VARIABLE		ALPHA-IF-ITEM-DELETED
A1	EBC	.8688
A2	ESI	.8861
A3	PFR	.8720
A4	IAQ	.8749
A5	ACVI	.8679
A6	RPEI	.8712
A7	IAS	.8730
A8	DIC	.8743
A9	AAL	.8895
A10	NSE	.8680
A11	ROYS	.8782
A12	NCT	.8741
A13	ESP	.8692
A14	VCC	.8695
A15	PITN	.8755
A16	UPP	.8736
A17	DECI	.8715
A18	PVSC	.8714
A19	PSR	.8692
A20	ECCV	.8752
A21	CAAS	.8711
A22	QVPE	.8816
A23	DLES	.8795
A24	SOI	.8743
A25	SPPAS	.8720

Reliability Coefficient   alpha = .8787

Reliability analysis of 'B' Scale (Pastoral Care)

Since all twenty five attitude items relating to Pastoral Care loaded to the first principal factor, it is not unusual to note a higher reliability coefficient than was observed for the 'A' Scale. At .94 and .87 respectively, however, the alpha values for both scales are substantially in excess of the minimum level of .7 cited by Youngman and Eggleston[3].

The lack of advantage in deleting attitude items to produce a shorter, more refined scale as in the case of the 'A' Scale can be ascertained from Table 8.5 below.

Table 8.5   **The effect of item deletion on the reliability of the 'B' Scale (Pastoral Care)**

VARIABLE		ALPHA-IF-ITEM-DELETED
A1	TAP	.9415
A2	BATW	.9415
A3	VMTG	.9409
A4	VCC	.9426
A5	TRSP	.9407
A6	ASA	.9428
A7	PCL	.9427
A8	APT	.9426
A9	LSTP	.9429
A10	ETGN	.9414
A11	TACA	.9416
A12	TPAR	.9429
A13	SAC	.9432
A14	ASN	.9429
A15	VIP	.9425
A16	RMTG	.9423
A17	SRCR	.9438
A18	EPD	.9434
A19	PDST	.9424
A20	TAC	.9415
A21	TARC	.9440
A22	TAMC	.9423
A23	TWTAC	.9425
A24	TAAG	.9415
A25	SAT	.9430

Reliability Coefficient	alpha = .9446

Comparison of the attitudes of respondent sub-groups

The factor and alpha-if-item-deleted analyses of the total sample generated scales that could be used to sum responses which were closely related to the dimension underlying each set of items; and, thereby, to assess the attitudes of respondent sub-groups as delineated in the research hypotheses. Scale scores thus calculated could then be compared to establish the degree of agreement within and between such groups.

Tests for significant differences of attitude were conducted for the following respondent groups:

a   College staff and students.

b   Senior staff (Head of Department and above) and junior staff.

c   'Fresher' students (those in their first or only year) and 'veteran' students
     (those in their second or third year).

Initially, the group comparisons were made across the full sample of three hundred and eighty two respondents, in order to establish whether broad distinctions of attitudinal patterning could be discerned. Table 8.6 shows the mean scores and standard deviations for staff and student sub-groups on both the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) scales, and the outcome of a 't' test for significant difference. There is strong evidence here (p<.01) of differentiated levels of support for existing policy and provision with respect to both General Studies and Pastoral Care not being due to chance.

Sixth form college staff across the three institutions surveyed were more supportive of such arrangements than those for whom these were designed to cater (the students).

However, the item means (for staff: 4.02 and 4.05 on the 'A' and 'B' scales respectively, and, similarly, for students: 3.19 and 3.40) equate to positions on the attitude continuum characterized by the statements 'TEND TO AGREE' and 'TEND TO DISAGREE'. The range of opinion is, therefore, perhaps more accurately conveyed in these terms.

It is interesting to note that students in the sample disagree substantially more among themselves with respect to their attitudes towards Pastoral Care than they do in relation to General Studies, and more than staff do in respect of either, as revealed in the width of the standard deviations for the mean scores and the Coefficient of variation - given by (s/x).

Table 8.6   <u>Significance of difference in attitude scores for all staff and students on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales</u>

		Staff (n=65)	Students (n=137)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	80.47	63.98	8.73**
	s.d.	13.74	14.48	
'B' Scale	MEAN	101.38	86.29	6.82**
	s.d.	14.26	23.58	

** p<.01

The second (b) and third (c) tests for significant difference between sub-groups were administered according to respondents' 'position' within the college population structure. Staff were compared in terms of their level of responsibility in the institution and were designated (as described previously) as either 'senior' or 'junior'. In determining whether support for existing policy and provision was influenced by 'hierarchical' factors, it was anticipated that inference might be made about the effect or absence of effect of viewpoint affiliation. Table 8.7 shows that whilst the difference in mean scores for senior and junior staff on the 'A' scale (General Studies) is marginally due to random effects, there is some evidence to suggest the difference in mean scores on the 'B' Scale (Pastoral Care) is a significant one and, in consequence, that senior staff are more supportive with respect to pastoral provision than their junior colleagues.

The item means for the sub-groups on the 'A' scale (4.15 and 3.80) and 'B' scale (4.16 and 3.88) respectively represent -

a   for senior staff: attitude continuum positions of TEND TO AGREE and

b   for junior staff: positions occupying a hypothetical point nearer to TEND TO
     AGREE than TEND TO DISAGREE.

The attitude range between staff respondent sub-groups (in the full sample) differentiated by 'position', is, therefore relatively narrow.

Table 8.7 Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for all staff, according to hierarchical position

		Senior Staff (n=35)	Junior Staff (n=30)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	83.20	76.12	1.95
	s.d.	11.94	15.48	
'B' Scale	MEAN	104.10	97.04	2.0*
	s.d.	14.15	13.60	

* p = 0.05

Student sub-groups in the full sample were differentiated according to how long respondents had been at the college. In comparing group attitudes in these terms, it was hoped that any effect of length of 'exposure' to philosophy and provision might be identified, and further informed by students' comments in unstructured interviews and by their responses to the sentence-completion items.

As is apparent from a comparison of the mean scores in Table 8.8 there is no significant difference between the attitudes of 'fresher' and 'veteran' students with respect to either area of provision. Indeed, with scale means respectively of 63.53 and 64.90 and item means of 3.17 and 3.24 on the 'A' Scale (General Studies), and with scale means of 86.49 and 85.67 and item means of 3.45 and 3.42 on the 'B' Scale (Pastoral Care) the mean attitude scores are in close accord at the TEND TO DISAGREE point on the attitude continuum.

However, this is not to suggest an essentially homogeneous view within each of the student sub-groups; the width of the standard deviations on the 'B' scale in particular, indicates an extensive attitude range*.

Table 8.8   Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) scales for all students, according to length of time at college

		'Fresher' Students (n=233)	'Veteran' Students (n=83)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	63.53	64.90	-0.77[i]
	s.d.	14.93	13.37	
'B' Scale	MEAN	86.49	85.67	0.26[ii]
	s.d.	23.24	24.64	

[i] p = 0.44
[ii] p = 0.79

* In situations such as these, the ways in which scale scores have combined to produce a particular effect illustrates a potential limitation of the scaling technique.

In order to ascertain whether significant differences in attitude existed between the respondent sub-groups on an inter-college basis, a one-way analysis of variance was performed. Where confirmation of variation between the colleges was given, the Scheffe multiple comparison test was subsequently applied to identify its specific location.

The data in Table 8.9 show the results for the 'A' Scale (General Studies) of the comparison between the staff respondent groups in the three colleges.

Table 8.9   **Analysis of differences in staff attitudes towards General Studies**

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	1031.33	2	6.38	.003
Within groups	161.67	62		
Total		64		

Multiple comparison (Scheffe)

	Mean	s.d.	Comparisons A	B	C
Settledon College (A) (n=22)	87.64	10.97	-		
Medley College (B) (n=16)	80.56	17.61		-	
Newfields College (C) (n=27)	74.59	10.46	*		-

* = pairs of groups significantly different at the 0.05 level

As the analysis of variance shows, there is a probability of the difference between the scores of the three staff groups being due to chance of 0.003. There is, therefore, very strong evidence of dissimilarity in staff attitudes towards General Studies provision between the three colleges.

This source of variation can be traced through Scheffe's test to the comparison between Settledon College and Newfields College, where scale mean scores of 87.64 and 74.59 are significantly different at the 0.05 level. Thus it can be deducted that staff respondents in Settledon College have a more supportive view of current provision for General Studies than do staff in Newfields College. Figure 1 shows how the respective item of means of 4.38 and 3.73 equate to attitude continuum positions of TEND TO AGREE and TEND TO DISAGREE, differentiating the groups in terms of their positively-orientated and negatively-orientated attitudes.

Figure 1   Attitude continuum placement for staff respondent groups in Settledon College and Newfields College according to item mean score (General Studies)

```
.....   AGREE              *      TEND TO    *         TEND TO  .....
                           '      AGREE      '         DISAGREE
                           '                 '
                           '                 '
                           '                 '
                          4.38              3.75

                      (Settledon        (Newfields
                       College           College
                       Staff)            Staff)
```

Interestingly, however, the distribution of scores about the mean, and hence the range of attitudes expressed, is almost identical in both cases.

When the attitudes of student respondents towards General Studies are compared across the three colleges, the evidence for variation between the institutions is irrefutable. Table 8.10 reveals an F probability value rounded to four decimal places of p = 0.0000.

The multiple comparison test confirms that the variations in attitude score are found to be significant at the 0.05 level for the differences between Settledon College and Newfields College and between Medley College and Newfields College. Student respondents in Settledon College (scale mean score, 67.55) and Medley College (scale mean score, 65.99) are, therefore, less critical of General Studies provision than their counterparts in Newfields College (scale mean score, 58.54).

Table 8.10   **Analysis of differences in student attitudes towards General Studies by college**

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	2500.47	2	12.82	0.0000
Within groups	195.03	313		
Total		315		

Multiple comparison (Scheffe)

	Mean	s.d.	A	B	C
			Comparisons		
Settledon College (A) (n=110)	67.55	12.48	-		
Medley College (B) (n= 98)	65.99	13.37		-	
Newfields College (C) (n=108)	58.54	15.81	*	*	-

* = pairs of groups significantly different at the 0.05 level

As proved the case with respect to the comparison of staff respondent groups, student respondents could be differentiated by college in terms of their mean scale response alternative. Figure 2 shows the scale placement for each of the three student groups according to their item mean score, and the extent of their disagreement regarding the benefits and efficacy of current provision.

Figure 2   **Attitude continuum placement for student respondent groups in Settledon College, Medley College and Newfields College according to item mean score (General Studies)**

```
.....   TEND TO       *      *    TEND TO   *                DISAGREE  .....
        AGREE         '      '    DISAGREE  '
                      '      '              '
                      '      '              '
                      '      '              '
                     3.37   3.29           2.92

                   (Settledon  (Newfields  (Medley
                    College     College     College
                    Students)   Students)   Students)
```

The observed pattern of contradistinction with respect to the attitudinal position of Newfields College, is further established with analysis of the scores of senior staff respondents in each of the three institutions. The analysis of variance (Table 8.11) confirms the existence of significant difference in attitude towards General Studies provision among the three senior staff respondent sub-groups, with a probability of the effect being due to chance of .0002.

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Scheffe's test identifies the sources of variation, which are to be found between Settledon College (respondent scale mean score 90.07) and Newfields College (scale mean score 74.63), and between Medley College (scale mean score 87.00) and Newfields College, and which are significant at the 0.05 level. It is, therefore, apparent that senior staff respondent groups in Settledon College and Medley College express more support for current provision than does the equivalent respondent group in Newfields College.

Table 8.11   **Analysis of difference in the attitudes of senior staff towards General Studies by college**

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	1006.86	2	10.50	0.0002
Within groups	95.91	32		
Total		34		

Multiple comparison (Scheffe)

	Mean	s.d.	A	B	C
			Comparisons		
Settledon College (A) (n=12)	90.07	11.11	-		
Medley College (B) (n=10)	87.00	9.45		-	
Newfields College (C) (n=13)	74.63	8.59	*	*	-

* = pairs of groups significantly different at the 0.05 level

Senior staff in Newfields College achieve an almost identical mean scale position to that of the composite staff group (Figure 1) and are differentiated, as Figure 3 shows, in the same terms.

Figure 3   **Attitude continuum placement for senior staff respondent groups in Settledon College, Medley College and Newfields College according to item mean score (General Studies)**

```
..... AGREE           *     *    TEND TO   *         TEND TO    .....
                      '     '    AGREE     '         DISAGREE
                      '     '              '
                      '     '              '
                      '     '              '
                     4.50  4.35          3.73

                   (Settledon (Medley      (Newfields
                    College    College      College
                    senior     senior       senior
                    staff)     staff)        staff)
```

An analysis of the differences between the three junior staff respondent sub-groups was not undertaken, since the full staff sample in Medley College failed to generate a statistically acceptable minimum of ten cases. A 't' test was, however, used to compare the respondent sub-group scores for Settledon College and Newfields College with the results shown in Table 8.12.

Table 8.12   Significance of difference in the attitudes scores for General Studies of junior staff respondents in Settledon College and Newfields College

	Mean	s.d.	t	n
Settledon College	82.43	9.31	1.53	10
Newfields College	74.55	13.19		13

t5% for 21 df = 2.09

The result is not statistically significant and it may, therefore, be concluded that there is no evidence to suggest differences in the groups' attitudes towards General Studies (as measured by their respective mean scores). The attitudes of junior staff respondents in Settledon College and Newfields College thus correspond more closely than those of senior colleagues in the same institutions.

Inter-college comparison of 'Fresher' and 'Veteran' student respondent sub-groups gave rise to results which were in accord with those for the composite groups. Analysis of variance (Table 8.13) shows that a significant difference in Fresher students' attitudes towards General Studies exists between the three colleges, with a probability of the effect being random of 0.0020. Scheffe's test confirms the variation as occurring between Settledon College (scale mean score 67.21) and Newfields College (scale mean score 59.30) and between Medley College (scale mean score 65.21) and Newfields College, with the scores being significantly different at the 0.05 level.

Item mean scores for the respective groups (Settledon College, 3.36; Medley College, 3.26 and Newfields College, 2.96) equate to the same attitude continuum placements as those denoted in Figure 2.

Table 8.13   <u>Analysis of differences in the attitudes of 'fresher' students towards General Studies by college</u>

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	1361.69	2	6.39	0.0020
Within groups	213.16	230		
Total		232		

Multiple comparison (Scheffe)

	Mean	s.d.	Comparisons A	B	C
Settledon College (A) (n=68)	67.21	11.45	-		
Medley College (B) (n=76)	65.21	14.34		-	
Newfields College (C) (n=89)	59.30	16.80	*	*	-

* = pairs of groups significantly different at the 0.05 level

Fresher student respondents in Settledon College and Medley College are, therefore, differentiated from their counterparts in Newfields College in the same terms as the composite student groups (ie they adopt a less critical perspective in respect of current provision).

Analysis of variance of the mean scores for the three veteran student respondent sub-groups (Table 8.14) gives similar confirmation of significant difference between them, with a probability of the effect being due to chance of 0.0003.

Scheffe's test traces the source of variation to a comparison between Settledon College (respondent sub-group scale mean score 68.12) and Newfields College (scale mean score 54.11) and between Medley College (respondent scale mean score 67.48) and Newfields College, the groups being significantly different at the 0.05 level. Item mean scores equate to response alternatives of TEND TO DISAGREE for Settledon College and Medley College, and DISAGREE for Newfields College. The students in Settledon College and Medley College achieve marginally higher scores than their fresher peers, but those in Newfields College are, conversely differentiated in terms of a marginally lower score. The groups' respective critical stances towards General Studies are, therefore, maintained as formerly noted.

Table 8.14   Analysis of differences in the attitudes of 'veteran' students towards General Studies by college

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	1341.65	2	8.95	0.0003
Within groups	149.82	80		
Total		82		

Multiple comparison (Scheffe)

	Mean	s.d.	Comparisons A	B	C
Settledon College (A) (n=42)	68.12	14.12	-		
Medley College (B) (n=23)	67.48	10.52		-	
Newfields College (C) (n=18)	54.11	9.01	*	*	-

* = pairs of groups significantly different at the 0.05 level

Inter-college analysis of the attitudes of respondent groups towards Pastoral Care, gives rise, by way of comparison to the outcomes for General Studies, to findings that are parallel in some instances and divergent in others.

For the full staff respondent groups, analysis of variance reveals the existence of significant difference in attitude scores with a probability of the effect being random of 0.0069 (as shown in Table 8.15). The multiple comparison test indicates that the difference between the scale mean scores for staff respondents in Settledon College (107.68) and Newfields College (95.26) accounts for this and that it can be so demonstrated at the 0.05 level. With item mean scores of 4.29 and 3.81 respectively, the two groups are marginally closer in outlook than was the case in relation to General Studies, but are still differentiated in terms of their response alternatives being positively (TEND TO AGREE) and negatively (TEND TO DISAGREE) weighted, with respect to Pastoral Care. Staff respondents in Settledon College are, therefore, more supportive of current arrangements than staff respondents in Newfields College.

Table 8.15   **Analysis of differences in staff attitudes towards Pastoral Care by college**

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	965.24	2	5.39	0.0069
Within groups	178.91	62		
Total		64		

Multiple comparison (Scheffe)

	Mean	s.d.	Comparisons A B C		
Settledon College (A) (n=22)	107.68	14.51	-		
Medley College (B) (n=16)	103.06	14.78		-	
Newfields College (C) (n=27)	95.26	11.42	*	*	-

* = pairs of groups significantly different at the 0.05 level

Examination of the attitude scores of student respondent groups produced a result which contrasts with that noted for General Studies. Analysis of variance reveals that there is no significant difference between the groups in the three colleges (Table 8.16). Scheffe's multiple comparison test was not carried out since variation between the groups was not confirmed.

Table 8.16   **Analysis of differences in student attitudes towards Pastoral Care by college**

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	343.10	2	0.62	0.54
Within groups	557.68	313		
Total		315		

Item mean scores of 3.52 for Settledon College, 3.37 for Medley College and 3.44 for Newfields College demonstrate the latter group's closer affinity with the other two than proved the case for General Studies, and as Figure 4 shows, equivalent scale response alternatives are consequently uniform.

Figure 4   **Attitude continuum placement for student respondent groups in Settledon College, Medley College and Newfields College according to item mean score (Pastoral Care)**

```
.....   TEND TO        *   *  *    TEND TO              DISAGREE .....
        AGREE          '   '  '    DISAGREE
                       '   '  '
                       '   '  '
                       '   '  '
                       '   ' 3.37
                     3.52  '
                           ' (Medley
                 (Settledon '  College
                   College '  students)
                   students) '
                           '
                     3.44

                 (Newfields
                   College
                   students)
```

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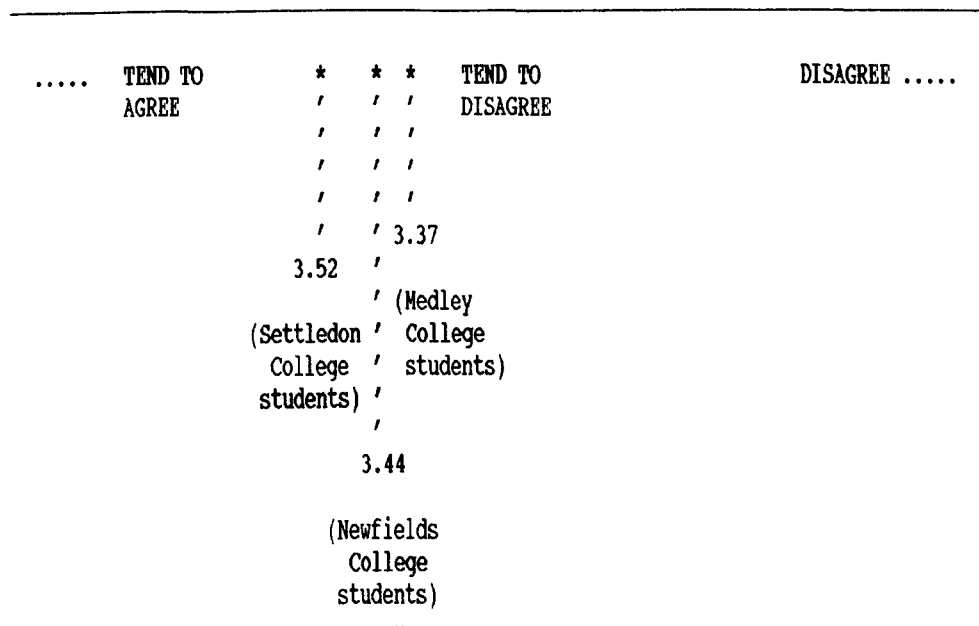
Senior staff respondents' attitude scores on the Pastoral Care scale generate an analytical outcome which corresponds with that observed for General Studies. Thus analysis of variance (Table 8.17) confirms variation between the three respondent sub-groups with a probability of the effect being due to chance of 0.0003. This source of variation can be traced through Scheffe's test to the difference between Settledon College (scale mean score 112.8) and Newfields College (scale mean score 94.31) and between Medley College (scale mean score 107.0) and Newfields College, which are significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 8.17   **Analysis of differences in the attitudes of senior staff towards Pastoral Care by college**

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	1371.88	2	10.02	0.0003
Within groups	136.97	32		
Total		34		

Multiple comparison (Scheffe)

	Mean	s.d.	Comparisons A	B	C
Settledon College (A) (n=12)	112.80	12.38	-		
Medley College (B) (n=10)	107.00	13.87		-	
Newfields College (C) (n=13)	94.31	9.62	*	*	-

* = pairs of groups significantly different at the 0.05 level

Item mean scores of 4.51, 4.28 and 3.77 respectively equate to response alternatives of TEND TO AGREE for Settledon College and Medley College, and TEND TO DISAGREE for Newfields College. The pattern of differentiation with respect to senior staff respondents' attitudes toward current provision for Pastoral Care, is, therefore, analogous to that found in respect of General Studies.

Analysis of the difference in attitude score between junior staff respondent sub-groups was dictated by the sampling constraints noted earlier and was, therefore, limited to comparison of Settledon College with Newfields College. Table 8.18 shows that there is no evidence to suggest a difference between the groups in respect of their attitudes towards provision for Pastoral Care. Indeed, scale mean scores of 96.71 for Settledon College and 96.64 for Newfields College depict a situation very much to the contrary, with both groups falling within the TEND TO DISAGREE response category. The result is particularly interesting in terms of the sub-group response in Settledon College, since the parallel outcome for General Studies gave an item mean score which equated to the TEND TO AGREE response alternative. Junior staff respondents in Settledon College are also significantly less supportive with regard to pastoral provision than their more senior colleagues (t=2.81, probability = 0.05)

Table 8.18   Analysis of differences in the attitude scores for Pastoral Care of junior staff respondents in Settledon College and Newfields College

	Mean	s.d.	t	n
Settledon College	96.71	13.17		10
			0.01	
Newfields College	96.64	14.04		13

t5% for 21 df = 2.09

Student sub-group scores on the Pastoral Care Scale were found to contrast with those recorded by the same groups for General Studies. Variation between 'fresher' students in the three colleges was not confirmed by analysis of variance, since mean scores of 87.49 for Settledon College, 85.95 for Hedley College and 86.20 for Newfields College did not prove significantly different at the 0.05 level (Table 8.19). All three 'fresher' student respondent groups were by virtue of their item mean scores (3.49, 3.43 and 3.44 respectively) located within the TEND TO DISAGREE category.

Table 8.19   **Analysis of differences in the attitudes of 'fresher' students towards Pastoral Care by college**

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	48.55	2	0.089	0.91
Within groups	544.47	230		
Total		232		

'Veteran' student respondents adopted similar perspectives to their junior counterparts. Analysis of variance (Table 8.20) revealed that no significant difference existed between the three institutional groups in terms of their scale mean scores (Settledon College: 89.12, Hedley College: 80.00, Newfields College: 84.89). Item mean scores of 3.56, 3.20 and 3.39 equated in likewise fashion to 'fresher' student scores to the TEND TO DISAGREE response alternative.

Table 8.20   **Analysis of differences in the attitudes of 'veteran' students towards Pastoral Care by college**

Analysis of variance summary table

Source of Variation	Mean square	Degrees of freedom	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	625.02	2	1.03	0.36
Within groups	606.75	80		
Total		82		

Summary of data from inter-college analyses

In summary, then, with respect to respondents' attitudes towards current provision for General Studies, Newfields College is differentiated from Settledon College and Medley College (in terms of its 'negatively'-weighted perspectives) in four out of the six sub-group analyses ('students', 'senior staff', 'fresher students' and 'veteran students') and from Settledon College in a further instance ('staff').*

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* It should be noted that although Newfields College is distinguished from Medley and Settledon in the terms described, approximately half the scale items offer a commentary on the adequacy of present practice; this does not necessarily, then, imply equally significantly different levels of support in conceptual terms (perspectives from the interview data relating to restructuring and development do, in fact, throw further light on this distinction).

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In the final case, the attitudes of junior staff respondents in Newfields College are not found to be significantly different from those of the equivalent group in Settledon College. Results with regard to respondents' attitudes towards current provision for Pastoral Care replicated those recorded for General Studies in so far as staff sub-groups were concerned; however, variation between student sub-groups in the three colleges did not exist as previously noted. Examination of the scores of these groups across both scales reveals the factors that have given rise to this: namely, the comparative stability of results for Settledon College and Medley College in both instances and a relatively pronounced increase in item mean score (.52) for Newfields College on the Pastoral Scale (the cumulative effect being one of greater homogeneity of perspective).

INTRA-COLLEGE ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENT ATTITUDES

The attitudes of the respondent sub-groups were subsequently compared on an intra-college basis (the analysis being repeated for each of the three institutions). The first of these analyses, for students and staff in Settledon College, may be found in the table below.

Table 8.21   **Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for students and staff in Settledon College**

		Staff (n=22)	Students (n=110)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	87.64	67.55	7.65**
	s.d.	0.97	12.48	
'B' Scale	MEAN	107.68	88.11	5.23**
	s.d.	14.51	22.15	
	** p<0.01			

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Comparison of the mean scores for staff and students provides strong evidence of a significant difference of viewpoint between the two groups in both attitude domains (p<0.01). Item means of 4.38 on Scale 'A' and 4.30 on Scale 'B' equate to an average staff position on the attitude continuum between TEND TO AGREE and AGREE; the item mean score for students on the 'A' scale (3.37) gives an average position almost exactly one response interval 'negatively' away from that of staff, at a point closer to TEND TO DISAGREE than TEND TO AGREE, whilst the score on the 'B' Scale (3.52) corresponds to a position approximately mid-way between the two. The difference in the attitude scores for both groups on the 'A' Scale is the most pronounced among the three colleges. The range of student attitudes towards pastoral issues (as shown by a standard deviation of 22.15) is also noteworthy.

Analysis of responses by senior and junior staff

As the process of comparative analysis narrows its focus, the resultant size of some respondent sub-groups necessitates a cautious view of the outcome of tests for significant difference. This is the case when the responses of senior and junior staff within a given institution are compared; the following observations are, therefore, tempered accordingly.

When the responses of staff are examined in relation to their hierarchical position, or 'senior'/'junior' designation, in Settledon College contrasting results are apparent for each of the two scales. Table 8.22 shows that whilst there is no evidence to indicate that the difference between the respective mean scores of 90.07 and 82.43 on the 'A' Scale is due to anything other than a random effect, there is some evidence to suggest that mean scores of 112.80 and 96.71 on the 'B' Scale represent significant attitudinal diversity.

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Settledon College proved to be the only case where this effect was observed. In addition, the scale mean for senior staff was the highest mean score for any respondent sub-group in the pastoral attitude domain, and is indicative of that group's advocacy of the effectiveness of present provision within the college.

Table 8.22   Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for staff in Settledon College according to hierarchical position

		Senior Staff (n=12)	Junior Staff (n=10)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	90.07	82.43	1.68[i]
	s.d.	11.11	9.31	
'B' Scale	MEAN	112.80	96.71	2.72*
	s.d.	12.38	13.18	

* p<0.05   [i] p = 0.115

Analysis of responses by 'fresher' and 'veteran' students

Comparison of the responses of students in their first or only year ('fresher' students) and those in their second or third year ('veteran' students) revealed no significant difference in attitude with respect to either scale. Rather, if the scale means (shown in Table 8.23) of 67.21 and 68.12 on the 'A' Scale and 87.49 and 89.12 on the 'B' Scale are considered, there is a close correspondence between the two groups. Although item mean scores of 3.36 and 3.40 and 3.49 and 3.56 for these groups on the respective scales do not equate to a sufficiently 'positive' position on the attitude continuum to satisfy the TEND TO AGREE criterion, they do represent the highest scores achieved by such groups within the three colleges. Once again, however, there is evidence of a broad spectrum of opinion among both sets of students in the pastoral domain (as revealed by the width of the standard deviations).

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Table 8.23 | **Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for students in Settledon College according to length of time in the institution**

		'Fresher Students (n=68)	'Veteran' Students (n=42)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	67.21	68.12	-0.35^{i}
	s.d.	11.45	14.12	
'B' Scale	MEAN	87.49	89.12	-0.40^{ii}
	s.d.	23.97	19.06	

^{i} $p = 0.725$ ^{ii} $p = 0.694$

ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENT ATTITUDES IN MEDLEY COLLEGE

Table 8.24 | **Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for students and staff in Medley College**

		Staff (n=16)	Students (n=98)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	80.56	65.99	3.16**
	s.d.	17.61	13.37	
'B' Scale	MEAN	103.06	84.49	3.96**
	s.d.	14.79	28.50	

** $p < 0.01$

Table 8.24 gives the result of a comparison in attitude scores on both scales for staff and student respondents in Medley College. As previously, the difference in the groups' mean scores is, in each instance, a significant one, and is indicative of the 'positive' and 'negative' orientation of their respective viewpoints. The level of significance reached with respect to the 'A' Scale is not, however, as great as that for the corresponding group comparison in Settledon College. Other features of note are: the resulting item mean for staff on the 'A' Scale (4.02), which only just equates to the TEND TO AGREE position on the attitude continuum; the relatively wide distribution of staff scores on the same scale which exceeds that observed for students (and which occurs only in Medley College); and the particularly marked extent to which students disagree among themselves in their attitudes towards pastoral provision (exceeded only by the range found within the sub-group of 'veteran' students in the same college, if possible small sample effects were to be disregarded).

Analysis of responses by senior and junior staff

A comparatively low return rate of staff questionnaires in Medley College resulted in sub-groups of ten and six respectively when hierarchical status was considered. Since for the purposes of comparison these numbers are of an order generally deemed to be unsatisfactory where tests of significance are concerned[4], no such analysis was undertaken.

Analysis of responses by 'fresher' and 'veteran' students

The results of a comparison between the two student groups (given in Table 8.25) reveal no significant difference in attitude score.

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On both the 'A' and 'B' Scales the group means give each set of students an average attitude position of TEND TO DISAGREE; though on pastoral issues their views tend to show less convergence and reflect, especially in the case of 'veteran' students, a wide variety of attitude standpoints. It is in this area of provision also that both groups register the lowest mean scores for the student respondent sub-sets among the three colleges. The lack of overall significant difference in attitude between the groups parallels that noted in Settledon College.

Table 8.25   **Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for students in Medley College according to length of time in the institution**

		'Fresher Students (n=76)	'Veteran' Students (n=23)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	65.21	67.48	-0.83^{i}
	s.d.	14.34	10.52	
'B' Scale	MEAN	85.95	80.00	0.78^{ii}
	s.d.	26.78	33.31	

[i] p = 0.412   [ii] p = 0.439

ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENT ATTITUDES IN NEWFIELDS COLLEGE

Examination of the attitude scores for staff and student respondents in Newfields College (Table 8.26), gives rise to observed results that are both akin to and different from those recorded in Settledon College and Medley College. Firstly, there are significant differences between the groups' mean scores on both scales, as there were in each of the other institutions. Thereafter, however, features of the data which set the college apart are in evidence.

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Staff respondents record the lowest scale mean totals on both scales for that sub-group within the three colleges. When the item means for the General Studies and Pastoral Care scores are derived (3.73 and 3.81 respectively), it will be noted that these fall below the TEND TO AGREE point on the attitude continuum, distinguishing staff in Newfields College as the only staff respondent sub-set not to have a positively-orientated view of present provision in either area. Students are similarly differentiated in terms of being the only student sub-set to have an item mean score (2.93) on the 'A' Scale that yields (albeit marginally) an average position on the attitude continuum in the DISAGREE category. Finally, with respect to the pastoral domain, staff and student groups have the narrowest difference in scale mean scores for any of the three colleges (suggesting, perhaps, a closer affinity of viewpoint).

Table 8.26   **Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for students and staff in Newfields College**

		Staff (n=27)	Students (n=108)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	74.59	58.54	6.36**
	s.d.	10.46	15.81	
'B' Scale	MEAN	95.26	86.08	3.15**
	s.d.	11.42	19.89	

** p<0.01

Analysis of responses by senior and junior staff

The most singular feature which emerges from comparison of the mean attitude scores for staff according to their hierarchical level in Newfields College, is the close correspondence which the scores exhibit. This is especially marked on the 'A' Scale where the respective figures for the two groups are 74.63 and 74.55. Senior staff are in closer agreement among themselves on the 'A' Scale (as shown by a standard deviation for the mean of 8.59) than any respondent sub-group within the three colleges, and display a similarly relatively homogeneous perspective on the 'B' Scale also, in comparison with their more junior colleagues (as revealed by the data in Table 8.27). Both sub-groups, then, as might be anticipated achieve a mean attitude position of TEND TO DISAGREE, which mirrors that of the overall staff position recorded in the previous section.

Table 8.27   Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for staff in Newfields College according to hierarchical position

		Senior Staff (n=14)	Junior Staff (n=13)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	74.63	74.55	0.02^{i}
	s.d.	8.59	13.19	
'B' Scale	MEAN	94.31	96.64	-0.48^{ii}
	s.d.	9.61	14.05	

[i] p = 0.986   [ii] p = 0.639

Analysis of responses by 'fresher' and 'veteran' students

In common with their counterparts in Settledon College and Medley College, 'fresher' and 'veteran' students in Newfields College show no significant difference in their attitude (as represented by their respective mean scores) towards the items on either scale. The results in Table 8.28, however, indicate that with respect to General Studies, the probability value for significant difference (0.067), whilst not reaching the 5% level, does greatly exceed that noted for the corresponding groups in Settledon College and Medley College; though it would be injudicious to accept this at face value without taking into account the figure for the standard deviation for the mean of 16.80.

A similarly broad range of attitudes towards pastoral issues is also in evidence, with both groups' scores dispersed quite widely about the mean. The 'A' Scale item mean scores give each sub-set an average attitude position of DISAGREE, whilst those on the 'B' Scale equate to TEND TO DISAGREE. 'Veteran' students in Newfields College recorded the lowest 'A' Scale mean score for any respondent sub-set in the total sample.

Table 8.28   Significance of difference in attitude score on the 'A' (General Studies) and 'B' (Pastoral Care) Scales for students in Newfields College according to length of time in the institution

		'Fresher Students (n=79)	'Veteran' Students (n=28)	t
'A' Scale	MEAN	59.30	54.11	1.87[i]
	s.d.	16.80	9.01	
'B' Scale	MEAN	86.20	84.89	0.22[ii]
	s.d.	19.35	23.30	

[i] p = 0.067   [ii] p = 0.825

<u>Summary of data from intra-college analyses</u>

Comparison of analytical outcomes from the three colleges reveals factors common between them, but also highlights institutional variation. The summary listing below facilitates cross-referencing of these features and characteristics.

Respondent groups contrasted	College	General Studies ('A') Pastoral Care ('B') OBSERVATIONS
Staff/Students	Settledon	Significant difference in attitude score between the groups on both scales - the difference on the 'A' Scale being the most pronounced amongst the three colleges.
	Medley	Significant difference in attitude score between the groups on both scales. The range of staff response on the 'A' Scale (as shown by the width of s.d. for the mean) was the most extensive amongst the three colleges.

Respondent groups contrasted	College	General Studies ('A') Pastoral Care ('B') OBSERVATIONS
	Newfields	Significant difference in attitude score between the groups on both scales. Staff have the lowest mean score on both scales for this group amongst the three colleges. Students achieve the lowest mean score on the 'A' Scale for this group. On the 'B' Scale staff and students exhibit the narrowest difference in mean score of the three colleges.
Junior/Senior Staff	Settledon	No significant difference in attitude score between the groups on the 'A' Scale; significant difference found on the 'B' Scale, however - the only case for these groups amongst the three colleges. The mean score for senior staff on the 'B' Scale was the highest recorded for any sub-group in the Pastoral domain.
	Medley	No analysis undertaken (see page 335).
	Newfields	No significant difference in attitude score between the groups on either scale. The 'A' Scale mean scores are the closest for any paired sub-groups within the sample.

Respondent groups contrasted	College	General Studies ('A') Pastoral Care ('B') OBSERVATIONS
'Fresher'/'Veteran' Students	Settledon	No significant difference in attitude score between the groups on either scale. Mean scores represent the highest recorded for these respondent sub-sets amongst the three colleges.
	Medley	No significant difference in attitude score between the groups on either scale. Both groups record the lowest mean scores on the 'B' Scale for these respondent sub-sets amongst the three colleges. 'Veteran' student respondents exhibit the widest range of viewpoint (as revealed in the width of the standard deviation for the mean) on the 'B' Scale of any sub-group within the three colleges.
	Newfields	No significant difference in attitude score between the groups on either scale, though the result (p=0.06) is much closer to being so for the 'A' Scale, than in Settledon College and Medley College.

The quantitative data provides a revealing measure of the range of difference between staff and student viewpoints - demonstrated typically in Medley and Settledon College by the correspondence of mean scores with differentiated attitude continuum positions of TEND TO AGREE and TEND TO DISAGREE. The scale of these differences is, therefore, perhaps surprisingly limited and may be seen to have implications for the resolving of current problems arising within existing provision.

However, the patters of variation amongst respondent sub groups are relatively complex, with differences being more pronounced or narrower, associated high and low mean scores being featured and the range of perspectives appearing wider or more restricted in some instances than in others. The contextual variables that give rise to this may make it less likely that taking account of collective 'staff' or 'student' views on such issues will prove a valid or profitable form of evaluation by the institutions concerned.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER 8

1   Vernon, P.E., 'An application of factorial analysis to the study of test items', <u>British Journal of Psychology</u>, 1950, pp 1 - 15.

2   Napior, D., 'Non-metric multidimensional techniques for summated ratings', in R.N. Shepherd, A.K. Romney and S.B. Nerlove (eds.), <u>Multidimensional Scaling Vol 1</u>, New York: Seminar Press, 1972, p 169.

3   Youngman, M.B. and Eggleston, J.F., <u>Constructing Tests and Scales</u>, Rediguide 10, Guides in Educational Research, University of Nottingham School of Education, 1979.

4   Petrinovich, L.F. and Hardyck, C.D., 'Error rates for multiple comparison methods: some evidence concerning the frequency of erroneous conclusions', <u>Psychological Bulletin</u>, 71, 1969, pp 43 - 45.

RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY (OPEN-ENDED ITEMS)

Responses to the sentence-completion (or open-ended) items were allocated to ten classificatory categories, which were derived from the total number of responses to items from a representative sub-sample of all respondents, as described in the section 'Development of the Attitude Questionnaire'.

The sentence-completion items which accompanied Scale A (General Studies) were as follows:

A1   The most valuable aspect of the General Studies programme is .....

B1   The least satisfactory aspect of the General Studies programme has been .....

C1   My experience of the whole question of General Studies in College leads me to

        say that .....

The classification codes and descriptions for item Al are listed below:

The most valuable aspect of the General Studies Programme is:

0   Opinion not ascertained.

1   Developing social confidence; open discussion/exchange of ideas.

2   Meeting students of differing ability levels/from different subject
        backgrounds.

3   Working with others who share ones own interests.

4   Providing a change and relaxation from pressure of study for examinations.

5   Broadening of education/experience; providing balance in programmes of
        study.

6   Creating opportunities for physical/practical activities.

7   The wide variety of courses on offer.

8   Freedom for staff and students to be involved in the organisation of courses
        of particular interest.

9   Miscellaneous.

The distribution of responses by all staff across the total sample to item Al may be seen in Table 9.1. More than one-third of staff respondents identified the broadening of education or experience and the achievement of balance in programmes of study, as the most valuable aspect of General Studies provision; and in consequence, this response proved to be that most frequently noted. Approximately half as many staff (twelve in comparison to twenty five) gave the second most common response of seeing the principal advantage as the change and relaxation which such courses afforded students from the pressures of examination study. 'The wide variety of courses on offer' was the third ranked staff response, which together with those above gave a cumulative total in excess of 70%. Least common and seldom identified were the perceived benefits of sharing common interests; the development of social confidence and open discussion of ideas; and the opportunity for physical or practical activity.

Table 9.1   <u>Distribution of responses by all staff to sentence-completion</u>
<u>item A1 (General Studies)</u>

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
5	38.46	25	38.46
4	18.46	12	56.92
7	15.38	10	72.30
0	7.69	5	79.99
9	6.15	4	86.14
(8	4.62	3	90.76
(2	4.62	3	95.38
6)	1.54	1	96.92
3)	1.54	1	98.46
1)	1.54	1	100.00

<u>Note</u>:

(Items 8 and 2 are equally ranked, as are items 6, 3 and 1).

If the responses to item A1 by all students across the total sample are considered in relation to those of all staff, two interesting features may be noted. Firstly, both groups identify the function of General Studies as giving respite from the pressures of examination study and its role in promoting breadth and balance, as key benefits (though the first and second rank orders for these responses are reversed for students - see Table 9.2 - when compared with those for staff in Table 9.1). Secondly, there is a noticeably higher proportion of idiosyncratic responses (ie those categorized as 'miscellaneous') and 'nil' (or 'opinion not ascertained') responses among students (almost one-third) than amongst staff (this tends to feature consistently where General Studies is concerned).

In addition, differences are apparent between the groups in terms of the proportion of subjects whose views are represented by the first and second rank order categories: whilst over half of all staff respondents fall into these categories, less than 40% of students are similarly placed.

Table 9.2   **Distribution of responses by all students to sentence-completion item A1 (General Studies)**

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
4	22.15	70	22.15
5	17.09	54	39.24
9	15.19	48	54.43
0	14.88	47	69.31
2	8.86	28	78.17
1	7.91	25	86.08
7	4.43	14	90.51
6	4.12	13	94.63
3	2.84	9	97.47
8	2.53	8	100.00

In conjunction with analysis of respondents' perception of the key benefits of the General Studies programme, the views of all staff and students regarding the least satisfactory aspect of current provision (item B1) were identified via the following codes and descriptors:

<u>The least satisfactory aspect of the General Studies Programme has been:</u>

0   Opinion not ascertained.

1   Wastes valuable time that could be spent studying for examinations.

2   Its compulsory nature.

3   Poor student attendance.

4   Lack of student interest and enthusiasm in participating.

5   Availability of courses at a given time.

6   The low priority attached by some staff to such provision.

7   Insufficient funding/resources.

8   Failure to match courses offered to student demand.

9   Miscellaneous.

The distribution of responses by all staff to item B1 is shown in Table 9.3. Nearly half of all staff respondents focused on perceived lack of student motivation as manifested in poor attendance and limited enthusiasm. The 'mechanics' of course timetabling; compulsory involvement; and funding and resources, were seen as factors that were least problematic in relation to other issues. A significantly larger number of staff offered responses for this item which were uncommon (and, therefore, which were not represented by codes 1 - 8), than proved the case for item A1 ('the most valuable aspect of the programme').

Table 9.3   Distribution of responses by all staff to sentence-completion
                   item B1 (General Studies)

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
4	24.62	16	24.62
3	23.07	15	47.69
9	18.46	12	66.15
6	10.77	7	76.92
8	9.22	6	86.14
(2	4.62	3	90.76
(0	4.62	3	95.30
7	3.08	2	98.46
1	1.54	1	100.00
5	0.00	0	100.00

When the responses of all students to the item are compared to those of staff, a marked reversal of emphasis is apparent. Nearly one-third of student respondents placed most stress on factors about which staff as a whole felt least concerned - namely: compulsory attendance and restrictions of course timetabling. Conversely, those aspects which appear to be of least significance for students - poor attendance and lack of student interest and enthusiasm - are the aspects to which staff attributed most importance. A second feature of note from the data contained in Table 9.4 is that over 25% of students made responses of an essentially individual nature; often reflecting upon their own experience in particular situations, their aspirations and their expectations of 'life' within a sixth form college. This is reflected in the position of the 'Miscellaneous' category at the head of the response code rank order.

Table 9.4   **Distribution of responses by all students to sentence-completion item B1 (General Studies)**

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
9	27.85	88	27.85
2	18.67	59	46.52
5	13.29	42	59.81
0	12.66	40	72.47
8	11.71	37	84.18
1	4.75	15	88.93
6	3.80	12	92.73
7	3.15	10	95.88
3	2.85	9	98.73
4	1.27	4	100.00

The final sentence-completion item in this section of the questionnaire, item C1, invited a freely-weighted response (unlike items A1 and B1 which were positively and negatively-orientated). The classification codes and descriptors for this item were as follows:

<u>My experience of the whole question of General Studies in College leads me to say that:</u>

0   Opinion not ascertained.

1   Thought of as important/worthwhile/interesting/enjoyable.

2   Course rationale needs to be reassessed/framework reorganised to increase motivation/benefits to students.

3   A good idea in principle - problems in practice.

4   Not relevant/boring/would rather do other things.

5   Parity of emphasis with academic work needed/a qualification should be available.

6   Students need to be involved in terms of contributing to the setting up/design of courses.

7   Success of courses constrained by present narrow attitudes of students towards breadth and balance in the curriculum.

8   Principle accepted but caveat relating to terms of study/attendance.

9   Miscellaneous.

When given the opportunity to focus freely on the salient issues as they perceived them, staff respondents most commonly made observations relating to the importance and merit of such courses; to their intrinsic interest; and to the enjoyment they afforded. Table 9.5 reveals that slightly in excess of 30% of all staff saw General Studies provision in this light as a result of their personal experience. Over 20% of staff respondents, however, drew attention to the need for current provision to be reviewed if students were to derive greater benefits from this. Very few staff felt sufficiently strongly that formal certification or parity of emphasis with academic work would constitute a means of achieving this, to indicate that such issues were uppermost in their minds. Of the three General Studies sentence-completion items, item C1 generated the largest number (approximately 17%) of responses of a miscellaneous nature, which frequently comprised multi-faceted expressions of thought and belief.

Table 9.5 **Distribution of responses by all staff to sentence-completion item C1 (General Studies)**

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
1	30.77	20	30.77
2	21.54	14	52.31
9	16.92	11	69.23
(0	6.15	4	75.38
(3	6.15	4	81.53
(6	6.15	4	87.68
7	4.62	3	92.30
(4	3.08	2	95.38
(5	3.08	2	98.46
8	1.54	1	100.00

Similar opportunities to identify issues of importance to them, led students to give identical weighting - in terms of the first two rank order categories - to staff. The data in Table 9.6 show that just over 18% of all student respondents were primarily conscious of the value and benefit to be derived from General Studies courses - substantially less than the proportion of staff respondents who were similarly inclined. Almost as many, however, felt the need, as did the second largest group of staff respondents, for reassessment and reorganisation of current provision. In common with staff, very few students made reference to the status of General Studies in relation to academic work, or to a constraining factor of 'narrow attitudes' on the part of their peers.

Table 9.6   <u>Distribution of responses by all students to sentence-completion item C1 (General Studies)</u>

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
1	18.04	57	18.04
2	16.78	53	34.82
4	14.24	45	49.06
9	12.97	41	62.03
0	12.34	39	74.37
(3	10.44	33	84.81
(8	10.44	33	95.25
6	3.16	10	98.41
5	1.27	4	99.68
7	0.32	1	100.00

It is especially noticeable that student attitudes generated by this item are more evenly-distributed across the classification categories, than are those of staff, which cluster around the first three categories in the response code rank order.

<u>Sentence-completion items for Scale B (Pastoral Care)</u>

The sentence-completion items which accompanied Scale B (Pastoral Care) were as follows:

A2   The most valuable aspect of the Tutorial Programme has been .....

B2   The Tutorial Programme would be more effective if .....

C2   Student guidance and counselling in my experience of college to date is .....

The classification codes and descriptors for the first of these items, item A2, are

listed below:

The most valuable aspect of the Tutorial Programme has been:

0   Opinion not ascertained.

1   Negative view: the opportunity to do homework/chat/have a rest/sit around.

2   Obtaining College news/information.

3   Social interaction with a mixed range of students.

4   Close personal relationships between students and staff.

5   The Tutor as a source of support and advice; Tutor as confidant.

6   A link between the individual student and the college.

7   The monitoring of students' academic progress and career aspirations.

8   Increased tutor-student communication; free expression of ideas and
        opinions.

9   Miscellaneous.

The responses by all staff to the items are set out in Table 9.7. Prevalent views

among staff respondents (idiosyncratic observations apart) related to the close

tutor-student relationships which, it was felt, the pastoral programme has helped to

bring about; and the mentorship which staff had been able to offer to those for whom

they were responsible. Evident concern for the individual was the key issue for nearly

50% of staff – a further 10% having highlighted the link which the programme provided

between the individual student and the college. A relatively high proportion of

responses in the 'Miscellaneous' category reflected the observations individual staff

made in relation to the context of their own tutor groups. There were no responses

which focused on the issue of institutional information/communication per se –

implying, perhaps, staff perception of the tutorial role as an 'extended' rather than a

'restricted' one.

Table 9.7   <u>Distribution of responses by all staff to sentence-completion</u>
                  <u>item A2 (Pastoral Care)</u>

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
4	21.54	14	21.54
9	20.00	13	41.54
5	16.92	11	58.46
(0	10.77	7	69.23
(6	10.77	7	80.00
3	9.22	6	89.22
(7	4.62	3	93.84
(8	4.62	3	98.46
1	1.54	1	100.00
2	0.00	0	100.00

If the responses of all students to the item are compared to those of staff, both similarities and differences are apparent. Table 9.8 shows that in common with staff, students do not perceive the monitoring of their academic progress and career aspirations as a particularly valuable outcome of the tutorial work undertaken; but do attach similar relative importance to the position of the tutor as mentor and confidant (with respect to issues of a particularly 'personal' nature). The benefits most frequently identified by students – those of social interaction with a mixed peer group (through tutorial grouping arrangements and inter-tutor group activity) and the free exchange of ideas and opinions (with tutors and fellow students) – were not, however, matched by a broad consensus as to their relative importance among staff.

There is also a disparity of emphasis in respect of the infrequency with which students cite a close personal relationship with staff - unexpectedly so, perhaps, in the light of their endorsement of the value of the Tutor as a source of support and advice.

Table 9.8   Distribution of responses by all students to sentence-completion item A2 (Pastoral Care)

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
3	21.52	68	21.52
8	19.94	63	41.46
5	11.71	37	53.17
9	10.76	34	63.93
2	10.44	33	74.37
0	9.81	31	84.18
1	5.38	17	89.56
4	4.43	14	93.99
6	3.16	10	97.15
7	2.85	9	100.00

In establishing by way of contrast the perceptions of all staff and students towards means by which the tutorial programme might be more effective (item B2), the following codes and descriptors were derived:

<u>The Tutorial Programme would be more effective if:</u>

0   Opinion not ascertained.

1   Tutor groups were smaller.

2   A coherent programme of work existed/more was done.

3   There was more time for/greater emphasis on individual tutor-student contact.

4   There was more time for administration/less administration.

5   It was more interesting/relevant to students.

6   Less time was devoted to it.

7   Students were consulted regarding content.

8   'Negative' response (eg 'it was abandoned').

9   Miscellaneous.

When invited to offer their views of the ways in which increased benefits might result from the programme, staff placed a clear emphasis on more time for, and a greater emphasis on, individual tutor-student contact. Given staff respondents' perception of the principal benefit of the programme as the close tutor-student relationship which it brought about (item A2), this perspective may be taken (in other than contradictory terms) as an indication of awareness of the further advantages that might accrue - time and programme content permitting. Approximately 10% of staff drew attention to the related issue of reducing tutor group size, but a significantly greater number of responses fell into the 'Miscellaneous' category, reflecting a correspondingly idiosyncratic perspective to that which was noted for the previous item ('the most valuable aspect' of the tutorial programme).

Table 9.9 gives the distribution of all staff responses for these and the remaining issues listed above.

Table 9.9   Distribution of responses by all staff to sentence-completion
                 item B2 (Pastoral Care)

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
3	46.15	30	46.15
9	26.15	17	72.30
1	9.22	6	81.52
0	7.70	5	89.22
(2	3.08	2	92.30
(4	3.08	2	95.38
6)	1.54	1	96.92
7)	1.54	1	98.46
8)	1.54	1	100.00
5	0.00	0	100.00

Responses to the item by students, are shown in Table 9.10 to be in marked contrast to those of staff, in respect of the issues of greatest and least concern. For students, the necessity for the tutorial programme to have a greater appeal to and relevance for them, and for their views and opinions regarding content to be taken into account, are equally-weighted priorities (perceived cumulatively by some 40% of respondents). Such matters were, however, of least consequence to staff in terms of response category rank order. Very few students singled out the size of tutor groups as an issue to be reconsidered, although this had been of some significance to a group of staff.

Once again, a sizeable proportion of responses were categorized as 'Miscellaneous', indicating individualized viewpoints. Perhaps the only other response which may be taken as indicative of a noticeable degree of concern, is that of the perceived need for increased individual student-tutor contact (which had been the key issue for staff).

Table 9.10   Distribution of responses by all students to sentence-completion item B2 (Pastoral Care)

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
5	20.57	65	20.57
7	20.57	65	41.14
9	18.04	57	59.18
3	13.29	42	72.47
0	12.03	38	84.50
2	7.59	24	92.09
6	3.16	10	95.25
(8	1.90	6	97.15
(1	1.90	6	99.05
4	0.95	3	100.00

The classification codes and descriptors for the final sentence-completion item, item C2, were as follows:

<u>Student guidance and counselling in my experience of college to date is:</u>

0   Opinion not ascertained.

1   Adequate; functioning as well as may be expected.

2   Limited by staff's lack of experience; professional support needed in counselling.

3   Available from tutors if required and if students are sufficiently motivated to seek it.

4   Varied according to an individual tutor's philosophy/personality/skills.

5   Particularly helpful in relation to higher education or career aims.

6   Poor; ineffective; non-existent.

7   Characterised by staff being pleased to help and advise.

8   Excellent; comprehensive; very effective as a result of adult treatment.

9   Miscellaneous.

The responses of all staff to the issue of guidance and counselling (Table 9.11) show the largest single group (21.54%) to perceive existing provision at its optimum level. Those who attested to the broad scope and quality of provision were, however, outnumbered in total by others who, in subscribing to the next two most frequently noted viewpoints, were conscious rather of the 'adequacy' of provision, its not unproblematic nature and its variability according to the philosophy, personality and skills of the individual tutor (30.76% of respondents). Few staff, however, identified any corresponding need for support to be offered via 'professional' counselling.

Table 9.11   **Distribution of responses by all staff to sentence-completion item C2 (Pastoral Care)**

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
8	21.54	14	21.54
(1	15.38	10	36.92
(4	15.38	10	52.30
9	13.86	9	66.16
2	7.69	5	73.85
(0	6.15	4	80.00
(3	6.15	4	86.15
(7	6.15	4	92.30
5	4.62	3	96.92
6	3.08	2	100.00

Student respondents were almost equally divided in perceiving guidance and counselling as being either 'adequate' or 'functioning as well as may be expected' (19.3%), and in discerning insufficiency and ineffectiveness regarding the same (18.04%). A group of not dissimilar size (16.47%), however, expressed unqualified approval of the quality and style of provision. Approximately 13% of respondents saw the issue essentially in terms of a facility which existed for those who were sufficiently motivated to seek it. Students' experience, it would appear, did not promote an other than restricted perception of variation in guidance and counselling according to the attitude, personality and experience of individual tutors (of which staff seemed more conscious). Table 9.12 shows these data and gives the distribution for the additional categories of response for the item.

Table 9.12   Distribution of responses by all students to sentence-completion
                  item C2 (Pastoral Care)

Response codes (rank order)	% of responses per code	Number of responses per code	Cumulative %
1	19.30	61	19.30
6	18.04	57	37.34
8	16.47	52	53.81
3	13.29	42	67.10
0	10.44	33	77.54
9	7.91	25	85.45
5	4.43	14	89.88
4	3.80	12	93.68
7	3.48	11	97.16
2	2.84	9	100.00

SUB-GROUP ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE-COMPLETION ITEMS BY "POSITION"

In deriving sub-groups by 'position' from the full staff and student respondent populations (ie 'senior'/'junior' staff and 'fresher'/'veteran' students) the number of responses accounted for within nine classification categories inevitably reduces to an extent where discrimination by full rank order and percentage tabulation is, perhaps, of lesser value than focusing on those descriptors which attract a 'significant' proportion of responses (in non-statistical terms), and, conversely, those which attract least or none.

Responses by staff respondent sub-groups to General Studies issues

Responses by 'senior' staff across the three colleges to item A1:

'The most valuable aspect of the General Studies programme is .....'

revealed that almost 40% gave precedence to issues of breadth and balance in students' experience and programme of study. This figure was more than twice that recorded for the next jointly most common observations which related respectively to the wide variety of courses available, and the opportunities which such courses offered for change and relaxation from the pressures of study for examinations. In cumulative terms, these three categories incorporate 70% of senior staff respondent perspectives. No responses were noted in connection with perceived social benefits and open discussion, or advantages which might accrue from the sharing of common interests.

Similar emphases were in evidence for aspects of premier importance to 'junior' staff respondents. 40% identified the broadening of education or experience and the provision of balance in programmes of study as the key issue; a further 25% cited the respite offered from the normal academic curriculum and its related assessment. A smaller proportion (12%) highlighted the range of courses on offer, which for 'senior' staff had been of comparable importance to the aspect last mentioned. All remaining categories assumed almost equal weighting in respect of the few observations relating to them.

The distribution of responses by 'senior' staff respondents to item B1:

'The least satisfactory aspect of the General Studies programme has been .....'

revealed primary concern for motivational factors. Poor student attendance and lack of student interest and enthusiasm in participating, were issues that accounted collectively for 50% of the observations made by the respondent sub-group. A further 20% expressed opinions of a miscellaneous and 'personal' nature. No views were offered in relation to problems posed through the taking up of 'valuable time that could be spent studying for examinations', or the availability of courses at given times. Although attributing similar importance to the issues identified most frequently by 'senior' staff, 'junior' staff respondents' views were not accounted for to quite the same extent by the categories in question (44% being so allocated). Corresponding absence of observations concerning course impact on examination study time and accessibility were noted; however, funding and resource issues were highlighted less frequently by the sub-group than by their more senior counterparts.

Item C1:

'My experience of the whole question of General Studies in College leads me to say that .....'

gives rise to a contrasting pattern of response distribution between 'senior' and 'junior' staff respondent sub-groups, which was not observed for the previous items. Whilst 35% of the former group thought of General Studies as being important, interesting and worthwhile, just over 20% of the latter were similarly inclined.

In likewise fashion, nearly 30% of 'senior' staff drew attention to the need for course reassessment and reorganisation if students' motivation was to increase and greater benefits were to be derived; however, less than half that number of 'junior' staff respondents perceived the same priorities. Conversely, whilst no 'senior' staff were located in the category relating to lack of relevance and a preference for other activities, several 'junior' respondents expressed such a view.

Responses by student respondent sub-groups to General Studies issues

The responses by all 'fresher' students to the opportunity to identify the most valuable aspect of the General Studies programme, revealed the most salient issue to be the change of focus from the demands of examination courses, with one in four respondents being accounted for in this way.

The only other category of perspective occurring with any notable frequency (apart from 'nil' and 'miscellaneous' responses which collectively accounted for some 28% of the sub-group) was that concerning the broadening of education and experience to give a balanced personal and study profile, which reflected the views of 15% of respondents. Those issues least commonly identified were the freedom for staff and students to be involved in the organisation of courses of particular interest to them, and the opportunity for working with fellow enthusiasts.

'Veteran' students perspectives of the principal benefit of the programme gave rise to rank order reversal in respect of the two most commonly cited issues - ie 25% of the sub-group focused on perceived advantages of breadth and balance, whilst 15% made reference to respite from the pressure of study for examinations.

There was a similar infrequency of response to that of their 'fresher' counterparts regarding shared extra-curricular interests, but added to this was an almost complete absence of reference to the issue of the variety of courses on offer. An unusually high proportion of responses for this item (and the next one) fell into the 'miscellaneous' category (25% of the total being thus ascribed).

Item B1 - relating to the least satisfactory aspect of General Studies provision - prompted 'fresher' student respondents to offer, most commonly, viewpoints centring on the issue of 'choice' - choice in the sense of their disapproval of its compulsory nature and choice with regard to the availability of courses at a given time.

Approximately one-third of the sub-group responses were allocated to these two categories; on a similar note - that of failure to match courses offered to student demand, a further 15% of respondents drew attention to an issue which revealed a common thread of concern for matters relating to 'client' preference. By comparison, almost no-one viewed the problem in terms of a lack of student interest and enthusiasm in participating. Over a quarter of the group's responses (the highest proportion for either respondent sub-set on any open-ended item) were of a miscellaneous nature - frequently anecdotal in detailing personal 'grievance'.

The disquiet of 'fresher' students was mirrored in the observations of their 'veteran' fellows: one-third of respondents voiced objections to compulsory involvement in the programme and limited access to courses of interest. An additional 20% expressed dissatisfaction at the failure to match content with demand. Whilst similarly inclined to omit reference to the effect of student attitude on programme outcomes, 'veteran' students also alluded less frequently to constraints upon time for examination study than their 'fresher' counterparts.

The joint most frequently observed categories of response by 'fresher' students for item C1 - which invited free comment upon the General Studies issue - revealed an equally divided concern on the one hand for reassessment of the course rationale or reorganisation of the framework in order to increase motivation and benefits to students, and on the other, appreciation of the programme's importance and the enjoyment it engendered. Whilst one-third of the sub-group's responses were thus ascribed, a further 25% were accommodated within the categories relating to lack of relevance and interest value and acceptance of the general principle with a caveat concerning terms of study or course attendance.

Again, respondents were almost evenly distributed between the two categories. Very few members of the group perceived the key factor to be a constraining of course success by the current attitudes of students towards breadth and balance in the curriculum, nor the need for parity of emphasis with academic work and an associated qualification.

Their senior counterparts were similarly disposed in respect of more or less equally-weighted preoccupation with the contrasting issues of the programme's central value and the necessity for its re-appraisal, but were drawn to these in larger proportion (40%). Whilst the issue of relevance and interest value assumed the same rank order position as above, it was not accompanied by acknowledgement of the basic notion with attendant 'conditions', which was an issue relegated to a lower level of precedence among 'veteran' students. There was a corresponding lack of reference to student attitudes and their impact on course success, as well as to equivalent status with examination courses; however, the group demonstrated in addition an almost complete absence of reference to the issue of student involvement in the setting up and design of courses.

Responses by staff respondent sub-groups to Pastoral Care issues

In response to item A2:

'The most valuable aspect of the Tutorial Programme has been .....'

the perspectives of nearly half of 'senior' staff respondents related to the notions of close personal interaction between students and staff and to the tutor as a source of support and advice (not infrequently in the role of confidant).

A further 20% saw the key issue (perhaps in a corresponding light) as that of the link between the individual student and the college. However, no member of the sub-group felt that the principal benefit was the opportunity to convey college news or information, nor that the programme merely facilitated relaxation, social intercourse or study time.

The views of 'junior' staff respondents were more widely dispersed across the nine classification categories. Thus, whilst tutor-student relationships were similarly highlighted in terms of rank ordering of issues, just over 30% of respondents were sufficiently conscious of these as salient factors. With the exception of the 'miscellaneous' category (accounting for nearly one in five responses) no other category reflected marked concern for additional outcomes.

As proved the case for the 'senior' staff respondent sub-group, 'junior' staff were least disposed to identify either institutional communication or social diversion as attendant benefits.

Additional time for/greater emphasis on individual tutor-student contact was the single most dominant dimension of response by 'senior' staff (25% of all observations) in relation to item B2:

'The Tutorial Programme would be more effective if .....'

and there is correspondence here with the value attached to the rapport achieved between staff and students, noted above. A substantial volume of responses (nearly one in four) were of a miscellaneous nature and revealed common preoccupation with individual circumstances. There were no observations concerning the programme's relevance and appeal, the devotion of less time to it or its demise, nor recommendation that students be consulted with regard to content.

For 'junior' staff respondents, a means of bringing about a greater degree of individual tutor-student contact was again the principal issue of concern, with 32% of the sub-group passing comment upon it. An interesting corollary to this is the reference by a further 20% of respondents to the need for smaller tutor groups - a mechanism, perhaps, by which closer contact might be achieved (though not one to which 'senior' staff had referred in other than isolated cases). Those issues least frequently alluded to were as found for 'senior' staff, though some limited reference was made to each (as opposed to none in the former case).

Item C2:

'Student guidance and counselling in my experience of College to date is .....'

gave rise to a vote of confidence at the optimum level for almost one-third of 'senior' staff respondents. In perceiving present provision as being excellent, comprehensive and deriving its success from treating students as adults, these respondents were counterbalanced somewhat by the 25% who collectively felt that such provision might at best be adequate or functioning as well as may be expected, or that it varied according to an individual tutor's philosophy/personality/skills.

There was no reference to an overall lack of effectiveness or quality and very little to availability of a facility which needed to be exploited via initiative on the part of the student in seeking it. A marked contrast was observed in relation to 'junior' staff respondents' perceptions of the quality of pastoral care offered to students. Only in one instance was there acknowledgement that the level of provision was of a high order; nearly 25% of the sub-group opting instead to characterize this as 'adequate' and a similar number holding to the idea of dependence on the individual traits of a given tutor. The value of guidance and counselling in relation to higher education or career aims was the aspect of experience least frequently referred to.

Responses by student respondent sub-groups to Pastoral Care issues

Notions of 'utility' were well to the fore when 'fresher' students sought to identify the most valuable aspect of the Tutorial Programme (item A2). The obtaining of college news and information, increased tutor-student communication and perception of the tutors as a source of advice and support collectively accounted for about a third of respondent perspectives, in more or less equal measure.

Over 20% of the group, however, were conscious of the benefits of social interaction with a 'mixed' range of students. Few attributed especial importance to the monitoring of academic progress and career aspirations or made mention of a link between the individual student and the college.

'Veteran' students likewise gave precedence to interpersonal relations with one's peers as the most valuable outcome - some 20% of the sub-group's observations being allocated to this response category. Nearly 40% of respondents' views were accounted for in relation to perceived advantages of the availability of the tutor as a source of support and advice, increased tutor-student communication and the opportunity to obtain college news and information. The least common response among 'veteran' students was that which reflected an essentially 'negative' perception of programme outcomes, in respect of 'chatting', 'having a rest', 'doing homework' and so forth.

One in four 'fresher' students highlighted the need for the programme to be more interesting and relevant, when invited to consider how it might be made more effective. A similar proportion drew attention to consultation issues - either with respect to greater individual student-tutor contact or to the canvassing of students' views regarding programme content. Little mention was made of a need for smaller tutor groups, allocating less time to the programme or freeing participants from attendant administrative pressures. The most salient issue for 'veteran' students was that of client involvement in programme planning - a concern articulated by some 30% of the respondent group. An additional 20% felt that the programme would have more to offer if it catered for students' interests and addressed their needs. Those issues least frequently identified were as reported for 'fresher' respondents.

When invited to reflect freely on provision for student guidance and counselling, just over a third of 'fresher' student respondents were drawn in almost equal measure to an appraisal of this as being adequate or functioning as well as may be expected, and condemnation of it as poor, ineffective or non-existent.

Approximately 15% characterized it as excellent, comprehensive and very effective as a result of adult treatment. Its value in relation to higher education or career aims and proposals that professional support in counselling be adopted, were notions least commonly encountered.

'Veteran' students were marginally more satisfied with the adequacy of guidance and counselling than their 'fresher' counterparts, though the proportion who rated it as either poor or excellent remained approximately the same (the respective figures being 23%, 18% and 14%). In common with 'fresher' respondents the group seldom identified a need for professional support in counselling, but also made infrequent reference to variation in provision according to an individual tutor's philosophy, personality or skills.

General Studies (A)

All staff: Most valuable aspect

    1   Broadening/balance.

    2   Change/relaxation.

    3   Wide variety.

    Social benefits least mentioned.

All students: Most valuable aspect

    1   Change/relaxation.

    2   Broadening/balance.

    3   Miscellaneous.

    'Interest' factors least mentioned.

All staff: Least valuable aspect

    1   Lack of student interest.

    2   Poor attendance.

    3   Miscellaneous.

    Course availability and 'wasted time'

    least mentioned.

All students: Least valuable aspect

    1   Miscellaneous.

    2   Compulsory nature.

    3   Course availability.

    Poor attendance and lack of interest

    least mentioned.

All staff: Overall view

1   Important/enjoyable.

2   Review/reassess provision.

3   Miscellaneous.

Modified attendance and parity with

academic work least mentioned.

All students: Overall view

1   Important/enjoyable.

2   Review/reassess provision.

3   Not relevant/boring.

Parity with academic work and

'narrow' attitude of students least

mentioned.

All senior staff: Most valuable aspect

1   Broadening and balance.

2   Wide variety.

3   Change/relaxation.

Social benefits least mentioned.

All junior staff: Most valuable aspect

1   Broadening and balance.

2   Change/relaxation.

3   Wide variety.

No distinctive uncommon element.

All senior staff: Least valuable aspect

1   Poor student attendance.

2   Lack of interest.

3   Miscellaneous.

Wasted time and course availability

least mentioned.

All junior staff: Least valuable aspect

    1   Poor student attendance.

    2   Lack of interest.

    3   Miscellaneous.

    Wasted time, course availability and
    funding/resources least mentioned.

All senior staff: Overview

    1   Important/enjoyable.

    2   Review/assess provision.

    'Not relevant' least mentioned.

All junior staff: Overview

    1   Important/enjoyable.

    2   Review/reassess provision.

    No distinctive uncommon element.

All fresher students: Most valuable aspect

    1   Change/relaxation.

    2   Miscellaneous.

    3   Broadening/balance.

    Interest/shared enthusiasms least
    mentioned.

All veteran students: Most valuable aspect

    1   Broadening/balance.

    2   Change/relaxation.

    Shared interests and wide variety
    least mentioned.

All fresher students: Least valuable aspect

    1   Compulsory nature.

    2   Course availability.

    3   Matching to student demand.

    Lack of interest/enthusiasm least
    mentioned.

All veteran students: Least valuable aspect

1   Compulsory nature.

2   Course availability.

3   Matching to student demand.

Lack of interest/enthusiasm and

wasted study time least mentioned.

All fresher students: Overview

1   Review/reassess provision.

2   Important/enjoyable.

3   Not relevant.

Students' attitude and parity with

academic work least mentioned.

All veteran students: Overview

1   Important/enjoyable.

2   Review/reassess.

3   Not relevant.

Students' attitude, parity and

contribution to courses least

mentioned.

Pastoral Care (B)

All staff: Most valuable aspect

1   Staff/student relationship.

2   Miscellaneous.

3   Tutor as confidant.

Institutional information least

mentioned.

All students: Most valuable aspect

1   Social interaction with mixed

    peer group.

2   Exchange of ideas/opinions.

3   Tutor as confidant.

Monitoring and college/individual

link least mentioned.

All staff: More effective if ..

1   More time for individuals.

2   Miscellaneous.

3   Smaller groups.

More interesting and conferring with

students least mentioned.

All students: More effective if ..

1   More interesting/relevant.

2   Need for consultation.

3   Miscellaneous.

More time for administration least

mentioned.

All staff: Overall view

1   Excellent/adult treatment.

2   Adequate.

3   Varied according to

    outlook/personality/skills.

Useful re H.E./career aims and poor

in quality least mentioned.

All students: Overall view

1 Adequate.

2 Poor/ineffective.

3 Excellent/adult treatment.

Limited by staff inexperience least

mentioned.

All senior staff: Most valuable aspect

1 Close personal interaction.

2 Tutor as confidant.

3 Link between student and

college.

College news/information and social

benefits least mentioned.

All junior staff: Most valuable aspect

1 Close personal interaction.

2 Miscellaneous.

College news/information and social

benefits least mentioned.

All senior staff: Least valuable aspect

1 Greater individual contact.

2 Miscellaneous.

Lack of relevance, less time and

consultation with students least

mentioned.

All junior staff: Least valuable aspect

1 Greater individual contact.

2 Smaller groups.

Lack of relevance, less time and

consultation with students least

mentioned.

All senior staff: Overview

1 Excellent/adult treatment.

2 Adequate.

3 Varied according to individual

   tutor.

Poor quality and availability if

sought by student least mentioned.

All junior staff: Overview

1 Adequate provision.

2 Varied according to individual

   tutor.

Value in relation to H.E. or career

aims least mentioned.

All fresher students: Most valuable aspect (1 Social interaction with peer

   group.

(2 Increased student/tutor

   communication (including news

   and information).

(3 Tutor as source of advice/

   support.

Monitoring of progress and link

between college and individual

student least mentioned.

All veteran students: Most valuable aspect

1 Social interaction with peer
   group.

2 Tutor as source of advice/
   support.

3 Increased communication
   (including news and
   information).

Negative perceptions least mentioned.

All fresher students: Least valuable aspect

1 More interesting/relevant.

2 Consultation needed.

3 Greater individual contact
   needed.

Smaller groups, less time and
administrative pressures least
mentioned.

All veteran students: Least valuable aspect

1 Consultation needed.

2 More interesting/relevant.

Smaller groups, less time and
administrative pressures least
mentioned.

All fresher students: Overview

(1 Adequate provision.

(2 Poor provision.

3 Excellent/adult treatment.

Value in relation to H.E. and need
for 'professional' support least
mentioned.

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All veteran students: Overview

1   Adequate provision.

2   Poor provision.

3   Excellent/adult treatment.

Need for 'professional' support and variation according to individual tutor least mentioned.

Note:

(=   equal ranking.

Sub-group analysis of sentence-completion items by 'position' and by college

Taking both institutional and hierarchical variables into account, the sub-group analysis of responses to the sentence-completion (or open-ended) items which follows, highlights those perspectives that characterize and, thereby, differentiate the colleges.

General Studies items

'Senior' staff respondents' views of the most valuable aspect of the General Studies programme did not differ markedly overall, though the issue of breadth and balance was endorsed less strongly in Newfields College than in the other two colleges. Their 'junior' colleagues were similarly situated, especially with respect to comparison with Medley College where nearly two in three respondents were agreed about the principal benefit.

There was more variation to be observed, however, amongst 'fresher' student respondents, for whom diversity of viewpoint was evident in relation to four issues arising from the item. Those in Newfields College were in accord with both staff respondent sub-groups in making less frequent reference to the notions of balance and breadth than their fellows in Settledon College and Medley College (especially so in the former case where such reference was more than twice as common). However, the sub-group in Newfields College were alone in attributing some value and importance to opportunities to work with others who shared one's interests. 'Fresher' students in Medley College were less conscious of the advantages of change and relaxation from pressure of study for examinations, and those in Settledon College of the development of social confidence and the chance for open discussion and exchange of ideas.

'Veteran' respondents differed in only two respects: firstly, with regard to reversed emphasis in respect of the issue of breadth and balance, where students in Newfields College alluded to it most frequently and students in Settledon College least; and secondly, in relation to the issue of meeting students of varying ability levels or from different subject backgrounds, where respondents in Settledon College identified such benefits with greater frequency than proved the case in Medley College and Newfields College.

Staff respondent perspectives concerning the least satisfactory aspect of the programme showed the same degree of correspondence as noted for the first item (A1), with a single issue, that of lack of student interest and enthusiasm in participating, proving dominant among 'senior' staff in Settledon College and almost absent in the observations of colleagues in Medley College and Newfields College.

Contrasts in students' views centred upon three aspects of provision, of which two, namely: availability of courses, and funding and resources, concerned 'fresher' respondents. The former issue, although referred to by nearly 25% of the sub-group in Settledon College and approximately 20% in Newfields College, was cited by a single respondent only, in Medley College. On a similar note, while one in eight 'fresher' students raised the question of insufficient funding and resources in Newfields College, a single case was recorded in Settledon College and no reference was made to the issue in Medley College. Amongst 'veteran' respondents, compulsory involvement in the programme drew a distinction between Settledon College and Medley College, with the former having twice the frequency of reference to the issue to the latter.

Although on average more than half the 'senior' staff respondents in Settledon College and Newfields College were predisposed to describe the programme as being important, worthwhile and enjoyable when asked to consider their overall reaction towards it, only two such instances were noted in Medley College. Correspondingly, amongst 'junior' staff respondents the principal distinction between the institutions was the reference solely by the sub-group in Medley College to the need for reassessment of the course's rationale, or the reorganisation of its framework, if students' motivation was to be increased and the benefits to them made more apparent (this was matched by a similar focus of concern – though not exclusively so – among their 'senior' colleagues).

'Fresher' students in Medley College were differentiated from their fellows in the other two colleges, as their tutors had been, in respect of their dissatisfaction with current philosophy and provision and demands for reappraisal of the same. In contrast, although acknowledging that there were problems in practice, respondents in Settledon College were more ready to accept the value of the notion in principle, whilst those in Newfields College were least prone to observe that courses were not relevant or boring but most likely to embrace the general idea given some form of caveat relating to terms of study or attendance.

'Veteran' respondents' perspectives differed only with regard to programme value and interest level and were confined in this respect to the one institution. Students in Medley College most frequently alluded to their lack of interest in the courses and their inability to see the relevance therein (nearly half the sub-group being so disposed) and, correspondingly, referred least often to them as being important, worthwhile and enjoyable.

Pastoral Care items

Two issues provided the focus for contrasting views among 'senior' staff respondents in identifying the most valuable aspect of the Tutorial Programme. These were the perceived benefits of social interaction with a mixed range of students - a view confined to the sub-group in Settledon College, and close personal relationships between students and staff - with a low incidence of observations concerning the same in Newfields College.

'Junior' staff did not exhibit any marked variation in their views towards the item.

Differences in 'fresher' students' perspectives were especially evident in relation to the issue of increased tutor-student communication and free expression of ideas and opinions; in connection with which the sub-group in Settledon College declared their awareness far more frequently than did the equivalent groups in Medley College and Newfields College. Recognition of close personal relationships between students and staff was an issue found to be most dominant in Medley College (seldom being referred to in the other two colleges), as was that of the tutor as a source of advice and support.

Settledon College and Newfields College were seen to be contrasted as a result of reference by one in four 'veteran' students in the latter institution to the opportunity to obtain college news and information and the virtual absence of such reference among the respondent sub-groups in the former.

In the context of suggested improvements to the Tutorial Programme, both 'senior' and 'junior' staff respondents in Medley College were distinguished from colleagues elsewhere in terms of their desire to secure more time for, or a greater emphasis on individual tutor-student contact. 'Senior' staff in Settledon College were characterized by an unusually high proportion of 'miscellaneous' responses that raised such diverse issues as: the adoption of a more positive view by the minority of staff who were not committed to the programme; the availability of more time for staff training and preparation; the need for prescribed material with which to initiate all tutorial sessions; a means of ensuring better student attendance and the development of a more serious approach to pastoral work in feeder secondary schools.

Several aspects of proposed programme amendment served to differentiate 'fresher' student respondent sub-groups across the three colleges. Settledon College stood out in this respect in three of the observed instances: firstly, with regard to the one in three respondents who expressed a wish that content be made more interesting and relevant to students (a plea made less often in Medley College and Newfields College); secondly in respect of the isolated cases where reference was made to the need for a coherent programme of work or for more specific activities to be undertaken; and lastly, in relation to the equally low number who perceived the necessity for devoting more time to or placing greater emphasis on individual tutor-student contact. The latter were contrasted most noticeably with respondents in Newfields College where one in four respondents accordingly made suggestions that such change occur.

The 'veteran' student respondent sub-group in Settledon College mirrored its 'fresher' counterpart in that few declared concern for creating increased contact between tutors and students on an individual basis; however, a separate issue of some consequence to this group was that students be consulted regarding programme content. 'Veteran' respondents in Medley College had interests in common with the 'fresher' sub-group in Newfields College with respect to the issue of tutor-student contact, with one in three drawing attention to the need for a more individualized approach.

The discriminating factor among 'senior' staff respondents on the final item was the perception within Settledon College of the excellence of student guidance and counselling, with 50% of the sub-group citing this as the key aspect of provision. By comparison, less than 20% of respondents in Medley College gave the corresponding affirmation.

'Junior' staff respondent sub-groups were also distinguished from each other by virtue of a single issue - that of quality of care being varied according to an individual tutor's philosophy, personality or skills. Whilst scant reference was made to the notion in Newfields College and none at all among respondents in Settledon College, 40% of the sub-group in Medley College attached precedence to this.

The 'fresher' student sub-group in Settledon College found itself in agreement with the institution's 'senior' staff respondents with regard to endorsement of the effectiveness of care, relative to the support declared in the other two colleges (though not of the same order, at a frequency level of one in five respondents).

Whilst of roughly equal (albeit limited) concern to the respondent sub-groups in Medley College and Newfields College, the issue of the 'tutor variable' in determining the quality of care was entirely disregarded by 'fresher' students in Settledon College.

'Veteran' respondents in Newfields College placed an emphasis on the benefits of tutors' advice in relation to higher education or career aims that was not parallelled in Settledon College and Medley College, and those in Settledon College on the availability of guidance and counselling from tutors as and when required, given sufficient student motivation in seeking it.

Whilst some general patterns of agreement are discernible within the data from the open-ended items when respondents are grouped in the broadest possible terms, the emphasis which sub-groups place on particular issues within and across the colleges is further evidence of the matrix of 'cooperation, compliance, competition, resistance and authority' (Chapter 1, p4) upon which curricular practice is enacted.

Thus, for example, although the lack of student interest in and enthusiasm for General Studies might be a critical issue for senior staff in one college, it appears to be superseded by other concerns among their counterparts elsewhere; and similarly, whilst fresher students within a given institution may express a desire for more interesting and relevant content in the pastoral programme, their veteran fellows perceive a means of influencing this through demands for consultation.

Again then, the evidence from the writer's research suggests that it is, perhaps, unduly simplistic to regard the variables of institution and status as direct correlates of attitude; and that there are further implications here for the notion of acknowledged 'climates' within colleges and perceptions of the views of students or staff 'bodies', or their constituent parts.

CONCLUSION: REVIEW AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has sought to investigate the attitudes of students and staff in three sixth form colleges towards aspects of the curriculum deemed to enrich student experience. It is an area of research in which the rhetoric and the reality has been inadequately explored - especially from the comparative perspective of both those who work in and those who attend such colleges. Through drawing on an holistic view of the research process the investigation has attempted to provide a valid representation of participants' construction of reality, which is recognised not as being single and fixed but multidimensional and subject to change. In so doing, it provides important information about some of the factors that facilitate and constrain the embedding of a key philosophical concept within the sixth form college curriculum, and offers a basis for comparison of ideological intent and effect in similar institutional contexts.

The advantages of 'integrating', or perhaps, more accurately in the light of earlier discussion, 'juxtaposing' methodological approaches have been examined at some length; however, it is only in retrospect that proper consideration can be given also to possible complexities.

Thus, where inspection of mean scores for significant difference was undertaken on the questionnaire data, the size of respondent sub-groups was only just large enough in some cases (and not sufficiently large in one case) to make such analysis meaningful in statistical terms. Yet' generation' of a larger sample of respondents was not warranted when the theoretical guidelines followed during the interview data collection phase indicated that further information would not add to existing concepts or produce viable alternatives.

Reconciling theoretical preference with potential practical difficulties is not always fully addressed by advocates of integrated methodology, but clearly needs to be given consideration by a researcher intending to proceed in this way. Additional factors relating to the cross-referencing of data are discussed below.

Comparison of data

The open-ended interviews conducted in the three colleges, yielded, as noted in Chapter 5, key themes which incorporated the salient dimensions of participants' attitudes; items in the questionnaire were constructs elicited from these. However, factor analysis of questionnaire data generated unidimensional scales which suggested that the items used were combining in an additive way to provide a measure of a 'global' construct (attitude towards General Studies and Pastoral Guidance respectively). Consequently, there can be no measure of simple correspondence between the data derived from each source).

Where initial comparison can perhaps be achieved without due difficulty, is in specific examination of response to the sentence-completion (or open-ended) items and the unstructured interview data respectively. On a college-by-college basis, a number of parallels may be drawn.

General Studies

For Settledon College, both data sources revealed a recognition among staff and student sub-groups of the benefits which General Studies brought in terms of broad and balanced curriculum profiles. This 'wider perspective' of sixth form education, though more prevalent here in the 'fresher' (first year) student population than anywhere else, did not, however, emerge in the questionnaire responses of their 'veteran' fellows, who were more preoccupied with the issue of 'compulsory involvement' (citing it twice as frequently as in Medley College, for example).

Despite the emphasis traced in both sets of data of the importance placed by the college's senior management on General Studies courses, there is a corresponding allusion to lack of student interest and enthusiasm in participating, which links with references to attendance problems. For 'veteran' students the attractions of such courses tended to be found in the constant of social mixing with peers whose aptitudes, aspirations and subject backgrounds differed from their own. 'Fresher' students' acknowledgement of the change and relaxation from academic study was common to both contexts, as was their criticism concerning course accessibility.

In Medley College relatively infrequent reference to particular issues was noted across both sets of data - for example: funding and resources, course availability and change and relaxation among 'fresher' students; course value and enjoyment among their 'veteran' counterparts; and lack of student interest and enthusiasm in participating among senior staff.

Each measure also elicited declared common attitudes towards given issues for all sub-groups; this was most marked in respect of the focus by senior and junior staff and 'fresher' students on the need for reassessment and restructuring respectively of the course rationale and its framework. It was also evident, however, with regard to 'veteran' students' observations of lack of interest and relevance; to the concern of both student groups with questions of choice and variety and to the belief of senior and junior staff in a curriculum which was not wholly examination-orientated, but which offered both breadth and balance through the central influence of a General Studies programme.

Newfields College represents the single case where dimensions highlighted in one set of data tended not to assume similar prominence in the other. Thus 'fresher' students' signalling in their questionnaire responses of ascribed benefits such as 'shared interests', was not parallelled in the interview situation; nor, too, was their 'veteran' peer group's assertion regarding the associated benefits of breadth and balance. Similarly, senior staff's concern for the course's 'image problem' and students' preference for attending to their academic studies which was apparent from the interview data, was singularly absent in reference to lack of student interest and enthusiasm in participating, in their responses to the questionnaire. However, as with the two other case studies, several themes were either commonly encountered in both sources, or were, correspondingly, disregarded.

These included 'fresher' students' disapproval of compulsory attendance (and, therefore, the favouring of some form of optional involvement); the emphasis placed by senior staff on the central importance and value of the programme; the question of choice and variety (and, implicitly, accessibility) cited by all students; and the acknowledgement by all participants of the benefits of change and relaxation.

Pastoral guidance

The emphasis by the senior staff group in Settledon College on the central principle of care at sixth form level, which was so clearly demonstrated in the interview data, and on uniform quality of delivery of the pastoral curriculum across the tutor team, which accompanied it, was mirrored in the findings from the open-ended items. This key concern, that of taking cognizance of college students' emerging adult status and attributing to them a corresponding sense of responsibility, was consistently highlighted with a frequency not parallelled in the item responses of the other colleges. Similarly, variation in provision according to the skills and philosophy of individual tutors was seldom mentioned.

As a by-product of the pastoral process and the internal arrangements that facilitated it, students' social interaction with a mixed range of peers was cited by senior staff as a benefit that was not commonly acknowledged in Medley College and Newfields College. However, this observation did not distinguish the institution in like manner where the interview data was concerned.

For students, the close relationships with tutors described through interview were 'validated' in their reference to the benefits of increased tutor/student communication, their being treated as adults and the relative absence of suggestion as to the need for greater tutor contact with the individual student. As with staff, there was, among fresher students in particular, no contention concerning variation in the quality of tutor care. The general use to which tutor periods were put was, however, questioned in both contexts - being demonstrated here by veteran students' appeals for increased consideration of client viewpoint, and their fresher fellows' preference for content that was both more interesting and relevant.

A more individualised approach to student care was the single most common issue of concern across all respondent sub-groups in the item data for Medley College. For senior staff who were interviewed, this was reflected in a desire to establish a common interpretation of the concept of care which fixed the needs of the individual at the centre of all the college sought to do; for junior colleagues it was represented by comment on the necessity for more time to accomplish what was recognised but seldom realised within the tutor group context; and for students it was implicit in their preference for smaller tutor groups, some discretionary choice concerning attendance at arranged talks and other presentations by outside speakers, and a more proactive approach to guidance and counselling.

Dissatisfaction with more formalised aspects of tutorial care for the individual notwithstanding, fresher students cited close personal relationships more frequently in their questionnaire responses than did their counterparts in the other colleges. This corresponded with the close 'bonding' and the 'contact of a qualitatively different kind from subject teaching' referred to in the interview situation.

The overall tenor of viewpoint of all respondent sub-groups towards pastoral provision in Medley College, suggesting that much remained to be done in delivering a coherent and unified programme of relevance and interest to students, was evident in both sets of data.

As with the General Studies data, comparison of responses in the pastoral domain for Newfields College gave rise to observed differences of emphasis. Issues of concern addressed via interview had been linked to change and development, the scale of which was probably unparalleled in the college's history. Thus the overall purpose and success of the 'Pilot' project vis-a-vis the implementation of a pastoral curriculum and the likely impact of its future extension to all tutor groups, occupied and shaped the thinking of all participants.

The open-ended items, whilst intended to provide latitude, distinguished the college not so much in the terms described above, but with respect to the valuing of college news and information and benefits in relation to Higher Education and careers by veteran students; to the emphasis among fresher students on the need for increased individual contact with tutors; and to the infrequency of reference by junior staff to variation in the quality of care according to individual tutors' predispositions and expertise.

A further area of contrast was that of reference to close tutor-student relationships, which had been widespread in the interview data, but was not signalled to any significant extent in the item responses.

Response patterns and the Likert Scales

Examination of response to the Likert Scale items builds on the accumulating evidence of the effect (or lack of effect) of the institutional context and respondent status or position - that is to say, the extent to which each college generated data patterns that were particular to it, or which it shared with another (or other) institutions(s).

With respect to the latter situation, all three colleges provided strong evidence of a difference in perception between staff and students towards Pastoral and General Studies provision - with staff adopting more favourable attitudes than students in each case. However, there is no simple polarisation of viewpoint here, as will be apparent from the commentary below on the emphases within individual colleges.

In contrast, there is no evidence in any of the colleges to suggest a difference between student respondent sub-groups ('fresher' and 'veteran') in their perspectives towards either area of provision (though at a less stringent level of significance than the 5% level, there would be evidence of such differentiation in Newfields College).

With the exception of these two dimensions of commonality, the remaining patterns of response attribute distinctive characteristics to each of the colleges. These are summarised as follows:

<u>Settledon College</u>

The difference in attitude between staff and students towards General Studies was more marked than in either of the other two colleges.

This was the only college where there was evidence of difference in attitude between junior and senior staff sub-groups towards pastoral provision (with senior staff expressing the greatest degree of support of all respondent sub-groups across the three colleges).

<u>Medley College</u>

The range of staff perspectives on General Studies was found to be wider here than elsewhere, ie there was evidence of a more pronounced lack of agreement.

Both 'fresher' and 'veteran' student respondent sub-groups had the lowest mean scores on the Pastoral Care Scale for any college, ie they offered least support for current provision.

However, the range of viewpoint among 'veteran' students towards such provision was wider here than in the other two colleges.

Newfields College

Staff had the lowest mean scores for that sub-group on both scales, ie they were less supportive than their colleagues in Settledon College and Medley College (in fact with respect to General Studies, their perspectives were negatively as opposed to positively-orientated).

Students were more dismissive with regard to General Studies than their fellows elsewhere.

The difference between staff and student attitudes towards pastoral provision was less clearly defined than in the other two cases.

Within these findings there are echoes of, and links with, some of the outcomes of previous surveys of sixth form provision - for example: Watkins's[1] conclusion that the value placed on General Studies by colleges themselves was not parallelled by similar perspectives on the part of students (though, as in the present study, the latter's views were more negative in some colleges than in others); Taylor et al's[2] identification of the aims to which sixth form teachers attached greatest importance; HMI's[3] observation that, in the main, college staff paid due regard to their role as Personal Tutors; and (more obliquely) Dean and Choppin's[4] recommendation that students be encouraged to recognise the intrinsic value of non-examination work and not simply consider it wasted time.

Accounting for differences and similarities between respondent sub-groups within and across cases would be as valid an exercise (perhaps a more valid one in terms of the study's theoretical orientation) for participants as for the researcher. However, for the purposes of 'objective' analysis of this kind one is unable to -

'rely solely on the world as seen by the subjects of the research'.[5]

All three colleges had compulsory programmes of General Studies. The evidence from Watkins[6] suggests that there is an association between negative student perception of such courses and mandatory attendance, and it may be that such an effect is operating here.

Similarly, all three colleges had (to varying degrees) courses built around random staff interests and main subject timetabling. Comments from students relating to choice, availability, relevance and quality may throw light on arrangements of this kind and on students' general preference for giving priority to their academic studies.

Each college's modular arrangements resulted in students taking, typically, three or four weekly options courses. Where courses were not part of a co-ordinated programme either at the level of defined entitlement or via a negotiated curriculum profile, it may, perhaps, be easier to see their potential for 'filling up' the timetables of both students and staff. This may in turn affect perceptions of the status of General Studies and the takeup rate of courses.

With regard to pastoral provision, all sixth form colleges are inevitably faced with the legacy of students' prior experience of pastoral programmes, including the notion of having 'done things before', and of the value and quality of previous tutor-pupil interpersonal interaction. There is evidence within the study that, collectively, students attach some importance to the benefits derived from having their Personal Tutor as a source of advice and support (tutors themselves, of course, have not infrequently been drawn to work within sixth form colleges as a result of the 'new and maturer form'[7] of relationship which can be established at this stage). However, cross-case aggregation of data suggests that with regard to the major advantage of tutorial provision, students tend to give precedence to social interaction with the peer group; they also express unanimity in their adverse criticism of the intrinsic interest and relevance of the tutorial programme and in their appeal for greater client consultation.

Similarities across the three cases can thus be weighed in terms of the factors outlined above and it remains to consider the possible influences operating within each college that may have affected the outcomes which distinguished them.

The singularity among the three case studies of Newfields College might, perhaps, be considered first. The college had had a long history of academic success - especially in terms of its 'A' level examination pass rate - shaped, perhaps, by its emergence as a sixth form college from a former grammar school and fostered by continuation of the traditions of that institution; correspondingly, it had a reputation for academic excellence within the local community.

At the same time its pastoral infrastructure was not dissimilar from that of that of the grammar school sixth form, with the nine Senior Tutors acting as the principal agents of care - much as a Head of Sixth Form might have done - and the majority of Group Tutors assuming a 'restricted', largely administrative role. Parallel to the latter arrangement, however, ten tutors and their groups (as described elsewhere) were involved in the Pilot Tutorial Scheme (see also Appendix III), which sought to invest greater responsibility in Group Tutors in developing the recording of achievement and timetabled guidance work.

From amongst this amalgam of organisation and experience (sampled in its constituent parts by the researcher) it is interesting to note from the quantitative data, for example, that the college was differentiated in negatively-weighted terms from the other two colleges in four out of the six sub-group analyses for General Studies (students/senior staff/fresher students/veteran students) and from Settledon College in a further instance ('staff'); in two of the analyses for Pastoral Care the college was differentiated from Settledon College and Medley College in the one instance ('senior staff') and from Settledon College in the other ('staff'). Such differences may derive, at least in part, from an examination - orientated focus embedded within the historical sedimentation of institutional life (an approach eschewed directly in the interview situation by members of the senior management of one of the other colleges, and which was apparent in any event in both of those colleges in terms of internal organisation and day-to-day interaction).

Differences in management style and organisational ethos may hold some significance in terms of the differences observed for Settledon College and Medley College. The more 'directive' approach of the former emphasized the 'package' which was on offer to students (who were, reportedly, not at liberty to 'pick and choose' those elements that suited them best), and sought to persuade them that the college's perception of their needs in relation to a core of experience should be their perception also. This approach also embraced the degree of guidance given to staff, especially in respect of the pastoral programme.

Against this background attention might be drawn to the evidence in the study which points to stronger levels of support amongst senior staff for pastoral provision and a wider discrepancy between staff and student attitudes towards General Studies provision, than in either of the other two colleges.

The greater 'latitude' apparent in Medley College may have helped shape such outcomes as the widest range of staff responses towards General Studies across the three cases, ie the extent to which individual tutors accepted and exemplified what a senior staff informant had described in conversation as, how far one saw -

'the sense of the philosophical approach which supports general education';

and the widest range of viewpoint towards pastoral provision for 'veteran' student respondents among the three colleges.

Comparison of the data derived by different means demonstrates not only that method effects and limits must necessarily be acknowledged, but also that the researcher's representation of participants' reality will commonly reflect inconsistency between contexts. This is owing to the individual's adoption of multiple perspectives - what is said and done in different situations as a function of purpose or intent. Thus, 'off the record' comments by senior staff, for example, may not be in accord with more 'public' statements of policy (and what is claimed to take place might be at odds with what actually occurs); and students' concurring with 'social norms' in group situations may be at variance with privately held and individually expressed beliefs. Lang makes the point succinctly:

'..... there is no such thing as absolute reality. Reality is a multi-faceted and complex ingredient of social processes and a crucial aspect of it is the range of meanings that the different actors involved bring with them'[8].

There are implications here, too, for the insights that might be obtained as a result of the status of the investigator, eg whether staff member or external researcher - some aspects of respondents' reality being accessed, perhaps, in the one situation, though not others. It would not be surprising, therefore, if differences were to be noted, for example, between the findings in the present study relating to student responses in one particular college and that college's own 'internal survey' of which the writer is aware.

Whilst there is a sense in which the study predicts college - wide opinion on the basis of respondent group viewpoints represented here, the proportion of students, in particular, whose perspectives were sought was relatively small; and any notion of a unidimensional attitude is to be qualified by Watkin's observation that there is -

'..... no such thing as a student view of the sixth form college. Students in the same college may share similar experiences - be in the same tutor group and teaching sets and participate in similar recreational activities - but respond to the college in wholly different ways'[9].

It might usefully be emphasized, in addition, that the account of the three case studies given here is an historical one: ie it provides a record of respondent perspectives towards the areas in question during the academic year 1989 - 1990. Investigations conducted on similar methodological lines have, on occasion, led their authors into conflict with participants at the time of reporting or publishing (since in some cases this has taken place up to eight years after the completion of fieldwork activities, the potential difficulties can perhaps be anticipated). This conflict has centred upon charges of misrepresentation of matters as they are perceived to stand - rather than perception of how they might have stood, which was, essentially, the investigator's concern at that time.

In essence, the study confirms 'popular' conjecture and such empirical evidence as exists regarding collective differences of viewpoint between staff and students towards defined elements of curriculum 'enrichment'. It also suggests, however, that such differences are neither extreme nor uniform (a function, perhaps, of the distinction between collective and aggregate opinion - the latter giving a more accurate picture of reality).

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This may have important implications for the assumptions which any one group of individuals of given status within each of the colleges holds of the perspectives adopted by any other.

It has not been the writer's intention to offer 'judgement' on the relative merits of the programmes involved; however, an issue of key significance which emerges from the study of these particular colleges is that the notion of a 'whole-student' focus in sixth form education may be imperfectly defined, validated and understood. This might, in part, account for students not infrequently being unable to 'see the point' of compulsory involvement in General Studies and pastoral programmes; it might further help to explain the wide-ranging perspectives on these areas of the curriculum that were found among both students and staff. Re-examination of the philosophical basis upon which enrichment activities are conceived, arranged and delivered may, in consequence, be prequisite for college initiatives in evaluating (and perhaps modifying) existing perceptions.

With respect to General Studies, the common framework has been seen to be one of a wide range of courses built around random staff interests and - in the main - random student takeup on the same basis. The effectiveness of ad hoc arrangements of this kind might be measured against a more cohesive programme, structured, perhaps, in terms of 'worthwhile' and 'relevant' areas of knowledge and experienced based upon a unifying theory of the curriculum. Within such a framework which offered a common (minimum) entitlement, negotiated choice could operate in accordance with students' individual interests, aspirations, abilities and other commitments to determine the depth, range and duration of their involvement at any given time.

In similar vein, the development goals of the pastoral programme and their relevance for individual students within each of the three colleges seem to merit further discussion and review. There might, for example, be a case to be made for seeking a balance between 'core' material offered to the tutor group as a whole and that matched more specifically to an individualised approach. This would be a further refinement of arrangements which already exist within the colleges to differentiate between the needs of particular groups at various points in their course.

Although the reality of an institutional ethos of 'enrichment' is likely to prove elusive as a result of individual interpretation on the part of staff, sixth form colleges - it may be argued - should like all 'service organisations' be attuned to the needs and wishes of their client group.

However, there is evidence within the study to suggest that whilst some staff demonstrate an implicit belief in meeting such needs and in their efforts to accomodate them, there is a mismatch with students' perceptions of whether such concern exists and whether such consultation occurs. Questions of the nature of reality apart, a closer correspondence between what is required by students and what is provided by the colleges, may need to be considered.

Responsiveness to students' perceptions of their needs; their views on the programmes which purport to meet them and their direct involvement in the design, development and delivery of the same should aid these (and other) colleges in laying proven claim to a genuinely student-centred identity.

Only on such terms, it is suggested, can the case for curriculum enrichment in the sixth form be conducted successfully.

Whilst all three colleges are likely to be responding to the ever-increasing emphasis in post-sixteen education upon greater student participation and responsibility and upon entitlement to breadth of experience, the observed process and rate of change is likely to be most notable in Newfields College. As a first generation college which evolved from a grammar school, much of the tradition and ethos which accompanied selective education was carried forward (unlike Settledon College and Medley College, which as newly-created institutions emerging from the local reorganisation of comprehensive schools had a different character from the outset). Proposals for the College Development Plan had been written shortly before the writer's research commenced and working parties had made recommendations for implementation. An extract from the Curriculum Working Party's documentation will, perhaps, serve to illustrate envisaged change within the college from 1989 onwards:

'Discussions will take place on the development of a fully negotiated curriculum and its possible impact on various aspects of the college. (These might include the role of tutors, records of achievement, the organisation of General Studies, etc)'.

It is particularly important, therefore, to note in consequence the recorded differences in the findings for this college and those for Settledon College and Medley College, examined in relation to and accounted for at least in part by 'historical' factors underpinning present institutional organisation and philosophy.

The extent to which the proposals referred to above had affected the range of staff perception exemplified by the typology in Chapter 5 - and, in turn, the attitude of students - would form an interesting basis for further study; and since Settledon College and Medley College had at the time of the research only recently documented their corporate aims and objectives via their respective Management Plans, a comparative reassessment of perspectives within all three colleges at some future developmental stage seems necessary.

Given (for reasons already stated) that the insights into respondents' reality gained in the present study are likely to be partial, such an investigation would be of optimum value if it were to have both an internal and an external frame or reference, ie if it were to be a joint enterprise between college and a researcher 'free' from association with it. However, such a study would have a fundamentally different structure from the present one and would not serve, therefore, to 'validate' the original.

A major consideration in both planning and execution might be the information which a college would wish to seek in assessing the quality or effectiveness of (and, by implication, the necessity for) present provision. It would, therefore, necessarily have a more evaluative focus than that adopted here.

Since it is not uncommon for research of this kind to be conducted within an institution over a period of one to two years, it would be valuable to determine whether additional or qualitatively different insights to 'participant culture' might result from a substantially longer time in the field, than that which proved possible in the present investigation.

Alternatively, a survey of a more diverse sample of colleges in terms of size, history, environment and geographical location, similar to that undertaken by Watkins[10] but more specific in focus and concerned with accessing both staff and student viewpoint, might help to further determine both the effect of the institutional variable and the existence of more widespread patterns of perception among those who work in and attend sixth form colleges.

Postscript

This study has been undertaken with reference to two of what Stephenson[11] describes as the three main elements of the curriculum, ie:

1 Education for personal development.

2 General intellectual/skill development.

3 Specialist intellectual/skill development.

Implicit within such a framework, however, is the question of balance or weighting according to perceived need; and, as Stephenson goes on to point out:

'An institution which places high priority on personal development and general education as compulsory elements for all' -

as the vast majority of sixth form colleges do -

'must allocate sufficient resources for effective delivery'[12].

Whilst many would claim to embrace the ideal, discrepancy between theory and practice can occur where the line of least resistance is followed as a consequence of 'traditional' market forces. It is, perhaps, not easy to envisage that particular kinds of success which (still) have currency in the worlds of work and further and higher education, will not affect these elements in the day-to-day delivery of the curriculum.

However, all three colleges were, at the time of the research, seeking to utilize records of achievement in reinforcing, both internally and externally, the importance of personal and general educational development.

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Questionnaire survey of staff and student attitudes
towards General Studies and the pastoral programme

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES AND INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY IS TO IDENTIFY THE VIEWS THAT STAFF AND
STUDENTS HOLD OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE COLLEGE HAS SUCCESSFULLY
ACHIEVED SOME OF ITS KEY AIMS FOR THE SIXTEEN TO NINETEEN AGE RANGE.

THE SURVEY FOCUSES UPON TWO CHARACTERISTICALLY DISTINCTIVE ASPECTS
OF SIXTH FORM COLLEGE PROVISION:

A. GENERAL STUDIES

B. THE PASTORAL PROGRAMME (GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING AND

TUTORIAL   ACTIVITIES).

BY TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH YOU ARE HELPING TO PROVIDE IMPORTANT
INFORMATION ABOUT THE REALITIES THAT CONFRONT SIXTH FORM STUDENTS
AND STAFF IN THEIR EVERYDAY WORK.

NOTE

YOUR OPINIONS WILL BE SHAPED BY YOUR OWN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES WITHIN
COLLEGE, BUT ARE ALSO LIKELY TO BE INFORMED BY YOUR AWARENESS OF THE
EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS.

ALL INFORMATION IS TREATED IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

INDIVIDUALS WILL NOT BE IDENTIFIED.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR VALUABLE ASSISTANCE.

M.J.STOPPER, M.A.(RESEARCHER)

PLEASE USE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE RESPONSE SHEET SUPPLIED. DO NOT WRITE ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE ITSELF.

SECTION A: GENERAL STUDIES

A1. General Studies courses have provided a necessary balance in students' programmes of study.

A2. The main benefit of the General Studies Programme has been the bringing together of a cross-section of students from different courses who would otherwise have little contact with each other.

A3. Funding and resourcing of General Studies need not be regarded as a priority.

A4. General Studies can have only a secondary role in relation to achievement of qualifications for careers or higher education.

A5. Students' courses have been made more interesting and worthwhile through the including of a programme of General Studies.

A6. General Studies should be abandoned in favour of additional time being given to practical, everyday matters (e.g. Health and Consumer Education, Current Affairs, Law in Society, Personal Finance etc.).

A7. More time needs to be spent on work leading specifically to examination qualifications.

A8. Having success in General Studies credited in some form internally creates a sense of achievement.

A9. It is not appropriate to examine General Studies at 'A'level.

A10. College Staff should regard the active promotion of General Studies as an important part of their role.

A11. General Studies would be best suited to providing a course framework for the One-Year student.

A12. Too many courses have to be taken by the average student throughout his/her time at College.

A13. The General Studies Programme has helped to overcome the otherwise limiting effects of taking a narrow range of courses.

A14. General Studies has proved to be the least valuable aspect of sixth form study for students at all levels.

A15. Student involvement in the General Studies Programme should be subject to individual negotiation.

A16. The College's aims in offering General Studies seem unclear.

A17. Opportunities for the development of new interests and leisure-time activities have been provided by the General Studies Programme.

A18. Catering for student interest and demand has been a significant factor in the planning of General Studies provision.

A19. The General Studies course provides a welcome break for students (from their main subjects).

A20. The value of a course to students is not reduced by the fact that it may not be their first choice.

A21. General Studies should be compulsory for all students.

A22. Wide variations in course quality have limited the effectiveness of the General Studies Programme.

A23. Greater benefits would not have resulted from linking General Studies to examination subjects in a more direct way.

A24. The General Studies Programme has encouraged students to become involved in the organisation of courses.

A25. Students should view General Studies as being of equal value to their main academic subjects.

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SECTION B: PASTORAL CARE

B1. The Personal Tutor is well-informed with regard to his/herstudents' overall progress.

B2. There are clear benefits to students in having a regular active tutorial work period.

B3. The 'mixed' Tutor Group arrangement has been of value to the group as a whole.

B4. Students' experience of pastoral care in College is always likely to be unequal as a result of individual Staff's personality and outlook.

B5. The Personal Tutor has given effective assistance to individuals in reviewing and reflecting upon their performance as students.

B6. College tends to be over-supportive in its attempts to aid students' personal development.

B7. Opportunities for student contact with Staff before coming to College are necessary for a smooth beginning to the course.

B8. Personal Tutors do not have enough authority to achieve much on their students' behalf.

B9. A 'set' Tutorial Programme does not prove helpful in meeting students' personal needs.

B10. Tutor Group size has enabled a personal interest to be taken in the individual student.

B11. Students have been helped to form appropriate career plans as a result of the Personal Tutor's awareness of their long-term aims.

B12. Subject teaching commitments should be regarded by Staff as being more important than their role as Personal Tutor.

B13. It should not be anticipated that College Staff will be the best people to undertake counselling with students.

B14. Students are not sufficently consulted regarding the relevance of College's efforts to meet their personal needs.

B15. The induction period ensures that students settle quickly into the College community.

B16. The Tutor Group arrangements make it difficult for the needs of different types of student to be met fully.

B17. The existence of a student representative body helps improve the quality of relationships within College.

B18. It is appropriate for students to attach greater value to practical and career-related aspects of their Sixth Form College Education than to aspects related more directly to their personal delevelopment.

cont

B19. Helping students to develop as individuals has been an important part of main subject teaching programmes.

B20. The Personal Tutor has been an effective channel of communication to and from students.

B21 The main task of the personal Tutor is to encourage a regular pattern of student attendance.

B22. There should be increased opportunities for guidance and counselling by the Personal Tutor.

B23. Tutorial work is best done in the context of subject teaching by those teachers with their own particular students.

B24. The Personal Tutor has played an important part in helping students to decide upon and achieve their educational goals.

B25. Students are treated in an adult way within College.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE SHEET

Name of College.....................

Personal details: Male/Female   Staff Student: One Year
(Tick relevant items)   S.M.T   1st Year 6th
                                  · H.O.D.   2nd Year 6th
                                     Other   3rd Year 6th

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with
each of the statements on the questionnaire by ticking one of the
attitude categories for each statement numbered below.
The further you find yourself towards the left-hand side of the
scale, the more you agree with a particular statement; the
further towards the right, the more you disagree.

STRONGLY / AGREE / TEND TO / TEND TO / DISAGREE / STRONGLY
AGREE   /   / AGREE   / DISAGREE/   / DISAGREE

ITEM
A1.

A2.

A3.

A4.

A5.

A6.

A7.

A8.

A9.

	STRONGLY AGREE	/	AGREE /	TEND TO AGREE	/	TEND TO DISAGREE/	/	DISAGREE	/	STRONGLY DISAGREE

ITEM

A10.

A11.

A12.

A13.

A14.

A15.

A16.

A17.

A18.

A19.

A20.

A21.

A22.

A23.

A24.

A25.

Please add to your views above by completing the following
statements so that they express your own feelings as honestly as
possible. Use as few or as many words as you wish. There are
three statements overleaf.

a) The most valuable aspect of the General Studies Programme is

b) The least satisfactory aspect of the General Studies Programme has been

c) My experience of the whole question of General Studies in College leads me to say that

Please continue
overleaf with
your views if you
wish.

contd.

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	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	TEND TO AGREE	TEND TO DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
ITEM						
B1.						
B2.						
B3.						
B4.						
B5.						
B6.						
B7.						
B8.						
B9.						
B10.						
B11.						
B12.						
B13.						
B14.						
B15.						
B16.						
B17.						
B18.						
B19.						
B20.						

contd.

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STRONGLY / AGREE / TEND TO / TEND TO / DISAGREE / STRONGLY
AGREE    /       / AGREE   / DISAGREE/          / DISAGREE
```

ITEM

B21.

B22.

B23.

B24.

B25.

As previously, please develop your views more fully by completing each of the following statements.

a) The most valuable aspect of College tutorial work has been

b) Tutorial work would be more effective if

c) Student guidance and counselling in College has been

Appendix II

Observation Data Record Sheet

COLLEGE.................... WEEK...... DATE............

MS   .... FS ....   SO (TUT/GSS/GSO/PMT/GSMT)

     TSP ....   T   ....

TS ....   PNo ....

                                RM ....

                                RI ....
                                    ....
                                    ....

SPECIAL OBSERVATIONS

Explanatory notes

WEEK: Each full or part week numbered consecutively

MS: Male students (or staff) present

FS: Female students (or staff) present

TSP: Total students (or staff) present

TS: Total number of students (or staff) who should have
        been present

SO: Session observed (tutorial/general studies support/
                          general studies option/pastoral meeting
                          general studies meeting

T: Teacher taking the lesson (where relevant)

PNo: Period number (or time)

RM: Room   RI: Researcher's involvement (role played)

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SPECIAL OBSERVATIONS: e.g. room change, change of staff,
reasons for low attendance (field trips,
higher education visits), amendment to
planned activity etc.; activities and
interactions, non-verbal communication,
phenomena contrary to researcher
expectation, environmental constraints,
researcher reactivity.

Appendix III

Pilot Tutorial Scheme information sheet for
students at Newfields College

Introducing the pilot tutorial scheme at Newfields   College

The accompanying orange sheet, which many of you received in
July, tells you about the way TVEI is bringing about changes
within Newfields   College from 1989 onwards. Over the next
few years these changes will affect almost all our students -
we hope we shall be able to make their time here even more
enjoyable, stimulating and educationally valuable. Some of the
changes involve the introduction of Records of Achievement and
timetabled tutorial guidance sessions which will aim to
encourage you to make the best possible use of your time here
as a member of the College. The pilot tutorial scheme is to
allow the College to start bringing about these changes. This
sheet attempts to tell you something about the scheme in which
your tutor group is involved.

What is the pilot tutorial scheme?

1 It involves **all** students in ten tutor groups [
                                  and   together with their group
tutors and senior tutors]. We would like to have included many
more tutor groups but this year we simply could not. This pilot
group will develop the recording of achievement and timetabled
guidance work and this will spread to many other tutor groups
in succeeding years,

2 Each student involved will have the chance to develop a
Record of Achievement with the help of their tutor.

3 Each student will benefit from a timetabled lesson each week
with their tutor. The purpose of this is partly to allow time
for work connected with recording achievement but also to allow
careers and personal guidance work - important aspects which
are all too easily crowded out of tightly packed timetables.

What will it mean for me?

1 You will have **an accredited Record of Achievement** document
when you leave Newfields . College [it will be formally
accredited by the local. Education Authority]. This will cover
all your achievements [academic, sporting, personal - including
your interests outside college]. This should help you in
seeking jobs, especially at interviews, and it can also help
you prepare successfully for further and higher education
applications. Your tutor will explain a great deal about this
over the next few months.

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2 You will have a **timetabled tutorial lesson** each week with
your tutor and other students in your tutor group in order to:
[a] record achievement: this may involve discussion with your
tutor or other students in your group or it may involve
maintaining your own personal record [on paper or on a
computer].
[b] be involved in a tutorial guidance programme: this will be
arranged by your tutor and will aim to cover a wide variety of
important aspects of your life at College and beyond [for
example, study skills and how to succeed in your academic work,
matters relating to employment and further/higher education,
personal and social skills - how to make the most of your
strengths and develop your weaknesses so as to be able to face
your future with realism and confidence].
Please note that to benefit fully from this programme you will
need to be totally involved. To begin with your tutor will
suggest how the programme might develop but he/she will want to
hear your ideas as well. You will learn in a variety of ways -
sometimes you will learn as much from the style of work as from
the content covered.

3 Some of you in each tutor group will be **designated as TVEI
students** [those of you already a TVEI student in your 11-16
school will automatically continue]. Being called a TVEI
student will make no difference to your chosen programme of
study. It simply means that, as you have chosen at least one
subject which is involved in TVEI developments and as you are
in a pilot tutor group which is also involved in TVEI
developments, the College will count you amongst the 120/140
students who will form the TVEI group. If you are included in
this group it means that your progress will be monitored by the
Training Agency which is the government body which supplies the
money for the TVEI developments to take place.

Who can tell me more?

If you have any questions at all do talk first with your group
tutor and/or your senior tutor. If for any reason they cannot
answer all your questions there are other staff you can
approach. If you have any questions ....
.............about Records of Achievement: talk to Mrs
who is the College Joint Coordinator for Records of
Achievement.
.............about being a TVEI designated student: approach Mr
who is the College TVEI Coordinator.
.............about the tutorial guidance programme or the pilot
tutorial scheme: see Mr   [Deputy Principal].

You are probably familiar with the name Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), even if the school you come from has not yet been involved in the TVEI Project in   TVEI is a scheme designed to speed up education's response to the changing world and to bring new opportunities to students between 14-19 in schools and colleges.

WHAT IS IT ANYWAY ?

As a student of   College next year you are very unlikely NOT to be involved in some part of TVEI, however small.   Very many subjects are developing new work in connection with the Project in Other subjects and aspects of the College will be involved over the next three years.   You should choose your course without worrying about this.   We hope that you will benefit from some new and exciting work, more equipment in the College, and links with people outside the community.   You might also find that there is greater opportunity to discuss your progress with your tutors.

HOW WILL IT HELP ME ?

Because TVEI is a project which has a lot of money invested in it, the body responsible, the Training Agency, wants to monitor the progress and career paths of students who have been involved with TVEI. To do this, we, as a College, are asked to nominate about 120-140 students working in TVEI pilot subjects. Students who are already part of the TVEI groups in their 11-16 schools will continue to be so and other students will be nominated to join them.   If you have any questions about this, or if you are particularly keen to be nominated as part of the TVEI group at   College, please get in touch with Mrs.   or Mr.   at the College.

WHO CAN HELP ME ?

TVEI is especially interested in

* Making sure that study after 16 builds on GCSE experience.
* Work experience.
* Increasing student familiarity with information technology.
* Residential experience.
* A balanced programme, giving you skills, experiences and qualifications.
* Recording achievement.

     Some or all of these things may be very important to you and your career.

     The qualifications you gain at the end of your course, be they CPVE, A-Level (and AS) or GCSE, will be the same, whether you are part of the TVEI group or not.

TUTORIAL RECORDS OF ACHIEVEMENT

STUDENT GUIDANCE SHEET

WHAT ARE RECORDS OF ACHIEVEMENT?

Some of you will have experienced Records of Achievement before you came to
        Others will only have become aware of them through the subjects you now
study or the tutorial time you now have at college. Most of you will have seen
the type of document that is produced as a·result of recording achievement, and
some may possess one.

When you leave   you will have a similar document to take with you
It will be built up over the coming months and will record your experiences,
interests and skills as well as your achievements prior to entry to

It focuses upon what are known as the common skills. These are skills which
are common to most subjects but which may be used in different ways in different
subjects.   Some may be more important and relevant to one subject than another.
For example, numeracy may be more relevant to Chemistry and Maths than English,
whereas communication skills are important to all subjects. The common skills
are essential to all aspects of your programme at

The common skills are: communication
                        numeracy
                        problem solving
                        information handling (including IT)
                        Practical skills
                        Personal and Social.

Many of you will record achievement on a regular basis in the subjects you are
currently studying.   Subject recording involves discussions between you and your
teacher(s) about the progress you have made.   It will concentrate upon what you
feel you have done well, and ask you to provide evidence from your work to support
that.   It will also ask you to consider areas of weakness and ways you might
improve.   Having identified and recorded your strengths and weaknesses, you will
then discuss what targets you might realistically set yourself for the coming weeks.
You agree upon those goals and when you next discuss progress assess whether or not
you have achieved your targets.

For some subjects there are no formal Records of Achievement. However, once you
understand how the process operates you should find it fairly easy to produce
Records of Achievement for yourself.

The information which is generated by the subject recording will be used to build
up a summary document (the one you will take with you when you leave college). To
produce it you will talk with your tutor about your progress throughout the whole
of your programme of study at college.   Your tutor will help you to bring the
various skills acquired in Physics, History and Sociology together in order to
produce a picture of your overall achievements.   This will also enable you to
discover whether or not you are enjoying a broad and balanced course.   Your
discussions will consider academic subjects plus B block and Central Studies
activities and aim to give you the widest possible range of experience.   (Most
employers and higher education institutions are looking for people with a range
of skills to offer.   You will be able to check whether you have this range to
offer.   During the discussions you may identify areas where you might want further
experience in order to improve your prospects).   Experiences which you have had
outside college such as sports clubs, part-time jobs, D. of E. etc. are also
important and should be recorded in your review session.   You will have to provide
evidence to support the comments you make about these achievements too.

WHAT ARE RECORDS OF ACHIEVEMENT Cont/d.

As with subject reviews, tutorial reviews result in targets being set. The goals you set may be specific to a particular subject or be about your general approach to study. You will have an opportunity to assess your progress towards your goals at the following review and decide whether or not you need to set yourself new targets. This review process will help you to appreciate the way your skills are developing and help you to focus upon the positive things you can do. It will help you to improve your work and overcome weaknesses you may have.

When you talk to your tutor it is hoped that you will arrive at the review having prepared yourself. You should think about how you have coped with your work, the progress you have made, the new skills you have developed. You should also consider areas of weakness. It is important that you have a positive attitude to your study and even when you recognise problems you have concrete suggestion as to possible solutions.

You find it useful to ask yourself the following questions prior to a tutorial review:-

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Assess your own strengths and weaknesses

How far am I able to:
- express an argument orally
- express an argument in writing
- show imagination in work
- follow a list of instructions
- work independently and without supervision
- work in a group
- show qualities of leadership
- work under pressure
- show reliability
- work through tasks methodically
- show active participation in extra curricular activities.

How do I rate my:
- attendance
- punctuality
- appearance
- courtesy
- ability to accept criticism
- relationships with other students
- relationships with staff
- sense of responsibility
- effort
- involvement in college life
- involvement outside college hours

What evidence can I show to confirm the accuracy of these assessments?
What are my main interests/hobbies?

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Which aspects of my academic work am I best at?
What work have I done beyond the ordinary syllabus to extend my understanding of each subject?
Which aspects of my academic work am I most in need of improving?
Which specific things do I need to do in order to improve my academic work?
Do I need further advice to help me work out how to improve these specific things?
What timetable/calendar can I set myself as a realistic target for bringing about these improvements?
What evidence will prove to me that I have brought them about?

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

What are my current intentions in terms of (a) higher education applications?
and/or (b) employment applications?
Which sources of information have I already used to help me make up my mind?
    "   "   "   "   do I still need to refer to help me make up my mind?

Do I need any further advice in order to help me make the necessary decisions?

Will I have had any experience from a work placement or part-time job before havinh to make my higher education/employment applications?

STUDENT GUIDANCE SHEET

WHY DO WE RECORD ACHIEVEMENT?

A Record of Achievement is intended to be of value to you. It aims to help you in a number of ways:

1.   It helps you to become more self-aware and self-critical. When you are able to recognise your strengths and weaknesses you should be able to make better decisions about your future.

2.   It will enable you to review your work so you can identify what you are good at as well as things you need to try and improve. The review may lead to target setting which will help you to become a more effective student.

3.   When you apply for a job, further training or further education, you need to be able to write positively about yourself. A Record of Achievement will make it easier for you to write meaningful statements.

4.   It recognises that you have skill and experience which has been gained outside college and that these are every bit as important as the things you do inside college.

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Central Studies information sheet for students at Newfields College

CENTRAL STUDIES

What are Central Studies ?

You have chosen to invest your time and energy by becoming a Student at . . . . To get the maximum benefit from your time at College you are required to take part in the Central Studies Programme which is designed to broaden and enrich your College experience.

The Core Course is compulsory for all 'A' level Students . It forms a foundation

of 'essentials' including careers advice , health guidance, study skills and much more about you as a thinking, active person living in a democracy at a time of unprecedented social, political and economic change. The Course in the Second Year continues as a preparation for the General Studies Examination at AS level of the London University Board.

The Options Programme including Sporting Activities gives you an opportunity

to try something new or to extend skills you have developed in your previous School or in a Youth Organisation .

How do you choose Options ?

On your first full day at College you will be asked to complete a Central Studies Option Form. On it you should indicate your order of preference· for the Options available . Your Group Tutor will be able to advise you - but as a guide you might ask yourself the following questions:

Should I choose an option which gains extra formal qualifications ?   e.g. First Aid
Life Saving; Information Technology

Should I choose an option which provides a contrast with my chosen subjects ?

Should I choose a physical option ?   e.g. Sporting Activities; Dance; Yoga

Should I choose a creative option ?   e.g. Painting; Wood Carving ; Singing; Fashion

Should I choose an option which is entirely new to me ? e.g. psychology; campanology
(bell ringing)

On the reverse side is a list of options currently available. More details will be provided before you make your choice but you could put a tick against those you are interested in before you return next week.................PTO..................

CURRENT OPTION COURSES AND SPORTING ACTIVITIES

Sporting Activities	Non-Sport Options (continued)
Weight Training	Video-Making
Cross-Country	Dance for Boys and Girls
Jogging	Photography
Rock Climbing	Water Colour Painting
Table Tennis	The Second World War
Trampoling	Children in Hospital
Basketball	Information Technology
Badminton	America Today
Tennis	Foreign Language at Work (French)
Volleyball	Quiz-Question making
5-a-side Soccer	Bobbin Lace Making
Squash	Singing for Pleasure
Soccer	Drama
Golf	Yoga
Hockey	Psychology
Rugby	Chemistry for Home Economics
Swimming	Physics for Enthusiasts
Cricket	Travellers' Geography
	Maths Workshop
Non- Sport Options	English Workshop
Wood Carving	Chemistry Workshop
Fashion Design and Creation	
Woodwind Group	
Campanology	
Life- Saving	
Resuscitation	
First Aid	

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General guidelines for staff at Settledon College
        on 'The Role of the Personal Tutor'

        ## THE ROLE OF THE PERSONAL TUTOR

GENERAL GUIDELINES

"The aim of the College is to serve the community by encouraging as fully as
possible the development of the personal, social and intellectual potential
of all its students."

The Personal Tutor is the central figure in our attempts to achieve this aim.
Each Personal Tutor is responsible to a Team Tutor whose job it is, in
consultation with the Vice Principal, Pastoral to ensure that all Tutors work
to common guidelines so that students are treated in a consistent manner.

The Tutor's responsibility is a dual one - for students as a group and as
individuals. The Tutor Group exists so that every single student has at
least one person, place and group of students that provide a genuine sense
of belonging. Part of the Personal Tutor's role is to create the opportunity
for this to develop. The Tutor Group also provides opportunities for the
personal and social development of students and for the extension of their
general education. The Tutor has general oversight of their academic progress,
actively encourages them to take part in extra-curricular activities and
ensures that they make profitable use of such facilities as the Library and
Careers Room.

Students may wish to discuss their work, career and any personal problems
with various people in the College and, of course, the Principal and Vice
Principals are always willing to listen to them. It will, however, normally
be the Tutor in whom they first confide. It is important that the Tutor
should be approachable and available as often as possible for this purpose.

The College aims to provide an environment in which young people can develop
their own personalities whilst, at the same time, recognising the needs of
other people and society as a whole. The Tutor tries to keep a balance
between these two considerations.

The Tutor is, and is clearly seen to be, a representative of the College and
associated with the demands it makes of the students. The responsibility
lies with the Tutor for seeing that members of the group understand the thinking
behind those demands and that the requirements are met. The aim should be to
achieve this mainly by developing students' self-discipline and sense of
responsibility. Sometimes, however, students may need to be told what to do.
Provided that the Tutor is fair and uses this authoritarian role sparingly
such situations need not undermine a good relationship between the Tutor and
the student. If minor indiscretions are not to assume undue significance, it
is expected that these are dealt with by the Tutor. However, for continued or
serious misdemeanors the Team Tutor may be asked to counsel, reprimand or take
other appropriate action.

The Team Tutor is available to give help and to be consulted on any aspect
of the Personal Tutor's role and provides another open door for students who
wish to talk to somebody.

GROUP TUTORIALS

Tutorials will take place on Tuesday and Thursday. Tuesday Tutorials will deal mainly with administrative matters. Thursday Tutorials are intended to provide the Tutor with the opportunity to foster the personal and social development of individuals through the shared experience of group activities. The Tutorial Resource Bank, which is available to Tutors, is being developed to provide a number of activities which will serve to satisfy this aim - as well as hopefully being enjoyable.

At certain times of the year the Tutor will need to set time aside for individual guidance and discussion of such matters as career/higher education choices and applications, study skills and organisation of work and also revision and examination techniques. It is also expected that Tutors will present information and activities concerning such matters as politics, health education, money management and many other topics which form an essential part of every student's general education.

On other occasions, Tutors may wish to contribute their own materials or hold debates and discussion on, for example, current affairs and their treatment by the media, encouraging student awareness and critical thinking.

It is hoped that Tutors will encourage initiatives, particularly projects that require thought and effort from every student, for example, social service schemes, fund-raising events, plans for improving the Tutor room, inter-Tutor Group competitions and games etc.

Every member of the group should be involved in whatever activity is planned; only in very exceptional circumstances should permission be given for a student to miss a Tutorial. Ideally, the whole group will stay together with the Tutor for the Tutorial except when division of the group is necessary for a pre-arranged event, e.g. Higher Education talks.

Suggestions for activities will be put forward for Tutors to use if they wish and duplicated materials are available for the benefit and enjoyment of students on such activities as group problem-solving, communicating and co-operating. These can be found in the Tutorial Resource Bank in the Library and should be returned for other groups to use.

The following list has been drawn up to provide suggestions for, and reminders of possible activities for free tutorials, most of which have been successfully tried and tested. (The degree of preparation required is evident in the nature of the activity.)

a) Informal reporting back to students about interesting activities, e.g. holidays, what they did on Sponsor Day, part-time jobs, interview experiences, sporting events, concerts etc.

b) Visits from ex-students to talk about their recent experiences in work or Higher Education.

c) Advice from 6.2 to 6.1, e.g. how to organise your P.S. time, how to revise, which General Studies courses they advise (!).

d) Video concerning a controversial or topical issue. ("Panorama", "QED" and "Horizon" are useful discussion starters.)

e) A formal debate.

f) Challenge another Tutor Group to a chess or bridge contest. (If necessary invite the other group to explain the game first.)

g) Challenge another group to compete in a sports activity, e.g. basketball, volleyball, rounders, five-a-side football. The non-players can always support on the touchline.

h) A board games tutorial. (Ask students to bring in Trivial Pursuits, Dingbats, Scrabble etc.)

i) Decorate (part of) the Tutor Base or tidy up some part of the immediate environment.

j) Invite in a speaker, possibly an acquaintance of yours, who has something interesting to say, e.g. about his/her area of work,   issues or an experience of general interest.

k) Invite in employers to talk about selection and training, to provide mock interviews etc.

l) Many of the tutorial activities based in the Tutorial Resource Bank in the Library may not have been used by your group. There are also extra materials on issues such as study skills and health education.

N.B. An investigation into what is available for Tutorial use in the Library would be well worth the time spent.

m) Naturally, at times students may start a spontaneous discussion on College, local, national or international issues. The Tutorial would seem an ideal forum for such matters and the Tutor may wish simply to listen and observe.

n) Arrange forward planning meetings for future free Tutorials or an out-of-College activity, e.g. a Tutor Group end of term meal, an event for charity, a visit. (One might train students in the holding of formal meetings for this, complete with Chairman, Secretary, Agenda and Minutes.)

If you have further ideas or if you have produced activities or materials for your group which you would be willing to share with others, please let Team Tutors know so that they can arrange for publicising and photocopying as appropriate.

Staff are also asked not to arrange activities during Thursday Tutorials which draw individual students from other groups.

SOME SPECIFIC TASKS OF THE GROUP TUTOR : CHECK LIST

MONDAY/TUESDAY (Administrative)

TIMETABLE PROBLEMS

COURSE PROBLEMS

BULLETIN

STUDENT COUNCIL MATTERS

REPORTING SYSTEM :

PROGRESS _ : FOLLOW-UP

REFERENCES : PERSONAL and ACADEMIC

APPLICATIONS and EXAMINATION ENTRIES : CHECKING

APPOINTMENTS CHECK FOR PARENTS' EVENING

PREPARATION FOR PARENTS' CONSULTATION EVENING

THURSDAY (Activities)

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

STUDY SKILLS

CAREERS and HIGHER EDUCATION PROCEDURES

SELF-ASSESSMENT

INTERVIEW PREPARATIONS

INTRODUCTION to CAREERS SERVICE

UTILISING CAREERS ROOM and RESOURCES

UTILISING LIBRARY

ORGANISATION OF STUDENTS' TIME and COLLEGE WORK

THINKING SKILLS

REVISION and EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES

LECTURE - TALK and SPEAKER INVITED to GROUP or YEAR

DISCUSSION - preliminary and follow-up

ETHICS

HEALTH - students' individual welfare, liaison with College doctor

CURRENT AFFAIRS

ART, MUSIC, POLITICS - appreciation led by subject students in group

SHARING EXPERIENCES - individual student's opportunities

COMPETITIONS and GAMES - to foster personal and social development

PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS PARTIES and OTHER CHARITABLE EVENTS

MONEY MANAGEMENT

FUND RAISING SCHEMES and CHARITIES' VOLUNTARY HELPERS

TUTOR ROOM - improvements and self-help

SCAVENGER HUNT - litter collection

General Education Programme information sheet for students at
Settledon College

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

We want all our students to develop, to achieve and to find a
real sense of purpose while they are with us.

We want you to have access to those core areas of the curriculum
to which you are entitled:

> Aesthetic awareness
> Communication skills
> Creative skills
> Experience of work
> Guidance and counselling
> Numeracy and numerical confidence
> Self-discipline and Self-motivation
> Social, Political and Cultural awareness

We also want you to have the chance to look after your physical
well-being through sport or through health education.

You choose four weekly units per term: choose carefully! We'd
like you to have fun and do yourself good at the same time.

Remember: You'll be of much more interest to employers, to
           colleges or to universities if you've really made
           good use of this programme.

SOME OF THE MANY COURSES AVAILABLE

CREATIVE WRITING...BRIDGE...ASTRONOMY...HEALTH MATTERS...
CHEMISTRY FOR FUN...SHADOW PUPPETS...MATHS FOR SCIENTISTS...
SCHOOL PLACEMENTS...POTTERY...PERFORMANCE ART...STREET PERFORMING...
PALETTE KNIFE PAINTING...HORSE RIDING...THEATRE LIGHTING...
LEATHERCRAFT...BREWING...BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY...CYCLE
MAINTENANCE...ANGLING...GET BY IN GERMANY...SOCCER...HOCKEY...
RUGBY...GUITAR TECHNIQUES...MULTI-GYM FITNESS...WORD PROCESSING...
NETBALL...GOLF CIRCUIT TRAINING...SCALE MODELLING...WILDLIFE...
YOGA...TABLE-TENNIS...KEYBOARD AND MUSIC...BRONZE MEDAL SWIMMING...
COMMUNITY WORK...CAMPING AND ORIENTEERING, THE ROLLING STONES...
METEORSAT WEATHER...ARCHERY...INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY...
5-A-SIDE SOCCER...JEWELLERY MAKING...GREEK AND ROMAN CULTURE...
GLASSCRAFT...HISTORY OF JAZZ...COMMERCIAL CATERING...COOKING
CHEAPLY...COSTUME DESIGN AND MAKING...BASIC RUSSIAN...

General guidelines for staff at Medley College
on the 'Role of the Personal Tutor'

2.1 ROLE OF THE TUTOR

The role of Personal Tutor is a very important one, particularly as students are with us for such a short period of time. Essentially it entails guidance so that the students are able to make the most of the opportunities available to them in sixth form education. The nature of the guidance will vary from student to student but in essence will be firm yet caring, respecting the age of the student and their growing reponsibility for their own decisions and learning. Sixth Form College provides the ideal 'half-way house' between school and higher education for many, and between school and the world of work for others, due in part to the nature of the personal tutor system.

Tutor groups comprise of between 15 to 20 students and are organised vertically, ie. including both year 1 and year 2 students as we feel that there are advantages in this to both staff and students. The structure of the timetable allows for students to meet with their tutor briefly each day, but with extended periods on Mondays and Thursdays. Tutors belong to one of three Tutor Teams each headed by a Senior Tutor who gives support and advice throughout the team.

The tasks of the tutor include the following:

- ensure new students to the college feel welcome and become familiar with college routines.

- monitor student attendance both at college by daily registration, and at class by receipt of/action on 'yellow slips' and contact with subject teachers.

- contact the home following the third day of absence if there has been no information received by the college explaining a students' reason for absence

-provide a communication link for important information to individual students and the group as a whole through the college newsletters

- overview of students' timetable to ensure it is appropriate to his/her needs and abilities; encouraging balance and breadth through appropriate choices from the College Studies programme

- monitor progress of students largely through the Review procedure and also through regular discussions; encouraging students to see the importance of assessing their work/progress and of setting targets

- consult with Senior Tutor if there is a cause of concern regarding a student and if necessary contact parent/guardian after consultation with Senior Tutor

- prepare and deliver sessions as part of the tutorial programme that are designed to aid the social and personal development both of the student and the group as a whole

- guide students to explore the options available to them after . . . .; encourage visits to the Careers Officer attached to the team

- give guidance in completing application forms for employment and higher education

- write references as requested including the detailed references required by UCCA/PCAS

- assist student to complete his/her Record of Achievement in preparation for leaving the College

Extract from Medley College's Prospectus: 'College Studies'

'There is a wide range of modules usually one term in
length (though some will be 20 or 30 weeks long) which
do not normally lead to examinations. They will be
certificated by the College itself and will usually be
taken for their own interest and to balance the
student's complete programme. All students follow some
courses in this area, normally two at any given time
though it is possible to take more. There is a very
wide range of opportunities to engage in, including
sporting and other leisure activities, community service
and work experience. One afternoon per week is given
over almost entirely to College Studies activities
which need two or three hours or a large number of
participants (for instance team games and dramatic
productions). There are many options. Work experience
is also arranged as block release. And various sporting
activities are available throughout the week. We do not
think it appropriate to require students to take part
in sport, but most are eager to do so given the range
of activities available - and we certainly encourage
healthy habits of exercise!'