

Practitioner perspectives on a franchise FHE relationship: has the policy process produced a new model of HE or just more FE?

Anthony P Davies

Institute of Education, University of London
EdD

Abstract

This thesis examines the experience of two groups of practitioners from three further education (FE) colleges, working in an established franchise partnership with a local higher education (HE) provider. The practitioner groups consisted of lecturers and their programme managers, who mainly taught students from non-traditional entry backgrounds.

The research took place within the context of national policy steering, involving both the FE and HE sectors and focused on the impact of policy on practitioners. A critical point to this study was the concept of educational partnerships and the effectiveness of FE colleges as HE providers. Hence the literature from the contextual chapters identifies a set of forces which interact to produce a 'FHE Institutional environment' which shapes the practitioners' FHE experience.

A single case study approach was adopted as the major research vehicle, with emphasis on the practitioners' accounts of their HE teaching experiences. The data was collected over a two year period and consisted of practitioner accounts, vignettes and documentation. Data triangulation involved comparing and contrasting the findings at the case study's lateral and multi-levels, including referencing to other relevant research projects.

My claim to knowledge is that the 'FHE Institutional environment' is dominated by a FE professional cultural element, whose predominant norms and values serve to produce a diluted HE experience for their students. Whereby students are largely taught on FE lines, it calls into question the principle that FE colleges can provide comparable HE experiences.

The study proposes, therefore, that FE colleges should view their HE provision as being distinct, and provide autonomous units, or designated centres, where a higher education ethos could prevail. The findings also reveal the need for further research on this topic in light of the potential 'emergent' HE markets, resulting from the Coalition Government's proposed sector reforms.

**Institute of Education
University of London**

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Ken Spours for his unwavering support and confidence in my ability to complete this degree, and to my family for their help, support and patience and especially my son Anthony who tells me 'he's grown up with this thesis.'

Declaration:

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Would count (exclusive of the list of references but including the diagrams and tables): 43,570 words

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without the proper acknowledgement of the author.

Signed:

Dated:

Contents	Page
Personal Statement	6
Introduction	11
Chapters	
1. The rise of policy steering	15
Introduction	15
Developments within the FE sector	16
Summary of developments in the FE sector	22
Developments within the HE sector	23
Diversity in the HE Landscape	27
FHE enhancement	32
Conclusion	42
2. FHE partnerships: the shaping forces	45
Introduction	45
Level 1: Policy levers and drivers	47
Level 2: The wider FE College environment (local ecology)	48
Level 3: The FHE institutional environment	49
The Partnership relationship	49
The FHE student attributes	57
FE professional culture and college structure	57
Summary	60
3. Research context and approach	63
Introduction	63
Key Research Questions	63
Context	64
Research sites – the University and its FE Partners	66
The case study approach	73
Research strategy	77
Data Collection and Analysis	81
Ethical considerations and practical issues	85
4. The key issues in the FE environment – practitioners’ perspective	88
Introduction	88
Preamble: network approach to teaching	90
Part one: the Lecturer perspective	90
Summary: the Lecturers experiences	110
Vignettes: the Lecturer Practitioners	112
Part two: the Managers perspective	115
Summary: the Managers experiences	130
Vignette: the Manager Practitioner	132

	Summary: the voice of the Practitioners	134
5.	The dynamics of the FHE partnership	136
	A historical summary	136
	The research and theoretical approach	138
	The FHE relationship – underlying forces	139
	Conclusion: the FHE paradox	148
	Implications for policy and professional practice	152
	References	156
	Appendix Materials	169

Personal Statement

This statement shows how the learning experiences obtained from my studies on the EdD program have enhanced my professional development and practice. To illustrate this I will adopt a sequential approach and examine how each element has contributed to my professional practice and the evolution of my thesis. Although my EdD studies have involved several lines of enquiry, much of my research has centered on the practitioners' experiences within the FE landscape and the role played by the policy process.

I started the EdD when I was working as a college lecturer in a further education (FE) college before moving into higher education where I completed the thesis stage of the EdD. I have spent 18 years working in FE colleges, teaching and managing on a wide range of FE and HE courses. At this time, as an ex-further education student myself, I valued my role in helping people who wished to return to study. It was during this period I witnessed the major reforms in the FE sector introduced by both the Conservative and Labour governments, as they steered the sector through a series of policy initiatives design to produce a centralised 'managed FE sector' that was financially efficient and responsive to local needs.

The rationale behind these changes, as well as some of the consequences were explored in a number of assessed papers for the taught element of the EdD degree comprising of the units for Foundations of Professionalism; Post- Compulsory Education and Training 1

(Contemporary Education Policy); Post- Compulsory Education and Training 2; Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2, Advance Research Methods and the Institutional Focused Study (IFS).

For Foundations of Professionalism my paper examined the structural changes, which had occurred in the FE sector up to the mid-1990s and the impact on professional relationships.

This linked the reforms in FE to the challenges of the 'Post- Fordism' new economy (Reeves, 1996) and the use of New Public Management techniques as an instrument to bring about

public sector change (Dunleavy and Hood, 1992; Bottery, 1996). My paper concluded that the weak professional profile that existed in FE would mean that its teaching practitioners faced further periods of ‘de-professionalisation’ as additional sector reforms began to take place.

The Post-Compulsory Education and Training 1 (Contemporary Education Policy) Unit explored the modernity of FE within the theory of policy cycles and market dynamic, with the aim of evaluating the extent to which policy development was an interactive arena. I used Bowe *et al.*’s (1992) Continuous Policy Cycle model as the evaluative framework and concluded that there was little scope for re-contextualisation of policy at the ‘Context of Practice’ level. The rationale behind this conclusion was that the policy production process was largely a ‘top-down’ experience and consequently the voice of the practitioner was left largely unheard. In my second elective, Post-Compulsory Education and Training 2, I looked at the drivers for FE incorporation and the government’s use of a centralised funding mechanism as a lever for change. Here I explored the intended and unintended consequences of the FEFC’s actions in relation to the FE college sector and its teaching practitioners. All three papers concluded a bleak outlook for the future of FE sector, which was representative of much of the research produced at the time, and in retrospect I may have been somewhat over-pessimistic in my own viewpoint. However, they did provide me with thorough knowledge of the effects of FE initiatives and the impacts of their levers, the context of which I was able to develop more fully in my thesis.

I found the sessions led by Geoff Whitty and Gareth Williams on the educational policy process highly influential, I was encouraged me to engage with research on the educational policy processes and how they impact on practitioners, whose voices seemed to be hardly heard. This also led me to look at UK policy processes in the light of its predisposition for ‘policy borrowing’ (Phillips and Ochs, 2003), and the lack of political party consensus on

educational reform with the ensuing instabilities in the post-compulsory sectors. From the outset these factors set the parameters for my research interests, much of which are evident in my EdD thesis.

The three research skill based units; Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2 and Advanced Research Methods provided the groundwork for designing and implementation of my research, where they ranged from critiques of methodological approaches to the design and implementation of the field research. The Methods of Enquiry 1 assessment required me to critique a piece of research from a methodological perspective. I chose to critically evaluate research commissioned by my own FE college on the perceptions and experiences of a group of afro-Caribbean students. This allowed me to apply research and methodology concepts, covered in the taught sessions, to examine crucial flaws in the authors' methodological approach and research design strategy, arguing that there were major issues involving the reliability and validity of their findings.

Methods of Enquiry 2 focused on the research design process and provided me with the opportunity to conduct a small-scale piece of piece of field research. My assessed project involved looking at the experiences of a group of FHE students after their college had changed its HE teaching delivery from having large cohort lectures to a smaller classroom approach, as a reaction to poor retention and achievement results. This introduced me to the debate involving FE college special mission, widening participation and comparable HE experience which were later to become policy drivers and the key parameter for my thesis research.

The Advance Research Methods, the final taught unit, examined more fully the complexities and philosophical arguments in educational research. Here the assessment required me to design a research project from the perspective of two distinct styles of enquiry, leading to a formative conclusion as to the research stance. My approached consisted of a study that

would look at the impact the policy of replacing HE student grants with loans and how it had affected their study patterns through having to undertake part-time work. The contents and the teaching approach in this unit served to strengthen my understanding of the principles behind social science research and I became more confident in discussing issues and concepts with work colleagues and fellow students. Furthermore, coupled with the skills of interpretation, analysis and project design developed in two earlier research units, I now felt I was in a much stronger position to pursue my own research goals.

My Institutional Focused Study (non-taught element) consisted of a multi-level case study examining the impact of senior management's change policies on a FE college department. This was in the context of the structural changes occurring within the college at the time, which had resulted from the senior management's strategy to solve the college's funding issues and meet its performance targets for retention and achievement. This was my first piece of research involving educational practitioners who were, at this stage, experiencing significant changes to their professional practice, as a result of the college's strategy to alleviate its precarious financial position and the more general consequences involved with FE policy initiatives at the time. Therefore, this research involved looking at the internal and external forces operating at the college, which were essentially the unintended consequences emanating from the policy process. However, the practitioners did not recognise the policy drivers as being the root cause for their college's difficulties, but instead were inclined to blame the senior management for their predicament. This made think more closely about the cultural 'forces' that operate within the FE college environment, which may be created by the policy process but not wholly shaped by it.

Shortly after completing my IFS I moved to a university college taking up a lecturing position in management studies. At my new institution I encountered a different approach to

teaching on HE courses, where the presumption was that the students were independent learners. In this situation the lecturer role involved student ‘enablement’, in contrast to focusing on teacher centered approaches, coupled with an expectation that staff were actively taking part in research. Compared to my FE experience, workloads were less strenuous, teaching was undertaken on a subject specialist basis with more time available for lesson preparation; it was delivered to students who required less individual support and had access to better study and leisure facilities. This move into HE provided me with the impetus for the thesis research, as it led me to question my earlier beliefs that the FE colleges could provide an effective HE teaching experience. I decided to look more closely at the practitioners’ experiences of FHE relationships in light of the policy influences involving FE’s ‘special mission’ to widen participation and its claims to have unique FHE attributes.

Looking back at my earlier EdD coursework I realise how far I have travelled as an academic and a researcher, I feel my writing and analytical skills have developed significantly, especially during my ‘thesis period’. Compared to my earlier work I no longer espouse such a prescriptive view about the changes to the educational system and appreciate the fuller context of the educational policy process, which also has helped me make sense of my own professional practice.

Looking forward, I am still a teacher at heart and will continue to teach as my main career, with a research focus on professional practice in light of the changing educational environment. Currently I am managing a research project, at my own HE college, looking at initiatives to improve the student experience, as part of a multi-institutional longitudinal study funded by HEFCE and the Higher Education Academy.

None of this would have been possible without the developmental skills and experience obtained on the EdD and unwavering support of my supervisor.

Introduction

Background

Further education (FE) colleges have played an increasingly important role in higher education (HE), providing courses for around a third of all HE students in England (Parry *et al.*, 2006). In relation to HE participants, FE colleges accounted for 113,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in 2007/08, of which 52 per cent were full time, with half of this provision funded indirectly by Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) via a higher education (HE) institution (HEFCE, 2009).

The previous Labour Government set out to widen the FE sector's HE role in order to accommodate its policies of increased student participation, widened access to under-represented social groupings and developed more vocationally orientated courses. It was envisaged that this 'new model' would be largely achieved through the enhancement of existing partnership relationships between FE and HE institutions (Abramson, 1996; NICHE, 1997; LSDA, 2005). This form of HE provision had been expanding since the late 1980's, as the former polytechnic sector sought to maximise growth potential, until the capping of student numbers occurred in 1993/94 (Smith and Boccock, 1999). However, the prominence given to the further and higher education (FHE) interface began during the late 1990's arising from the Dearing recommendations (NICHE, 1997) and earlier HEFCE initiatives on 'special mission' and widening participation (HEFCE, 1995).

Chapters 1 and 2 will examine the policy steering mechanism in relation to the effect it had on both the FE and HE sectors, for example the Conservative Government's funding-led systems in the 1990's (Watson and Bowen, 1999) and New Labour's micro-management methodologies (Coffield *et al.*, 2008). This context will help analyse the pressures and

changes faced by both sectors leading to the arrival of FHE relationships, as well as providing a framework to form the base for the research findings (Chapter 2, Fig. 2:46).

The research

The research approach consists of a single case study involving three FE colleges operating in a franchise collaborative partnership model with a local university. The primary research reflects the ‘voice’ of the practitioners and comprises an exhaustive sample of the FE lecturers, plus their managers, who taught on the HE partnership programmes. It is argued that the practitioners have a fundamental ‘mediating’ effect on the quality of the educational policy, but their experiences are rarely taken into account (Edward *et al.*, 2007; Coffield *et al.*, 2008). Researching the ‘voice’ of the practitioner involved the use of interviews, supplemented by the study of documentation from the local FHE network and reference to external inspection reports.

Professional context

The genesis for this research was threefold; it emanated from the author’s past career experiences, previous EdD research projects and current professional development. The researcher has over 18 years of experience working in FE colleges, teaching and managing on a wide range of FE and HE courses, which provided direct insights to the major changes occurring within the Sector. The rationale and consequences of some of these changes were explored in a number of assessed papers for the taught element of the EdD degree, discussed in the Personal Statement accompanying this thesis.

Although there has been a notable amount of research into FHE relationships (Abramson, *et al.*, 1996; Parry and Thompson, 2002; Trim, 2002; Young, 2002; Tett *et al.*, 2003; Harwood and Harwood, 2004; Dhillon, 2005; Tunbridge and Shobrook, 2005; Turner *et al.*, 2009 Feather , 2010, 2011, 2012 a, 2012b; Parry , 2012 and Parry et al., 2012) little exists on the

quality of the HE teaching experience through the perspective of the FE practitioners. Thus, the overall aim of this thesis is to examine the experiences of FE practitioners', who are the final link in the policy steering process and arguably have a major impact on the success of its outcomes (analysed in Chapters 4 and 5). The key research aim, therefore, is to examine the role of policy levers in the creation of FHE models and the effect they have on the FE teaching professional, along with any other influencing factors. This context has continuing significance with the Coalition Government's proposed HE reforms aiming to provide a more 'open' market, which is to be led by student demand. Here the financial empowerment of the student market is intended to drive HE educational quality initiatives and improving teaching standards; as Willets (2011:2) states, *'funding for teaching should follow the choices that students make'*. There is a likelihood that many post -1992 HE institutions, when looking for cost reduction strategies, will move towards outsourcing more of its provision resulting in more FHE franchise models operating in the sectors. Another possibility will be the emergence of new entrants into the degree market who adopt price-penetration strategies and award their degrees via an external examiner route (Willets, 2010a). The Coalition Government, therefore, envisages that the HE sector will become a more competitive market, comprising different types of providers each competing on a 'quality base' for their students, with price being a key determinate of choice (Willets, 2010b; Cable, 2011).

However, FHE partnerships are only a small part of a FE college's business portfolio (Parry and Thompson, 2002) and these programmes are normally located in large FE departments, utilising the existing teaching staff. In these situations the emphasis is on FE teaching approaches and styles. Therefore, practitioners could encounter difficulties in delivering a compatible HE experience for their students in relation where ethos involves greater emphasis on research based teaching, independent learning and personal development.

The thesis demonstrates that there are major gaps in the education policy steering process; its levers produce sets of unintended consequences when they collide with stakeholder expectations at the FE and HE institutions and within their local ecologies. There are major issues with the policy of encouraging further FHE development, the case study data when extrapolated into the model (Chapter 5) attests that it is the 'FE sub- culture' operating within the college department that determines the HE practice which, at best, produces a diluted HE student experience.

Chapter 1. The rise of policy steering

Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the policy context for the further and higher education sectors and identifies the policy interventions that have driven both sectors and, in particular, the emphasis placed on FHE collaborative partnership arrangements under the previous Labour Government. The overriding aim of the research is to investigate the impact these policies have had on FE practitioners in relation to their HE roles within FHE partnerships.

The term ‘policy steering’ refers to mechanisms used by government in the management of public sector services. The research utilises an analysis of policy steering under New Labour that combined a ‘top down’ system and a multi-agency collaborative approach, which Coffield *et al.* (2008:26) labelled as a ‘*new model of public service reform*’ (PMSU, 2006). Coffield and colleagues (2008) reported a four- stage model to the policy process, the elements of which were designed to exert pressure for change. Two elements incorporated aspects of the new public management principle of market forces (Incentives and Competition) and target setting (Top-Down Performance Management). Further development involves the concepts of greater citizen empowerment (Users Shaping Service) and the structural reform of providers to enable their own self-improvement changes (Capability and Capacity). However, according Coffield *et al.* (2008) this model for public sector steering still omitted the voice of the practitioner:

It is immediately obvious that the experiences, concerns and innovative ideas of the professionals who run the sector are conspicuously absent from the model. This is not an oversight but deliberate policy. (Coffield *et al.*, 2008: 25)

They suggested that policy steering comprised both ‘policy drivers’ and ‘policy levers’ which, according to Steer *et al.* (2007), are designed to produce a response within

government agencies and providers:

Policy drivers, whether expressed through official policy documents, ministerial exhortation or statements of government priorities in the mass media, may be taken as cues to action by those who manage and deliver public service. (Steer *et al.*, 2007:3)

Within the context of ‘policy drivers’, policy levers refers to the tools used by government to manage change, implement its policies and mould institutional behaviour. Coffield *et al.* (2008), cited five major forms of policy levers that were used to create change and shape the Learning Skills Sector (of which FE is the major component). These consist of planning requisites, funding mechanisms, target setting, inspection and quality regimes. These levers are mediated differently at the ‘local’ college level depending upon a range of factors operating in a ‘local ecology’ (Spours *et al.*, 2007). The use of policy levers, mediated in the institutional setting, will form a basis for the analysis of the case in Chapter 2.

Developments within the FE sector

Initially FE colleges (previously Technical Colleges) tended to be a product of their local environment, rather than a feature of a centralised planning, with many dating back to the 19th Century. Despite their different origins, FE colleges largely had a common focus of training and technical skills provision to meet the needs of their local economy (Huddleston and Unwin, 2007). This community emphasis was based on a voluntary principle and initially funded by business levies, or local taxation and/or the ‘whisky money’ taxes (James and Biesta, 2007). This concept of FE developed further with the devolution of power to local authorities in the late 1880’s, when many towns began to build and maintain the first technical colleges (Green, 1997). The period from the end of the Second World War to mid-1970 saw the expansion and development of technical colleges, which provided an emphasis on vocational occupational training predominately on a part-time basis. This was partly achieved through employer tax incentives to facilitate day release expansion, to meet the

training needs of a largely manufacturing-based economy (Spours and Lucas, 1996).

According to Green (1997) this period of 'work-related' expansion began to plateau towards the end of the 1960's and early 1970's (pre-oil crises). Consequently, FE colleges began to diversify into other markets involving adult education, full-time academic programmes, vocational and leisure activity based courses. Moreover, decisions regarding the direction, nature and provision of much of FE were largely a decentralised activity carried out by the Local Education Authority (LEA).

From the late 1970s to early 1980s, the FE sector further increased capacity in terms of its student numbers and curriculum provision, coupled with greater state involvement. Green (1997) argued that the catalyst for this change was a reaction to the structural changes occurring within the economy; in particular concerns over long-term unemployment in the youth and adult labour market, as a result of the worldwide recession and changing work patterns. This had a two-fold effect on the FE college sector, involving funding levels and curriculum expansion. Firstly, there was an increase in demand for full-time education courses; due to high youth unemployment levels (Lucas *et al.*, 1997). Secondly, there was a greater level of policy intervention aimed at alleviating structural unemployment through the introduction of training initiatives. As a result, FE colleges obtained lucrative contracts to train the unemployed such as the Youth Training Scheme, or Certificate in Pre-Vocation Education for unemployed school leavers, or Training Opportunities scheme and Employment Training for unwaged adults. These developments brought FE increasingly into the political arena, particularly with the Conservative Government's agenda of public sector reform and market principles in the late 1980s.

Throughout the 1980's structural unemployment remained high, with the Government's initiatives for training and re-training having a limited effect (Spours and Lucas, 1996). Thus,

it was becoming increasingly clear that its employment and training strategies were in need of re-appraisal, as was the future role of FE. Moreover, there was growing concern amongst policy makers about the United Kingdom's international and European competitiveness, with links being made between national academic and vocational training attainment levels and industrial performance (NEDO/MSC, 1984; Baker, 1985). Particular emphasis was now being placed upon the UK's relatively lower rates of post-16 education and training participation, compared to other European Union countries and the then emergent far East Asian 'tiger economies' (Ashton and Green, 1996). Although there had been growth in the FE college sector during the 1980's there was little strategic direction through the state, as control was still with the LEAs who appeared to respond according to their own local agendas. This lack of central control created disparities between the curriculum provision and the level of funding between individual colleges within FE (Green, 1985; Hall, 1994). By the late 1980's it was becoming increasingly evident that a new approach was required for FE, which would involve a greater degree of government intervention. A new framework for FE was envisaged (HMSO, 1988), one which could be centrally planned and cost effective. In relation to the development of FE policy, there were two influential reports. Firstly, *'Obtaining Better Value from Further Education'* (Audit Commission, 1985), which produced two core recommendations; that colleges pursue more effective marketing strategies to improve recruitment, retention and achievement of students; and that there be a more effective deployment of teaching resources to increase lecturer productivity. Secondly, *'Unfinished Business: Full-time Educational Courses for 16-19 Year Olds'*; produced more explicit findings in terms of quantifiable cost savings, involving curriculum standardisation and improvements in student retention and achievement levels (Audit Commission/OFSTED, 1993). Four key recommendations emerged from the Audit Commission's report:

- FE should possess effective management information systems to monitor and control

the progress of its students;

- demonstrable actions should be taken to remedy unsuccessful course outcomes and thus reduce wastage;
- the funding council should develop a control mechanism that encourages effective open access to FE, whilst being ‘directive’ in placing students on appropriate courses;
- funding should encourage successful completion of courses and penalise wastage.

Taking into account this need to reform FE, the Conservative Government instigated major changes in the sector between 1987 and 1993. This took the form of four principal policy instruments. The White Papers *‘Managing Colleges Efficiently’* (DfES, 1987a) and the Education Reform Act, 1988 (HMSO, 1988), provided for a national funding mechanism for the FE college programmes, loosening the controls of their respective local education authority (LEA) and facilitating the introduction of measurable performance enhanced indicators. The White Paper *Education and Training for 21st Century* and the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992, provided for the separation of FE colleges from their respective LEAs into separate legal entities by April 1993. This also led to the setting up of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) as the directive body for funding, quality and strategic direction; along with the introduction of the National Vocational Qualification framework which was aimed at bridging the gap between vocational and academic qualifications.

A major lever for achieving growth was the FEFC funding mechanism, known as ‘Option E’, where monetary unit values (Units of Activity) based upon the number of attending students, their course levels and completion rates, were ‘contracted, with individual FE colleges. In addition FE colleges could ‘contract’ for an extra 10 per cent of Units of Activity, to facilitate growth known as the ‘demand-led’ funding element. Furthermore, due to the fact that the

funding mechanism was designed to 'converge' to a standard national cost per student by 1998/99, most FE colleges had to decrease costs and increase their student number to remain financially viable. As a consequence of the convergence mechanism, a whole range of quality and curriculum initiatives was steered through the FEFC. This resulted in many FE colleges being forced to re-organise their management systems, change their curriculum mix and enhance their competitive strategies in order to sustain enforced cost efficiencies, which Longhurst (1996:49) criticised as being '*further education transferred into a commodity*'. One consequence of these efficiency gains was that a typical FE college was expected to cut costs by five per cent a year in order to converge to a standard FE cost per unit of activity (FEFC, 1997b). In real terms, colleges needed to increase their student numbers in order to maintain their current funding levels, through the demand-led funding element. There was evidence of some FE colleges exploiting loopholes in the funding mechanism to engage in 'unit farming' and 'unit maximisation' (Steer *et al.*, 2007) and dubious college-led franchising arrangements (Leny *et al.*, 1998; Belfield, *et al.*, 2000).

As a result the sector grew rapidly (estimated at 28% per year for the periods 1993 to 1997) until expansion was curtailed with the removal of the demand-led funding element, due to the overheating of the FE economy (Bradley, 1996; Spours and Lucas, 1996).

Failure to meet contracted targets, or correctly account for them, would subsequently result in a FEFC 'claw-back', creating even greater financial hardship and disparities between FE colleges (Randle and Brady, 1997a). By the late 1990's, many FE colleges found themselves in financial difficulty, with less than half (42%) categorised as being financially robust, compared to over 70 per cent in the three years earlier (FEFC, 1997b). Faced with the need to implement cost-containment strategies, college managers began to look for financial savings from the curriculum and the staffing budgets. With this, a redefinition of the power

relationship between manager and the lecturer stakeholders groups took place (Elliot, 1996; Longhurst, 1996), which Randle and Brady (1997b: 229) described as ‘*the rise of the new managerialism*’.

At the time, many lecturers struggled to come to terms with this shift towards to cost- driven strategies. This was manifested itself in terms of changes in work patterns, larger classes, cuts in course hours, increased contact time, performance accountability (retention and achievement targets) and greater use of casual labour (Bradley 1996; Elliot and Crossley, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997a; Shain and Gleeson, 1999). Many of these issues had served to fuel the debate about an unstable sector in trouble, undermined by too many policy initiatives and a state of strategic confusion. This imbroglio was further compounded by duplication in national governance with a FEFC and the 72 local independent Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), each with their own set of funding and quality assurance levers brought to bear upon the FE college sector. In 1997, the Labour Government decided to evaluate the role of the FEFC and the TECs with the aim of providing skills, social equity and value for money (Coffield *et al.*, 2008).

The Labour Government’s *Learning to Succeed* White Paper (DfEE, 1999) sought to streamline the administration for the post-compulsory education system, with the overall aim of eliminating waste and becoming more stakeholder focused. As a result, the Learning and Skills Act (2000) introduced a single Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to be established in 2001. The LSC was to have the FE sector as a major part of its remit and would administer 47 Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) on a sub-regional basis.

Coffield *et al.* (2008) used a three-phase model to describe the historic development of the LSC from its inception in 2001 until its realignment and narrowing of focus in 2007. Each phase had a profound impact on the FE college sector in relation to funding levels, course

provision, quality assurance and effect on its practitioners. In Phase 1 (2001 to 2003), the LSC's role was to act as a catalyst for the amalgamation and rationalisation of both the FEFC and the TECs. It was envisaged as both a planning and funding agency for achieving government steering targets. In relation to its FE involvement, it had a similar role to the FEFC (at the time), with funding levels based upon performance targets and bid planning to be administered through the LLSCs' in accordance with national framework targets. In addition, there was a proposal to link funding to three-year plans in an effort to produce a degree of stability and continuity in the FE sector. However, this role did not fully transpire, due to a second restructure at the LSC in 2004. Phase 2 (2004 to 2006), often referred to as the 'business model approach' (Coffield *et al.*, 2008), involved the formation of a set of regional management teams, which had greater powers to deploy resources to the LLSCs. The rationale for LLSCs was the achievement of a greater degree of local responsiveness within a strategically developed national framework. At the same time, this decentralisation and deployment of resources resulted in a restructure and rationalisation of the LSC's central functions, aimed at producing a more streamlined and responsive agency. Phase 3 (2006 - 2007) resulted in a further major change in its role. As a result of the Leitch Review the LSC was expected to become even more responsive to the needs of local employers and individuals (the demand-led system). This would be achieved through the reorganisation of the LSC into nine regional offices involving the administering 148 local partnerships. Furthermore, as a result of a Government departmental re-organisation in 2007, the LSC's FE role was significantly curtailed when its responsibility for 16 to 19 year provision was given back to the LEAs, as part of the Labour Government's 14-19 phase strategy. This produced a strong parallel with the old FEFC model, but with tighter control through the LLSCs to facilitate policy steering.

Summary of developments in the FE sector

Policy steering from the early 1990s successfully produced an increase in participation rates for post-16 age groups along with a national qualification framework. This was achieved through the removal of FE from the control of LEAs and placing it under the strategic direction of the FEFC; whose remit ensured that the FE sector was not squandering public finances, through wastage and inconsistencies in college funding levels. Stimulated by the funding formulae, this led to the massification of FE, producing a broader base of students on a reduced level of funding, leading to further diversification into other ‘business models’ such as franchising and mergers. In 2001, the LSC was created to meet the need for a more effective strategic arm to facilitate policy steering within the post-16 sector (excluding HE). However, as a result of policy shifts the LSC experienced three fundamental changes in relation to its role and scope, ultimately resulting in a significant decreased FE function.

Since 1993, the unintended consequence of many of these reforms has resulted in the FE sector rebounding from a series policy steers. This has been symptomatic of a seemingly ever changing policy interface, illustrated by a FE college sector in a state of flux where many individual colleges were beset by financial instability, industrial unrest and an inability to grasp a sense of strategic coherence (LSDA, 2005; Perry and Simpson, 2006). Furthermore, due to the regional nature of the LSC, many colleges have been operating in unstable narrow environments, or local ecologies, which have reacted differently to these policy levers (Spours *et al.*, 2007).

Developments within the HE sector

Following the election of the Conservative Government in 1979, a central policy theme became the reform of the supply side of the economy. As a part of its wider rationalisation strategy for the public sector it had planned to reduce both HE student subsidies and the

number of institutional places. These decisions were based on a projected decline in demand for HE places, due to demographic changes and the withdrawal of subsidies for overseas students. Consequently, the 1981 Public Expenditure White Paper announced major reductions in HE sector finances (Watson and Bowen, 1999). A greater degree of sector contraction was expected as a result of Keith Joseph's Green Paper, *The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s*, (DES, 1985). This proposed further subsidy reductions through the rationalisation of HE institutions; greater commercialisation of the sector; less reliance on the state for funding through the introduction of student tuition fees and an emphasis on 'plugging the skills gap' through a greater degree of industry liaison (DES, 1985).

The proposals from Baker's White Paper, *Higher Education: Meeting the Challenges* (DES, 1987b), were substantially enacted as part of the Education Reform Act (1988) and indicated a reversal in HE policy. The emphasis in HE policy was now to change from one of rationalisation to low-cost expansion, primarily involving changes in the HE funding systems and the governance of the polytechnic sector. This involved the incorporation of the polytechnics, and some of the larger HE colleges, into separate legal entities. By taking them out of local authority control and funding them directly under the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council (replacing the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education), it was believed they could be placed on a more competitive footing. However, this meant a dual funding system was still place, with the University sector funded by the University Funding Council.

A major impact of these developments was the manipulation of the supply of student places by the state, ultimately leading to the mass HE system of today (Pratt, 1999). Clark's White Paper *Higher Education: A New Framework* (DfES, 1991a) and the subsequent Further and

Higher Education Act (1992), led to unification of the HE system with the 34 polytechnics and two higher education colleges (on the threshold of polytechnic status) given degree awarding powers and, on the whole, full university status. The Act also abolished the old binary line in the funding mechanism and created one funding council each for England, Scotland and Wales. These Acts served to further strengthen the Government's control over the destiny of HE, using its funding levers to drive expansion and growth (Pratt, 1999; Watson and Bowen, 1999).

The rationale behind this increase in HE student places was twofold. First, since the early 1980s the UK economy had experienced a shift in emphasis from manufacturing to the tertiary sector. These changes fuelled the perception that there was an undersupply of suitably qualified labour who, therefore, command higher wage levels by virtue of holding Level 4 National Vocational Qualifications. Subsequently, there was demand shift for higher-level qualifications from people pursuing careers in areas such as the service industry (HEFCE, 2001a). Additionally, there was the impact from the globalisation debate, which proposed that the UK was lagging behind its major competitors in terms of HE participation rates and subsequent occupational skills gap (Ashton and Green, 1996). Shifts were also taking place in terms of participation. The GCSE reforms of 1988 led to more pupils taking up sixth form places, completing their Level 3 courses and consequently creating greater demand for HE places (Hodgson and Spours, 2000). The post-compulsory education participation rates, for the period 1987 – 1994, rose from 49 to 72 per cent with a corresponding increase in GCSE and 'A' level attainment (DfEE, 1999a).

In this context, the Conservative Government wanted the HE institutions to be more proactive in recruiting from the non-traditional 'A' level routes, thus having a greater widening participation role. As well as being desirable in terms of social equity and widening

participation, it was seen as a principal source for further HE growth. The Education and Training for the 21st Century White Paper (DES, 1991b) encouraged two new routes into HE, which were a) vocational and b) mature entry applicants. The ‘vocational route’ endorsed the greater acceptance of BTEC (Edexcel) as standard entry qualification onto degree courses, although this was already being accepted by most polytechnics on their Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes and in some cases their degree courses (DES, 1991b). With the ‘mature route’ (consisting of students over 21 years of age) the case for wider acceptance from access courses was made. Furthermore, this White Paper (DES, 1991b) initiated the formation of a national framework for Access course recognition and quality assurance through the establishment of the Authorised Validation Agency (consisting of local FE college consortia with a HE institutional linkage). According to Parry (1996), this initiative saw a proliferation of Access course registrations with the HE funding bodies, thus fostering greater links between HE and FE institutions.

Most HE growth took place from the period 1988/89 to 1993/94, when full-time participation rates increased from 15 to 30 per cent. According to Watson and Bowen (1999) data provided for the Dearing Inquiry, by the Department for Education and Employment, demonstrated that undergraduate numbers had risen from 777,800 (1979) to 1,659,400 (1996), with postgraduate places increasing from 100,000 to 350,000 for the same period. Data also indicated, during the same time period, that the Age Participation Index (API) for 18 – 19 year olds had risen from 12 to 30 per cent. During a similar time period, the API for mature students (those over 21 years old) had increased by eight per cent, from 24 to 32 per cent. The female HE participation rate had also risen steadily to almost equal the number of the male students. Inroads had also been made into increasing participation rates from selective ethnic grouping (mainly achieved in the post- polytechnic sector). However, participation of

children from non-professional backgrounds had only increased from six (1990/91) to 12 per cent (1995/96). This failed to mirror the expansion in the sector as a whole, fuelling the widening participation debate and forthcoming government initiatives, including an enhanced role for FE (Hodgson and Spours, 2000).

Much of this expansion in the HE sector was steered through the application of government policies aimed at producing a system based on a premise of cost effectiveness. The principal lever (known as 'fees-only funding'), in the late 1980's was the reduction in the block grant with a corresponding increase in the tuition fee element, thus encouraging institutions to expand their student numbers to maintain funding levels (Williams, 1996). According to Watson and Bowen (1999), although the Government's HE expenditure had risen, in real terms, over the period 1979 to 1994, funding per HE student had actually decreased by 25 per cent (greater in the former polytechnics). As a result, the HE sector was forced to pursue cost containment strategies, involving greater student staff ratios (which had doubled in the former polytechnics), larger lecture class sizes, course closures and redundancies (Watson and Bowen, 1999). By 1993/94, HE student numbers were capped by the Government, due to the spiralling costs caused by an unexpected growth rate (a similar occurrence to FE sector); the general levelling in demand from school leavers and the perception of over-supply of graduates (Williams, 1996; Parry and Thompson, 2002). For the next three years the status quo remained whilst the sector was 'under review' awaiting the outcome of the Dearing Inquiry (NCIHE, 1997).

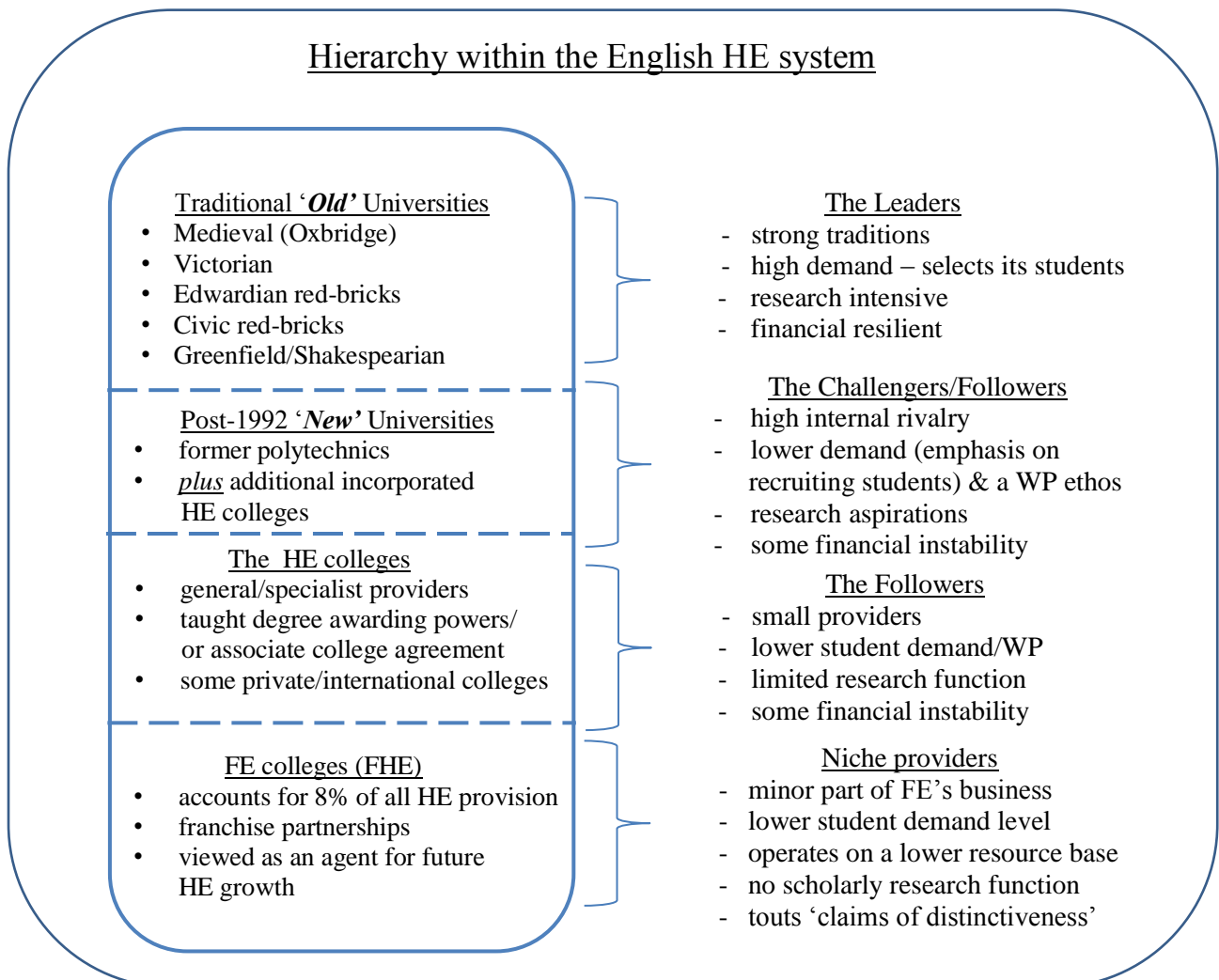
The diversity within the HE landscape

With the dismantling of the binary divide and the unification of the HE system the former polytechnics found themselves operating predominately within four-tier structure. This structure encompassed the 'older' tradition universities, the former polytechnics, some HE

institutions and the FE sector's HE providers (see Figure 1). When the former polytechnics are compared to the 'older' universities they could be perceived as offering an inferior student experience.

The English Traditional 'old' universities had secured their reputations over time. The first were Oxford (12^h century) and Cambridge (13th Century) these two were originally formed as 'medieval institutions' that had a religious/scholarly function associated with the state

Figure 1 Hierarchy within the HE system



executive, then later becoming rites of passage for the nobility (Hudson, 2002). By the 19th century these institutions had accrued prominence as centres of excellence for academia and

subsequently became the dominant model for later British universities (Hudson, 2002). Scot (2009) described the expansion of the old university sector as occurring in a series of historical ‘waves’ and arising from local initiatives to develop a HE presence in a particular geographical area. The first wave of university expansion took place during the early 19th century with the creation of Durham (1833); London (1836), the Victoria University (1880 – later divided into three to form Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds, during 1903 to 1905). A second wave took place in the early 20th century with the Edwardian ‘red-bricks’ creating the universities of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol and Birmingham. The third wave of university development, referred to as the ‘civic red-bricks’, occurred between the two World Wars and involved Southampton, Hull, Exeter, Leicester, Reading and, in 1940, Keele university (Ross, 2003). The post-war period saw the establishment of the ‘Shakespearian’ or out-of-town greenfield site university such as, Sussex, York, Warwick, Lancaster and East Anglia (Scot, 2009). Most of these institutions followed a path based on the ‘Oxbridge’ model involving conventional research development under a concept of ‘liberal education’ (Ross, 2003), and, in terms of student demand and research functions have been successful (Scot 2009).

Another path of HE development came about through the formation of the polytechnics sector between 1966 and 1972 from a number of designated colleges of technology, commerce and art (DES, 1966); they were created to fill a perceived gap in high level engineering and vocational training in England (Scot, 2009). After gaining full university status in 1992 the former polytechnics moved towards adopting the traditional university norms, symbols and values which Scot (2009) described as:

heavily influenced by the quasi-collegial norms rooted in notions of academic self-government and institutional autonomy that had always prevailed in the traditional universities. (Scot, 2009:409)

However, a gap still existed between the ‘elite’ universities and the post-1992 institutions. The traditional ‘older’ universities had been operating in stable and predictable markets for over a century, facilitating the development of strong research reputations and high student demand for their degrees. In contrast, the former polytechnics’ dash for growth, (massification of the system - discussed earlier) had left them in a weakened financial position (Watson and Bowen, 1999). Here, their expansion strategies had resulted in the recruitment of students with comparatively lower entry qualifications, many of whom had widening participation profiles (Archer, 2003, Reay *et al.*, 2009), higher course withdrawal rates and lower levels of graduate employability (Ainley and Allen, 2010). These factors have been reflected in HE league tables leaving majority of the former polytechnics towards the bottom end of the chart, impacting on student choice and the HE institutions’ reputation of either being a ‘selector’ or ‘recruiter’ of students. When discussing the impact of HE league tables on student choice Evans (2002) commented:

More or less exactly half-way down the table there is a break between the old and new universities. As all vice-chancellors have recognised, position in this league table has an economic value: students, particularly given the new considerable cost of higher education, will choose to go the new university, and the department, where validated excellence will later have a financial reward. Evans (2002:163)

As mentioned earlier a third tier consists of a small number of HE colleges, some of which were private international colleges, who were granted degree awarding powers and in some cases full university title during the early part of the 21st century, for example, University of Roehampton (2004) formally Roehampton Institute of Higher Education; University of St. Mark & St. John (2012) formally University College Plymouth St. Mark & St John and Regents University (2013) formally Regents College (private/ international college). There is no evidence that these institutions are inferior to the former polytechnics, they operate on similar lines to the post-1992 institutions, but are much smaller and have less emphasis on

research and a stronger focus on teaching (Scot, 2009).

A fourth tier involves the FE colleges as providers of HE, who have been operating in this area for a number of years (Scot, 2009), where they cater for about 177,000 higher education students, who are largely located in general FE colleges (93%). The FE colleges mainly offer places on foundation degrees (52,000 students), followed by first degrees (25,000 students), along with the higher national certificate (14,000 students) and a further 11,000 students on its full-time equivalent diploma 11,000 students (Parry *et al.*, 2012). Their lower resource base (funding) have led to challenging quality issues (Scot, 2009), and often leading to a restricted HE ethos and practitioners skills (Jones, 2006; Turner *et al.*, 2009, Feather; 2011 and 2012a). Furthermore, student demand is chiefly from widening participation groups who have less of an HE identity (Reay *et al.*, 2009). These colleges market themselves on their ability to provide a personal learning environment for their students (Parry, 2012) whom will benefit from smaller classes (Turner *et al.*, 2009), and a ‘demystified’ approach to the interpretation of curriculum, as Feather (2012a: 251) stated in his research on practitioner scholarly activity in FHE: *‘their role was to interpret the journals and textbooks, and put them into a language that students could understand’*. Their lower operating cost base and other attributes such as widening student access has created a considerable amount of state interest as a vehicle for future HE expansion.

The creation of a low-cost mass HE system, levered on a platform of social inclusion and economic necessity, had led to a pressurised HE environment, with the former polytechnics feeling particularly harried as a consequence of their substantive growth on a lower level of funding. In comparison the ‘older universities’ have maintained their reputations and therefore are able to continue to select their students and command greater research incomes in turn helping to perpetuate their ‘first tier’ position in the HE league tables. FE colleges

have long been providers of HE either directly funded (operating courses in their own right) or indirectly funded (franchised partnerships), however, they operate on a lower cost base and cannot offer the fuller student HE experience, but are seen as being a viable route for future HE expansion.

FHE enhancement

Up to the mid 1980's HE provision within the FE college sector tended to be largely planned on a 'local needs' basis and under the control of the LEAs. Any HE courses were normally under the FE College's own name with quality assurance exercised through an 'external validation' relationship, for example, the Business Education Council. The products on offer tended to be on a part-time basis, associated with employer release schemes, referred to as 'high level' or 'Level 3' type work. The nature of these qualifications varied accordingly, but most colleges provided Higher National Certificates (HNC) in the fields of engineering and business subjects; with some specialist provision to meet local and regional employer demands (Parry and Thompson, 2002).

The period from the mid-1980's to 1994 saw some important changes in the scope and amount of HE provision offered by the FE colleges. Watson and Bowen (1999) believed this growth, in FE colleges, resulted from the actions of the former polytechnics. They had expanded significantly during this period and were now operating at full capacity, but still looking for further market opportunities. Consequently, many polytechnics had entered into cross-sector collaboration with their neighbouring FE colleges – often on the basis of a franchise arrangement (Smith and Boccock, 1999). This relationship tended to involve the award of qualification, which was under the HE Institution's own name, predominantly at sub-degree level, linked to a 'top up' degree at the franchiser's site. Franchise agreements continued to grow in popularity as a means of expanding polytechnic intakes until the

capping of university places in 1994, which saw a period of consolidation with reduction in FE allocations (Parry and Thompson, 2002).

Based upon the growth in franchise relationships and the perception that FE colleges provided good quality producers of HE in their own right, in 1995 HEFCE published the consultative document *'Higher Education in Further Education Colleges: Funding the Relationship'* (HEFCE, 1995). The study group led by HEFCE consisted of stakeholders from government education and employment departments, as well as the HE and FE funding and quality agencies. The discussion paper produced, by this group, created a catalyst to stimulate further dialogue on the future of the FE and HE sector interface. Based upon these responses HEFCE published *'Higher Education in Further Education Colleges: a future funding approach'* in February 1996 (HEFCE, 1996). Although the report recognised the distinct role FE colleges had played as HE providers in their own right, it concluded that there were some distinct common features shared by the FE institutions. Parry and Thompson (2002), citing this report, highlighted four distinctive features, which complimented FE's role as providers of HE. First, FE had a tradition of a relative close proximity to the world of work, in relation to its high proportion of sub-degree vocationally orientated courses. Second, the FE colleges had greater access to the educationally marginalised, due to their post 16 recruitment patterns and geographical locations. Third, FE acted as a basis for progression enabling a smoother transition to HE for those students who prefer study within a FE environment. Finally, many FE colleges had a history of offering specialist HE courses (on part-time basis) to meet the needs of local and regional employers.

The changing patterns emerging from the expansion of the HE system suggested that the HE sector would be characterised by sets of 'demand- led changes', encompassing a number of change factors. HE would possess a greater 'vocational emphasis' in line with employer

demands and the requirement for greater economic competitiveness. It would become more 'flexible', offering its customers greater choice in terms of delivery patterns to meet the needs of a more diverse student population. Its product mix would orientate more towards 'life-long learning' supporting the pursuit of higher learning at a different pace throughout the participant's career lifespan. HE would then possess both a greater 'regional and local emphasis', resulting from the growth of local and regional markets for higher education as a consequence of student support and growth in part time courses, mature and life-long learners (Parry and Thompson, 2002). There were good grounds, therefore, to support the argument that FE colleges who would be well placed to take advantage of these perceived changes in HE demand patterns. These 'characteristics' were to form a key aspect of the Dearing Inquiry's (NICHE, 1997) recommendations involving the future of the FHE collaborative interface (Parry and Thompson, 2002).

In the light of the rapid expansion of both sectors, and the capping of student numbers for HE in 1993/94 and FE in 1996, two separate reviews were formed to identify the key issues and produce recommendations for future policy direction: Kennedy (1994-1997) and Dearing (1996 – 1997). The Kennedy inquiry was an internal committee set up by the FEFC to provide advice on strategies to widen participation in further education. Kennedy's report, *'Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education'* (FEFC, 1997b), concluded that FE colleges should play a fundamental role in a national strategy to widen access. This was to be steered through government policies to include funding levers and strategic partnerships to encourage progression onto Level 3 and HE programmes from under-represented social- economic groups. The Dearing Review, on the other hand, was an independent national committee of inquiry, with a remit to review policy and funding for the higher education sector, but also encompassed the FE's role in HE provision.

The recommendations from both reviews, especially those arising from the Dearing Report, were to inform the incoming Labour Government's policy (post-1997) in relation to the role that FE was expected to play in widening access to HE.

Of the 93 recommendations made by Dearing, five focused on the perceived new role for FE involving enhancement of the further and higher education interface. These argued (i), for a renewal in HE growth with the focus on development of sub-degrees places; (ii), that the expansion should be afforded to the FE colleges as a matter of priority on the basis of its existing expertise in providing sub-degree work, and its attributes to as 'special mission', discussed earlier; (iii), greater collaboration should take place between the FE colleges and HE funding bodies, in order to promote progression to higher education, especially in relation to debate about social inclusion in HE; (iv), there should be inclusion of representatives from HE institutions on FEFC regional committees as a measure to enhance the further and higher education interface and (v), in order to facilitate a greater quality commitment, FE institutions were to have only one HE franchise partner.

Much of the immediate post-1997 FHE education policy was based upon the Dearing recommendations, with the exception of single partner franchises, which were dropped due to successful lobbying from within the FE sector. The Labour Government mapped out a series of policy goals for the steering of future FHE developments, expressed in the terms of its key educational responsibilities and collectively referred to as its 'special mission'. In respect of this, the FE sector was to be involved in the state's aim of increasing the HE participation rate, utilising its cultural skills and abilities in the recruitment of traditionally under-represented groupings, greater flexibility and specialist vocation routes provision (Parry *et al.*, 2004).

The Labour Government gave its formal response to the Dearing Committee's findings in its

Green Paper on life-long learning, *The Learning Age. Higher education for the 21st Century* (DfEE, 1998). In particular, it agreed the lifting of sub-degree capped places on the basis that priority would be given to the FE colleges. This driver was to dovetail with plans to increase the API to 50 per cent for 18 to 25 year olds by 2010, using FE expansion as a method to widening participation and meet social equity agendas.

Dearing recommended that the existing model for collaborative partnership arrangements should be encouraged and extended, with the exception of multi-franchise relationships. Here there was concern over the quality of the education provision due to the fact that FE colleges had over extended themselves by entering into too many relationships and were unable to ensure parity of the student experience compared to that of a parent HE institution or demonstrate value for the public funds involved (Parry and Thompson, 2002). Although the recommendations on single partnerships were not taken forward, it was decided that the both HEFCE and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) were to have a more robust role in developing and policing franchise arrangements. Dearing recommended that the QAA be responsible for the establishment of rigorous criteria for specifying proper limits for franchising, plus the instigation of a regulatory framework to ensure compliance. After 2001, all future arrangements would need to meet the standards laid down by the QAA criteria.

From HEFCE's perspective, its new enhanced role regarding the funding and development in FE colleges had become a major and complex issue (Parry and Thompson, 2002). As an aid to policy formation, as well as to engage stakeholders, a series of consultations took place, resulting in three research documents. The aim of the first HEFCE paper (1998a) was to look at the relevant costs of HE provision in both sectors; and the second paper (1998b) looked in more detail at the financial arrangements and nature of the student experience under different franchise arrangements. Two years later, a third research paper was produced which looked at

relative costs of HNC and HND provision in FE colleges for both funded and non-funded HEFCE programmes (HEFCE 2000a).

Based upon their research studies and outcomes from the Dearing recommendations, HEFCE offered the FE college sector a choice of three funding models. Directly funded (from HEFCE); indirect funding (franchise partnership); or via a consortia arrangement involving a regional partnership cluster model involving a HE institution which was to have loose quality assurance controls (HEFCE, 1999a). However, the funding council expressed a preference for the indirect partnership funded model because most FE colleges produced a marginal amount of HE work and tended to operate in isolation, thus unable to meet HEFCE's expectation of delivering the same quality and standards as their HE counterparts (HEFCE 1999a; Parry and Thompson, 2002). The pattern of response to HEFCE's discussion with the FE college representatives in 1999 indicated that the majority of respondents (75%) wished to work, or continue to work in partnership with others (HEFCE, 2000b). However, the principal concern arising from Dearing was that the FHE student experience should be compatible to that of the HE institution provider (or franchisor), which was not yet formally recognised in many FHE relationships.

The Labour Government's response to Dearing (NCIHE, 1997) and Kennedy (FEFC, 1997b) involved restating the need to include the previously under-represented groups in HE (Archer *et al.*, 2003). The setting up of the HEFCE advisory group the Equal Opportunity and Lifelong Learning Committee and the subsequent targeted funding initiatives had improved the participation rates involving gender, ethnicity and to some extent those students with disabilities (Lewis, 2002, Archer *et al.*, 2003). Nevertheless, there still existed a large disparity in the social economic groupings in HE (Connor, 2002).

HEFCE's response to these policy drivers, emanating from the Dearing, was to look at ways

to widen access for these groups, in collaboration with the HE institutions, by employing targeted funding initiatives to stimulate greater levels of recruitment and achievement from under-represented groups in HE (Lewis, 2002). During the period 1998/1999, HEFCE provided priority funding, in the form of additional funded places, to those institutions that could provide evidence of having implemented and achieved widening participation strategies. In most cases this was evidenced through existing collaborative arrangements between the HE franchiser and its FE partner college(s). HEFCE's rationale for this strategy was that FE colleges, due to their locality and cultural history, had a tradition of recruiting students who were classified as having widening participation backgrounds (HEFCE, 2003a). The financial incentives of the funding system also served to create new links and enhance existing ones between FE and HE institutions (Parry and Thompson, 2002).

From 1999/2000, HEFCE introduced a system of funding supplements given to HE institutions based on their number of undergraduate entrants who came from the lowest participating geographical areas or with disabilities. These payments were made in respect of the additional costs associated with the recruitment, retention and special needs costs of these groups of students. Payments were calculated on the following basis; of disabled students in receipt of the Disabled Student Allowance, and students from the social economic disadvantage backgrounds ascertained through geo-demographic profiling (postcode premium). However, in respect of social economic groupings, the internal distribution of designated funds was left largely to the discretion of the institution in accordance with its strategic statement. HEFCE also funded a series of 'special projects' aimed at widening participation through the lead HE institutions, developing links between schools and community groups from geographically unrepresented areas. Special project funding was also made available for either FE colleges or HE institutions to improve pathway routes from

further to higher education, as well as special programmes associated with student disability (HEFCE, 1999b). In respect of these extra funds, HE institutions were required to submit an initial strategic statement on target and aims for widening participation, to be formalised in their Annual Operating Statements by July 2000.

In September 2000, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment launched the 'Excellence Challenge' agenda, which provided additional widening participation funding. Strategic benchmarks were introduced encouraging those institutions with fewer than 80 per cent of their students from state schools to explore ways to redress the imbalance. A general tightening up and greater accountability over widening participation funding was introduced, resulting in greater scrutiny and more prescriptive target setting of the HE institutions. During this 12-month period widening participation funding expanded significantly, but mainly in the FE colleges where the government expected the majority of part-time and sub-degree growth to take place (Parry and Thompson, 2002).

It was becoming increasingly clear to the first Labour Administration that there was insufficient demand in the sub-degree market as a means of reaching their 50 per cent API target by 2010. The existing sub-degree market tended to consist of two main products, predominately full-time HNDs and, to a lesser extent, part-time HNCs. These programmes had been declining in popularity over a number of years, primarily due to the increased supply of degree places in the new universities and lack of employment opportunity and general changes in demand. It was also the case that HNDs had lost their vocational emphasis as qualifications in their own right, and had become access routes to degree place (Parry and Thompson, 2002). Many HND places had been taken up by students who had underperformed at 'A' level or by mature access students wishing to enter into higher education with no formal entry qualification. The majority sub-degree places (again

predominantly HND) were situated in the FE colleges as part of a franchise partnership or consortia arrangements, and were often seen as last resort choices by 18 year olds.

As a result of the lack of HND take-up, the Labour Government began to look for a more attractive model which had the hallmark of being short cycle, (i.e. two years in length), with a vocational emphasis and have a post nominal degree confirmation. These courses would be capable of being delivered by FE, supported by lead HE institutional quality assurance arrangement. Notice of the proposed Foundation Degree was given by the Labour Prime Minister in his Romanes Lecture, at the University of Oxford, to which he described it as being '*akin to the US associate degree*' (Blair, 1999). Further details regarding the philosophy and strategy for this degree were provided by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment in his Higher Education Lecture at the University of Greenwich in 2000. The intrinsic purpose of the Foundation Degree was to redress the historic skills deficit of employees at the intermediate and post-immediate educational level, which had long been an issue facing employers (Blunkett, 2000). Moreover, the curriculum content was in response to demand from industry and therefore would be in a position to support growth in the new UK economic sectors. Thus, the new qualification would be equipping a wider range of people with both generic and specialist skills, as well as providing a ladder for life-long learning. The principles behind the development of Foundation Degree were consolidated in the Government's consultation paper on '*Foundation Degrees*' (DfEE, 2000), which highlighted issues concerning high attrition on the current sub degrees, dissatisfaction with graduate and diplomat skill levels and a general confusion regarding student progression routes. The Government believed that the Foundation Degree would become the dominant sub-degree qualification, stating:

It is the government's intention that the bulk of any further growth in HE be achieved

through foundation degrees. (HEFCE, 2000c: 5-6)

The two- year sub-degree qualification would be primarily situated in FE colleges on the basis of their accessibility and claims for distinctiveness (special mission), with progression to full honours degree at the lead HE institutions. FE colleges would be encouraged to develop Foundation Degrees based around ‘specialist’ areas of expertise and those FE colleges with ‘Certificate of Vocational Excellence’ status would be well placed to enhance further industrial and local employer links. Actual student provision on Foundation Degree grew from a base of 4,300 in 2001/02 to nearly 61,000 in 2006/07; with just over half the numbers on a full time courses (56% in 2006/07) and roughly divided between FE to HE student locations (HEFCE, 2007b).

Some colleges thought that the validation of Foundation Degrees would be undertaken by a national body, similar to that of the now defunct Council for National Academic Awards, thus effectively loosening the hold of the universities (Parry, 2006). With this independence, the FE colleges could expect a more generous directly funded model, which would provide them, for all intent and purpose, taught degree awarding powers. This was, however, effectively halted with the White Paper ‘*Success for All*’ (DfES, 2003a) which stipulated the requirement for ‘structured partnerships’ with HEIs as the principal vehicle for future further and higher education expansion in this area.

First signalled in the Dearing Inquiry Review (NICHE, 1997) and later enshrined in government legislation (DfES, 2003b), a greater degree of collaboration was to take place between FE and HE institutions. FE colleges were seen as a key to increased widening participation, an important part of further HE expansion targets, provision of vocational progression ladders into industry and continued higher education, as well as principal providers of Foundation degrees. Based upon evidence of previous good practice, a greater

enhancement of existing further and higher education partnership arrangements was to take place, with the HE provider normally having the quality assurance role, control over curriculum development with a funding model based around a franchise relationship.

Conclusion

The massification of both sectors was set in motion by the Conservative Government (1979-1997), which used the funding mechanisms as its principal policy lever. These levers reflected a strategy that emphasised the manipulation of the supply side of educational markets, producing a quasi-market involving lower unit costs, substantive growth, greater institutional rivalry and a tightening of revenue curves. Eventually post-compulsory education expansion was curtailed due to the financial pressures it had placed upon the Exchequer; resulting in the capping of HE places in 1994/95 (Watson and Bowen, 1999) and the removal of the 'demand led' funding element for the FE college sector in 1996/97 (Stanton and Fletcher, 2006).

The low cost expansion engineered through the 'fees-only funding' policy lever, which had led to an escalation in student numbers (Hodgson and Spours, 2000), left many post-1992 universities in a precarious financial position, due to their over-ambitious expansion strategies and flawed budgetary planning (Watson and Bowen, 1999). Finding themselves in a situation of having to grow to maintain financial solvency many HE institutions were keen to exploit further markets including FE franchise development (Parry and Thompson, 2002). The Conservatives thus used financial levers to create an expanded FE sector with a standard unit cost (convergence), which it centrally controlled via the FEFC. This led to a degree of financial turmoil within the FE college sector (FEFC, 1997b), as many colleges found themselves ill-equipped to deal with the 'marketisation' of their service (Reeves, 1995). As a result of these change factors, conflicts arose between FE stakeholder groups in particular

those consisting of senior management teams and the lecturer workforce (Elliot, 1996; Longhurst, 1996). The changing role of the FE practitioner (Elliot and Crossley, 1997; Shain and Gleeson, 1999) proved to have had a detrimental effect on professional practice, which became heightened as the funding dried up (Randle and Brady, 1997b). This left the Labour Government to deal with a post-compulsory education sector that had expanded almost three-fold on a reduce levels funding and operating in an unstable environment.

Its (1997-2010) approach to post-compulsory education was to reinstate growth in both sectors, employing a new model for planning and control, which was intended to provide greater local responsiveness under a canopy of central planning. Labour's plans for HE involved raising the API to 50 per cent, which was based upon its social equity agenda of widening participation and, in part, as a response to the Dearing Inquiry's recommendations (DfEE, 1998). It was decided that FE colleges were to play a greater HE role, through the expansion of sub-degree provision and, later on, the introduction of Foundation Degrees. The aim behind this strategy was to widen participation and increase vocational provision. Here the funding lever mechanism was to favour the enhancement of collaborative partnership arrangements between HE and FE institutions (Parry and Thompson, 2002).

Part of this new policy scenario was the role of the LSC (along with its LLSCs), which was subjected to a series of policy changes itself. To facilitate stability, the higher levels of FE funding were still linked to performance indicators and three year planning cycles; although in reality this did not transpire due the successive re-organisations of the LSC (Coffield *at al.* 2008). A consequence of New Labour's micro-management of the LSC was the production of multiple sets of policy levers, which Steer *et al.* (2007:12) referred to as being the '*growing problem of a culture of measurement*'. This created further tensions in the FE sector as colleges attempted to mediate the constant policy shifts and over-burdensome bureaucratic

systems, especially at local college levels (Spours *et al.*, 2007).

The Dearing Committee (NICHE, 1997) advocated that FE should have an enhanced widening participation role encompassing its franchised sub-degree programmes (Lewis, 2002; Parry and Thompson, 2002) and under New Labour FE and HE was increasingly pushed together.

The policy steering process was largely top down approach and although the discourse promoted an agency or partnership approach, the reality involved the implementation of an increasing range of policy levers aimed at institutions. Bathmaker and Avis (2005) describe the impact on professional identity as:

Competitiveness and efficiency are paramount, and targets and measurement all-pervasive. The effect on lecturers is not just work intensification, but changes to the nature of their work. What they do is increasingly controlled and determined by centrally-devised policy.... (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005: 8).

This risked the marginalisation of the role of the lecturer as a professional as they attempted to translate policy into educational practice.

Chapter 2. FHE partnerships: the shaping forces

Introduction

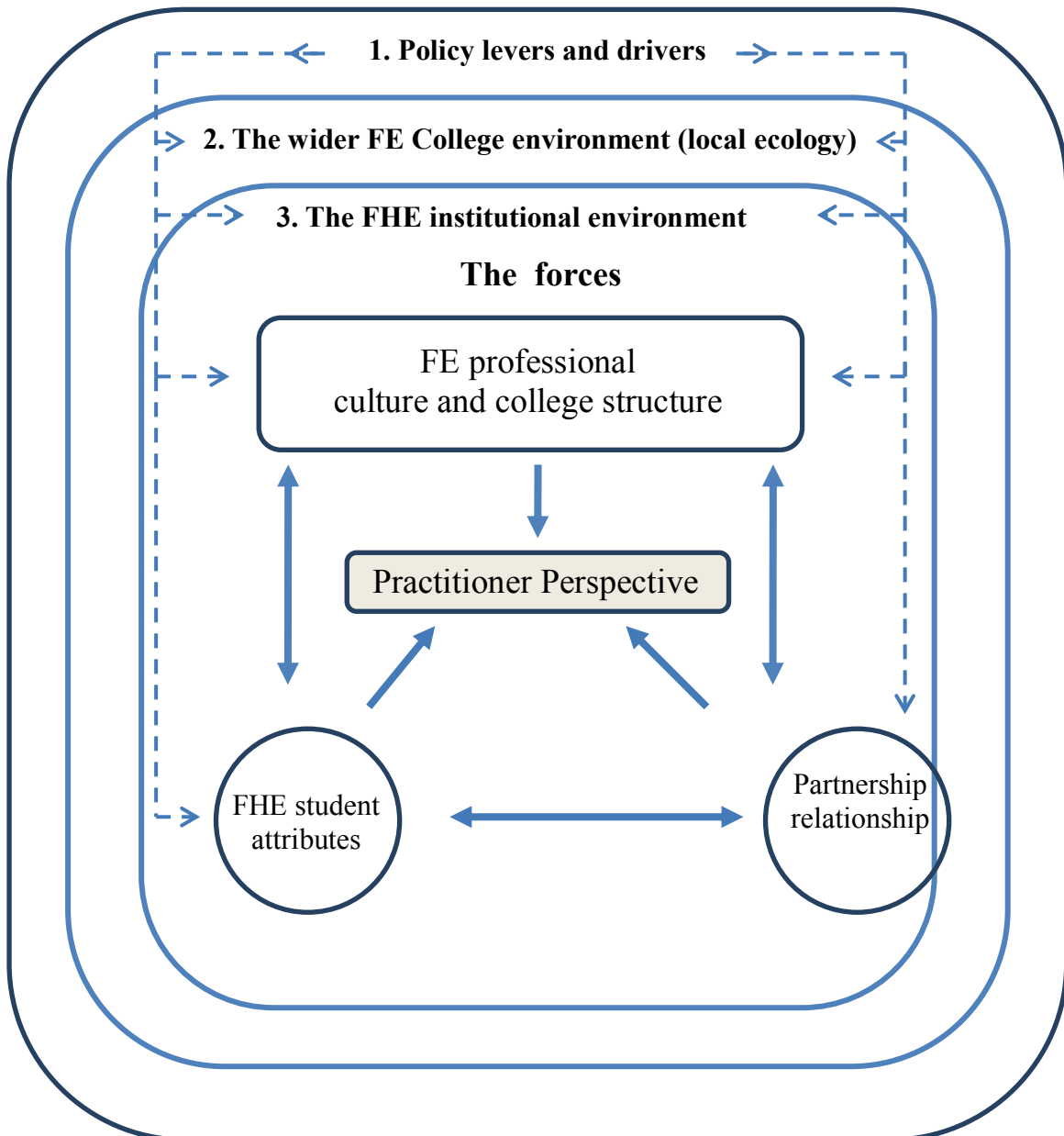
Most of FE's roots emanate from the 1920's when colleges were founded to meet the needs of local employers and communities (Huddleston and Unwin, 2008). As a result of this a college's geographical location exerts a powerful influence over its teaching and learning culture (Robson, 1998, Steer, *et al.*, 2007). However, FE's role has changed in response to local changes in business conditions, evolving student markets and government policy initiatives (Spours and Lucas, 1996). In more recent times, as Chapter 1 shows, the FE sector has been subjected to two major shifts due to policy steering; firstly, the Conservative Government's transformation into mass market system (Baker, 1989; Bradley, 1996; Chapter 1) followed by Labour's multi-agency micro-management approach (Watters, 2005; Stanton and Fletcher, 2006; Coffield *et al.*, 2008).

Policy steering should not be viewed in isolation from the number of other interrelating factors, which form complex relationships that shape the individual FE college. These operate at local college level, albeit tempered by national policy, to form what Coffield *et al.* (2008:156) coin as being '*local ecologies*' when describing '*the interrelationships of multiple factors that play out at local and institutional levels*'. Local environmental forces work in combination to produce distinctive college cultures, and the socialisation of practitioners who in turn translate policy levers to fit their own practice (Thomas, 2002; Edward, *et al.*, 2007; James and Biesta, 2007). These factors will affect all aspects of a FE college creating sets of sub-cultures throughout the organisation, included FHE relationships.

Figure 2 (pg.46) illustrates the major components of the FHE institutional environment, which is located in the 'wider college' context and subject to the colleges' 'local ecology'

and stakeholder policy translation. The major processes, or components, of the FHE environment consists of a subset of interrelating factors – or ‘Shaping’ forces that illustrates the dynamics of the FHE relationship and how they influence practitioner perspectives on HE in a FE context.

Figure 2: Composite forces of the FHE Institutional Environment



In this model, the policy translation process permeates throughout the FE college

environment and is re-contextualised by the forces in Level 3, who act as their own zone of translation. The diagram will be populated with the research findings and reproduced in the Conclusion.

Level 1: Policy levers and drivers

The outer layer of this model (Level 1) represents the wider policy context which influences FE and impacts on the change dynamics at the FHE institutional interface. The national policy framework has been evaluated in Chapter 1, where the impact of policy steering on the FE and HE sectors was described. Here it was argued that many of the state's earlier reforms had undermined the operating effectiveness of the institutions in FE and HE, with little consideration into the realities of professional practice (Bradley, 1996; Elliot, 1996; Randle and Brady, 1997b; Guile and Lucas, 1999; Shain and Gleeson, 1999).

Policy is re-contextualised by the stakeholders within their institutional setting as it competes with other factors from the wider FE environment (Spours *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, the importance of the practitioners' role in re-interpreting policy initiatives must also be taken into account (Shain and Gleeson, 1999). Edward *et al.* (2007) have argued that teacher professionals have a major mediating effect on the policy outcomes:

Their position is pivotal: from the perspective of policy-makers, teaching staff may be seen as the last link in the policy chain, the ultimate implementers whose behaviour they seek to change, if the experiences of learners is to change (Edward, *et al.*, 2007: 158).

Therefore, a question arises to what extent practitioners translate policy levers into their own practice and what other influences exist to create FE college cultures? Coffield *et al.* (2008) cite an evolving 'five lever policy model' that has helped fashion the Learning Skills Sector (LSS). The five levers that encompass the sector were; Planning, involving the coordination and transmission of government policies which are rarely mediated below the senior

management college level (Steer *et al.*, 2007; Coffield *et al.*, 2008); the two levers Targets and Funding that combined to produce the most dominant force in respect of their financial influence on a FE college and its practitioners (Spours *et al.*, 2007) and; Inspection process a major force within the FE environment as it can shape local reputations. In addition, these levers which shape the FE college environment can be viewed often viewed as hostile change elements by practitioners (Edward *et al.*, 2007). The effects of these, however, depend on the way individual colleges respond in the contexts of their local environment and individual college cultures (Spours *et al.*, 2007; Steer *et al.*, 2007).

In looking at the impact of policy levers on four FE colleges in their study Steer *et al.* (2007) adopted the concept of ‘local ecologies’ for part of the process to analyse the process of national FE policy mediation,

Thus, any analysis of the impact of policy must look at the particular configuration of policy levers within the wider political context, at the interactions of policy levers with local ecologies and at their mediation within institutions (Steer, *et al.*, 2007: 20).

Furthermore, these policy drivers will become further diluted at the FHE sub-level as they interact with the three constituent forces that influence the practitioners’ perspective on their HE partnership experiences.

Level 2: The wider FE College environment (local ecology)

This represents the FE college and its interactions with other stakeholder groupings within its surrounding environment. These local ‘environmental’ factors strongly feature the interactions of stakeholder groupings, such as local labour and skills levels, employment markets, employer demand, LLSCs learning partnerships, geo-demographic learner profiles, management and staff relationships, as well as FHE partnerships. All these stakeholder groups must be managed in terms of their interest and power relationships with the FE

college and in the context of national policy frameworks, according to Spours *et al.*

(2007:25):

The complexity of the FE college ecology makes these institutions highly vulnerable to constant shifts in different areas of policy and to mounting transaction costs from multiple accountability systems.

Taking into account the complexities of their local FE environments and the fact that FHE relationships represent a modest part of FE's overall business (HEFCE, 2007a), these partnerships may have a lower management priority with the possibility that this FE dominated landscape could impede professional practice when it comes to reproducing a HE experience.

FE colleges are complex institutions; each is different and has a distinct culture and sets sub-cultures (Robson, 1998, Parry *et al.*, 2004, James and Biesta, 2007), shaped by forces at both national and local levels (Spours *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, what happens at the wider FE college level will also determine the character of the FHE relationships.

Level 3: The FHE institutional environment

The FHE institutional environment in this model comprises of three constituent forces which influence the practitioners' perspective of FHE relationships, which also acts as a zone of policy translation when mediated by practitioners.

The Partnership relationship

Conservative Government policy focused on the reformation of the supply side of economy, where the public sector economics were dominated by the concept of new public management. This was to be achieved through the greater use of competition and efficiency measures (Hood, 1991; Randle and Brady, 1997a), which was a top-down centralised approach. The Labour Government (1997 to 2010) intended to produce a 'consensual

approach' in its policy steering strategies, based upon the concept of public partnerships, mutuality and common aims in public service. However these levers were still underpinned by a market mechanism philosophy, which Cardini (2006: 394) referred to as:

New Labour's widespread use of partnerships involved a reconstruction of its political meaning ... that combine to redefine partnerships as a new way of organising the delivery of social services that not only offers a better or more pragmatic alternative than state or market-focused strategies but also promotes collaboration and civil society participation in the definition of public policy.

This adaptive multi-agency/partnership approach to solve overlapping and inter-related problems was viewed as a workable solution and a fresh approach to New Public Management. Cardini (2006) in citing Newman (2000:53) described their approach '*joined up solutions to joined-up problems*'. However, this system was not without its critics, who argued that the market forces agenda still dominated the other policies of social inclusion and institutional flexibility and that the state became more interventionist when policy gaps and reversals occurred (Hall, 2003; Coffield *et al.*, 2008). Coffield *et al.* (2008:137) referred to this as a hybrid or adaptive 'neo-liberal regime', philosophy and cites Hall (2003) in how they reverted back to market forces when policies went adrift:

Policy tensions and confusions have become endemic as the government continues to slide one agenda under the other – the 'double shuffle' Coffield *et al.* (2008: 138).

Under New Labour substantive growth occurred in the use of educational partnerships to steer policy. These relationships had diverse structures and varied from being formal providers to looser collaborative network arrangements, (Lumby and Morrison, 2006). The rationale behind their development was to identify and anticipate learning and skill needs using a bottom up approach, which resulted in a plethora of partnership arrangements operating across the geographical spectrum (Watters, 2005; Cooper, 2007). Their membership consisted of a range of stakeholders including the Government, Local Authority

Development Agencies, Regional Development Agencies, employers and the educational providers. Although these partnerships differed greatly in terms of their membership, role and effectiveness, they did possess similar characteristics. These traits involved mutuality of objective and a belief in synergistic advantage (pooling of skills and resources), possibly unattainable by an individual stakeholder group (York Consultancy, 2004). Watters (2005) in citing Johnstone (2003a) believed that partnership success depended upon shared goals, clear mutual advantage, effective teamwork, leadership control and an underpinning pecuniary element. Many of these factors resonate with the existing FE college partnership arrangements, particularly those that involve FHE franchise relationships.

Role and characteristics of FHE Partnerships

According to McTavish (2006), FE colleges are involved in three types of cross- sector partnership arrangements:

1. The FE/School and Community Interface which was established to improve links between local schools and the wider community, usually with the aim of improving feeder links to the college.
2. The FE/Entrepreneurial Interface, set up to foster links with local enterprises to address the needs of the local economy and business development needs; nominally consisting of members from local authorities, wider academic community and business leaders.
3. The FHE interface set up and maintained to provide a higher education experience, usually on a widening participation platform, typically with a local HE institution franchisor as its main partner. However, the exact nature and membership of these FHE partnerships varied according to regional and individual

stakeholder needs, policy lever mediation and local environments (Doyle, 2000).

There is no single definition to cover the FHE franchised partnership relationship, but some effective descriptions do exist (Bird, 1996; Doyle, 2001 and Trim, 2001). A FHE relationship is often described in terms of a process using inter-changeable terminology such as *'partnership', 'alliance', 'network' and 'collaboration'*. They are dissimilar to the other educational partnerships due to their emphasis on a business relationship (Doyle, 2001), involving formal contracts, target setting and viewed as an investment to secure mutual financial growth (Abramson, 1996).

Bird (1996) used two operative definitions to describe the collaborate functions between FE and HE institutions; first, one based on his earlier research and second, a criterion developed from the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC, 1993). Bird's own research produced a set of four classifications, categorising FHE relationships in accordance with the management of products and power relationships (Bird *et al.*, 1993).

1. The Franchising relationship - a one way process, where a programme would be designed and developed solely by one institution (normally a university) to be wholly implemented by the franchisee, without any opportunity for input from the FE partner.
2. An Associate College arrangement - where the FHE relationship involves a high level of collaboration between two types of institutions, involving joint processes for the planning and development of programme delivery. This relationship would often involve combined bidding for funding, normally as a result of one partner's inability to solely deliver the course.
3. Validation relationship - where the HE provider gives accreditation for a course

owned by the FE provider, usually in the form of an access agreement; for example, '2 + 2' systems, where the first two years are provided by the FE college (with a Foundation year 0 added); or a '2 + 1' programme such as a HND, or Foundation degree which acts as the feeder qualification for one year 'top-up' at a main university site.

4. Access relationship - which has courses developed by the FE College as a basis for student entry to a 'partner university'.

In fact, HEQC (1993) produced similar models focusing on the nature of the agreement, these being: the Articulation agreement where the FE college's own sub-degree provision students are given direct access to degrees at the HE institution. The Joint Provision arrangement exists when a FE college is responsible for curriculum and quality assurance provision, which is by a HE institution. The Franchising Provision arrangement, a programme developed by the HE institution but delivered by the FE college, normally on a sub-contracting basis. Associate College arrangements (as above) but allows fuller collaboration, where the validation and accreditation of the course is owned by one (normally the university) but delivered by another college typically on the '2 + 2' or '2+1' system – mentioned earlier.

Although all four models are currently in operation, it is the 'Franchise' Relationship approach that is preferred by HEFCE, where a lead HE institution is responsible for quality and the channelling of funding and ownership of the student registration (HEFCE, 2003a).

Trim (2001) views FHE relationships primarily as being a business relationship, with a dominant university partner placing emphasis upon its legality and authority. Here the institutional arrangements are more akin to an outsourcing arrangement, between contractor and sub-contractor, than a collaborative arrangement on the premise of mutuality of

educational mission. However, they tend to be non-confrontational:

A franchise operation is a loose coupling between educational institutions with one partner having the authority to award a qualification and other partner be responsible for the delivery of the educational product and service. (Trim 2001:111).

Trim's (2001) categorisation bears the closest resemblance to the network model in the case study, although it does not take into account the complex relationships that constitute a FE college environment and the difficulty in defining a typical FHE relationship. For example, Tunbridge and Shobrook (2005), argue that no single model can be applied to a FHE arrangement due to the diverse nature and cultures of FE colleges (also see Steer *et al.*, 2007); HCFCE (2003) believes the nature of their funding relationships has an impact (i.e. directly or indirectly funded) and Parry *et al.* (2004), the proportion of HE and FE work undertaken (mixed economy colleges) by the individual FE college.

Regardless of the nature of the collaborative agreement, tangible mutual benefits exist for the partnership institutions otherwise their development would not have been sustained.

Abramson (1996) believed there are major financial benefits for the HE provider, which includes a 'top-slice' of the student fees, further access to additional widening participation revenues (see Chapter 1) and a future income stream available from 'feeder' students onto their top-up degrees. A further strategic advantage exists through the development of access and progression agreements to 'lock in' local provider colleges and enhance regional status (Abramson, 1996; Connolly *et al.*, 2007). From the FE colleges' perspective, these benefits involve additional revenue streams (Selby, 1996); enhanced status and reputation (Young, 2002); opening up of new markets and opportunities for diversification (Doyle, 2002); greater scope for widening participation and 'internal student' (ladder) progression, (Smith and Boccock, 1999; Doyle, 2002).

Developments at the FHE interface

The period from the early 1960's to mid-1980's saw a slow rate of expansion in terms of the volume of HE undertaken by FE colleges, peaking in the 1970's with a reported 11 per cent of all English colleges offering HE provision (Bird, 1996). This was collectively known as Advanced Further Education, mainly consisting of part-time courses with the decision over the provision largely resting with the LEA (discussed earlier), with national policy very much on the periphery (Parry and Thompson, 2006; Bird, 1996). During this period there was evidence of collaborative FHE partnerships. These were, however, rather limited in scope and tended to arise from *ad hoc* access agreements (Validation Arrangement), normally between a polytechnic or HE college and its 'local' FE provider (Parry and Thompson, 2006). At this time there were little or no state directional policy initiatives in play. This meant that the 'non-collaborative agreements' in operation were loosely under the control of the respective LEA, which made the decisions over allocation of courses and funding provision based upon local needs, with quality control measures largely under the responsibility of the awarding bodies. The courses offered within the FE college sector portfolios consisted of a limited amount of degree provision, with a substantive amount of part-time 'sub-degrees' (mainly HNC's), that were nationally recognised and externally assessed/validated under the old Business Education Council and Council for National Academic Awards awarding bodies, or by public examination. Additionally, individual colleges offered specialised 'other high level' work, such as specialist training courses for local and regional employers, for example, diplomas and certificates for local authority employees such as trading standards officers and the engineering trades. In the majority of cases, the responsibility for delivery rested with the FE college and was under 'its own name'. The bulk of this work was carried out for Non-Advanced Further Education, leading to the national qualifications, now known as, Levels 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Regarding the Advanced Further Education provision, there was little

planning until the introduction of Education Reform Act (1988).

A second phase, involved major expansion at the FHE interface which took place from mid-1980's until the HE places were capped in 1993/1994. By the early 1990's, 51 per cent of all FE colleges had reported being involved in a wide range of HE collaborative work (Bird, 1996). Most of this was described as being franchise work, in association with single or multiple partners, primarily being HND and HNC programmes, that is '2+1' and '2 + 2' models discussed earlier. By the time it was decided to halt HE expansion (1993/1994) the number of students studying on HE courses in FE had reached 32,000, a fourfold increase compared to the period 1990/1991 (HEFCE, 1995). This increase in HE student numbers, however, only ever accounted for a small proportion of FE's total income.

The third phase occurred during the post-Dearing era. This saw further growth in FHE franchised student numbers, with current figures in the region of 51,000 for the period 2004/05 (HCFCE, 2007a). The HMI survey, *'Higher Education in Further Education Colleges'* (DES, 1991a), provided a foundation of principles which formed a bedrock for further development and expansion of collaborative agreements between institutions from the two sectors (FE and HE). These were later to be enhanced and taken up by the Dearing Committee and formed part of HEFCE policies and practices. From the FE colleges' perspective, advancement in collaborative provision was a welcome addition to their product portfolio, with the benefits mentioned earlier including access to new market segments, replacement of declining products, status enhancement, and individual staff motivation and development (Abramson *et al.*, 1996). Also Doyle (2001) believed that the FHE interface was well placed to provide a dual role of API expansion and social equity:

The current policy mantra in the UK of widening participation is driven by a combination of utilitarian and progressive perspectives: a push to accelerate the move

into a truly mass system of higher education, whilst attempting to diversify the social mix of its beneficiaries (Doyle, 2001: 11).

The FE sector came to prominence as a vehicle for the Government's future HE expansion plans, originally in the HND's market and later for Foundation degrees, as well as a widening participation label. One precept emanating from Dearing was that FE colleges would be expected to work in partnership with local HE institutions, which Parry (2006) classifies as being '*semi-compulsory partnerships*, as the HE institution would hold the quality remit as well as the funding and thus be the dominant partner. It appears that the initial policy levers served to incentivise the movement into FHE relationships, albeit indirectly, as a result of the massification of the HE system and the reaction of the polytechnic sector wishing to sustain growth. However, later policy steering became more proactive, from the late 1990's with Labour's HE agenda to widen access, increased participation rates and reform the sub-degree market producing a more regulated system (Fryer, 1997; Kennedy, 1997; NICHE, 1997).

The FHE student attributes

The premise for developing HE in the FE sector was based on its 'claims of distinctiveness' in catering for students from a widening participation background. FE's value-added HE model involved teaching to smaller class sizes, greater individual support and prioritised teaching resources. It was intended that the student HE learning experience should be comparable to that at a main HE institution. The Dearing Committee (NICHE, 1997) viewed these FE attributes as a positive platform for further sub-degree expansion, especially for widening participation students. However, these claims for distinctiveness have been called into question on the grounds of quantifiability and the inability to benchmark within a diverse FE college sector (Parry *et al.*, 2004).

FE professional culture and college structure

Initially FE colleges tended to recruit staff directly from the trade occupations and

professions, meaning emphasis was placed on job specific skills rather than a recognised teaching qualification (Robson, 1998). The diverse backgrounds of their practitioners created a fragmented approach to teaching and learning styles within the colleges. This situation began to improve from the 1940s onwards, due to a limited amount of state intervention, as more FE practitioners attained accredited teacher status. By the early 1970's approximately 45 per cent of the FE profession had recognised teacher status, cumulating into 60 per cent by the mid-1990s – with the inclusion of sixth form colleges in 1993 (Young, *et al.*, 1995; Robson, 1998). This trend, however, began to reverse during the 1990s as a result of the rationalisation of the FE sector and the ensuing industrial unrest, greater 'casualisation' of the workforce and high staff turnover (Robson 1998; Colley *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, the diverse nature of much of FE's work, which Robson (1998:588) describes as the '*labyrinthine nature of the technical and vocational education*', resulted in creation of weak professional identities in FE colleges. What has existed historically, however, are sub-cultures operating within FE colleges, which have evolved around curriculum and academic groupings (Gleeson and Mardle, 1980; Colley *et al.*, 2007), with the colleges themselves becoming the main socialisation agent for practitioners (Tipton, 1973 cited in Robson, 1996:595).

There have been recent attempts to redress issues of professional identity, training and staff development through the introduction of the Further Education National Training Organisation standards (Colley *et al.*, 2007). However, this strategy has been hindered on account of the diverse occupational backgrounds of the practitioner entrants and their propensity to import norms and values learnt at their previous workplace (Robson, 1996). Furthermore, the lack of a formalised FE teaching background is due to practitioners joining the profession in mid-career, that Colley *et al.*, (2007:174) portray as being the '*accidental tutor*'. The authors discovered that many FE lecturers' occupational backgrounds ranged from the academic/profession to the vocational skills and trade activities. Their research

illustrated that practitioners tended to bring in their own occupational identities to their teaching role, viewing themselves as specialist practitioners who happen to teach, rather than professional teachers (also see Young, *et al.*, 1995). James and Biesta (2008:127) also found many of their research subjects had no initial career plans to be in FE but had '*slipped into the role through a range of unforeseen and unplanned events*', often via the part-time employment or '*long interview*' route.

As a result of this diversity in FE practitioner background (the variations in vocational and academic) an argument exists as to whether a cohesive professional identity actually exists in colleges:

little is known about its practitioners, their dispositions and how they define their sense of professionalism in the changing context of their work (James and Biesta 2007: 126).

In looking at post- incorporation changes in the FE sector, Guile and Lucas (1999) postulated that the change levers in operation throughout the 1990s had brought about a re-conceptualisation of the practitioner's role. This change was broadly described as being a redefinition of practice, involving a movement of teaching emphasis from specialist subject knowledge and reflective practice to a broader 'holistic practitioner' college-wide approach. The authors identify five shifts that have occurred in practice which encompass:

- a move from subject knowledge to curriculum knowledge and how it relates to other subjects;
- teacher centred to learner centred pedagogic knowledge (expertise in assignment design, group work, tutorial skills);
- intra to inter-professional knowledge (blurring of roles they need to possess specialist knowledge beyond their subjects, such as career counselling, pastoral care,);
- classroom to organisation knowledge (involving greater collaboration and team work);

- insular to connective knowledge (beyond the college linking their knowledge to the outside world).

Moreover, these concepts are supported by James and Biesta (2008), when discussing the ‘casualisation’ of the FE workforce and changing roles, who found that the prospect of job insecurity produced a high degree of worker flexibility, in colleges:

The flexibility we mentioned remains a facet of work for many – perhaps most-practitioners if they become more established in colleges. it is quite common to find people working outside of their comfort zone in colleges, at least for some of the week, teaching a unit or module in an area they feel is beyond their field of expertise but simultaneously feeling they could no or should not refuse to do so (James and Biesta, 2008:12).

These low levels of collective professional identity appear to exist throughout the FE college sector. This is due to the diverse former occupational backgrounds of its practitioners; the dissimilarities in their teaching roles; no formal entry requirements (i.e. teaching qualification) and the casualisation of the workforce and have precluded the establishment of a unified and identifiable culture beyond that of Guile and Lucas’ (1999) ‘holistic practitioner’. Robson (1998) believed the typical FE structural arrangements, along curriculum department lines, led to the establishment of sets of sub-cultures:

Not surprisingly, this diversity in backgrounds of FE teachers and in the nature of the work they undertake leads to the development of a number of quite distinctive cultures, often within one college there are many cultures within any one institution, as many, in fact, as there are occupational or subject groups (Robson 1998: 594-595).

These sub-cultures are developed through internal socialisation processes, which are subjected to the influences of the practitioner’s own trade and industry experiences (Robson, 1998; Gleeson and Mardle, 1980). Colleges are complex organisations, ever adapting their ‘*Learning Cultures*’ (James and Biesta, 2008: 13) to changes in their local and national environment. Of prime interest to the research is the extent to which their sub-cultures have

been adapted within the FHE paradigm, if at all.

Summary

The Labour Government intended to develop FHE partnerships as a cost effective method to expand HE access (HEFCE, 1999a; Parry and Thompson, 2002). This was to be achieved through a multi-agency partnership approach (Watters, 2005; Stanton and Fletcher, 2006), whilst maintaining the 'market system' introduced by the Conservative Government (Hall, 2003; Coffield, *et al.*, 2008). As a result of this strategy, institutions in both sectors, struggled to cope with the myriad of policy initiatives whilst they attempted to balance the needs of their local stakeholders.

Figure 2 (pg. 46) illustrated the inter-related nature of the forces that influence the FHE environment that ultimately shapes the practitioners' perspective on HE partnerships. The effects of these policy levers and drivers permeate throughout the FE college's organisational structure (Levels 2 and 3); however they become diluted as practitioners and their managers deal with conflicting stakeholder expectations within the college and its local environment.

The FHE institutional environment (Level 3) constitutes a sub-set of the wider FE college environment and consists of three inter-relating forces that shape the practitioner's experience of FHE partnerships. Each of these elements is driven by both policy levers and local environmental factors (ecology), with the latter acting as a further zone of policy translation in relation to FHE practice.

The model component 'FE professional culture and college structure' is representative of the set of sub-cultures which operate on curriculum departmental lines within a college and acts as a main socialisation agent (Robson, 1998; Thomas, 2002, James and Biesta, 2008).

Consequently the operating dynamics of the three elements (Level 3) result in the FE

professional culture and college structure proving to be the dominant force that shapes the practitioner perspective. Nevertheless, all three elements work in combination to produce the 'FHE effect'.

The Dearing Committee (NICHE, 1997) recognised the effectiveness of FHE partnerships as a method of widening participation and recommended further development of collaborative provision between the two sectors, but with the proviso that students receive a comparable HE experience. In the model (Fig.2: pg. 46), the Partnership relationship is driven by policy levers (such as, increases in student sub-degree places), where the relationship is defined on business lines (Trim, 2001). The University also has its own stakeholder commitments from within its own local ecology and, technically, is a part of the wider FE College environment, this is indicated in the model by straddling the 'element' across Levels 2 and 3. Of interest are the power relationships between the two types of institutions and the extent to which this shapes professional practice in the FHE context?

The FHE students are typically viewed as coming from educationally marginalised backgrounds and require a greater level of individual support, which can be provided by FE colleges (HEFCE, 1996; Parry and Thompson, 2002). In this situation, the needs of FHE students should drive the nature of the teaching process; however, other factors at play in the wider FE College environment (Level 2) as the FE college operating structure and pedagogic approach may override these aims to produce a diluted HE experience.

The dynamics of this model help explain how FHE relationships are operating within a FE college context and shape the practitioners' experience. These practitioners have a fundamental effect on a FE college's ability to reproduce a HE experience for its students. However, they are absent from the decision making process and their voices are largely silent on the matter.

Chapter 3: Research context and approach

Introduction

The focus of the research is the experiences of FE practitioners, including course managers, who are working within a FHE institutional environment. As argued in Chapter 2, there are a set of three inter-related forces (Partnership relationship, FHE student attributes, FE professional culture and college structure), which translate policy levers and act as a catalyst within the workings of this FHE partnership. By exploring these through the practitioners' experiences, the research sheds light on the nature of the HE experience from their perspective and ways in which policy levers have affected the FHE relationship.

The unit of research was an established FHE network, which was analysed via a case study approach with the focus on the FE colleges. These institutions were selected on the grounds of being an established FHE network; their network model had been cited as 'good practice' by HEFCE (QAA1) and because of the diversity of the three partner FE colleges.

Key Research Questions

The following research questions result from the analysis of the effects of policy levers in the massification of both the FE and HE sectors and the way in which they were translated in the local learning ecology:

- 1.** How did policy and policy levers mould the FE college environment and the FHE interface and to what effect on practitioners and their experiences?
- 2.** What were the FE practitioner perspectives on the FHE experience as professionals and for learners, in context of:
 - i.** their competitive environments and characteristics of the student cohorts;
 - ii.** the effects of FE culture, funding and accountability mechanisms on the

- iii. FHE experience;
 - iv. issues of teaching and learning in a FHE environment?
3. What questions do the perspectives identified raise for further research and debate in relation to the FHE interface?

Context

The aims, therefore, of this research were to investigate the policy levers and related issues by examining the implications of delivering franchised HE programmes, through the experiences of the lecturers and their managers - whose collective voice I will argue appears to have been largely overlooked by the literature, despite the fact they have a substantive effect upon the quality and character of the student learning experience.

This was a relatively small-scale study, which emphasised depth of focus by adopting a case study investigative approach (Denscombe, 1998), using an extensive sample of practitioners from an established FHE franchised network. Therefore, it is important to highlight that this was not a small sample-based investigation, but a intended exhaustive sample taken from a relatively small population. The majority of the interviewees taught on a multiple number of HE subjects in their college for the Franchise Programme and, therefore, had in-depth experience to bring to the research process. At two of the colleges the sample was exhaustive, whilst at the third college there were difficulties in gaining access to the lecturers, which was due to the diverse number of teachers on the programme and unwillingness to participate.

In reviewing the literature on FHE partnerships, it became clear that there was a substantive gap in the research regarding the practitioners' experience of working in a franchised FHE partnership arrangement. Much of the existing research tended to focus on the structural issues arising from FHE partnership arrangements. For instance, Cardina's (2006) discourse on the mismatch between the political rhetoric and realities of partnerships which placed an

emphasis on producing the appropriate tools, and the provision of exemplars to ensure effective planning and procedures when instigating FHE relationships (Bridge *et al.*, 2003; Johnson, 2003b; Watters, 2005). Work on conflict resolution and institutional cultural clashes included research on the effectiveness of different types of FE-partner relationships (McTavish, 2006); managerial commitment and expertise (Trim, 2001); power and cultural issues at play within the FHE relationship (Tett *et al.*, 2003; MacFarlane *et al.*, 2007), gender management issues (Clegg and McNulty, 2002) or the development of models to analyse the dynamics of partnership workings (Hudson, 2004). Research whose parameters involved the widening participation role of FE and which focused on the nature of widening access relationships and social justice included Dhillon, 2005 and Garrod and Macfarlane, 2006; institutional strategies for the implementation of widening participation initiatives were discussed by Smith and Boccock, 1999; Doyle, 2001; Lloyd and Griffiths, 2008.

Studies more directly involving practitioners' views and experiences tended to treat the topic in a secondary manner (Stanton and Fletcher, 2006); or had parameters emphasising the organisational cultural aspects being studied, such as MacFarlane *et al.*'s (2007) case study on practitioner attitudes and experiences arising from a FE and HE institutional merger. Even the recent publication on FHE relationships by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS, 2012) paid little emphasis on the teaching practitioner's viewpoint as it selected students, managers and employer stakeholder groups as its primary research source.

However, two pieces of research, Young (2002) and Harwood and Harwood (2004), placed an emphasis on the practitioners' experience and perceptions of operating in a FHE environment and have helped to inform this research. Young's (2002) action research involved a single college case study, based upon a 30 per cent sample drawn from the college's FHE practitioners. This work discussed issues of FHE lecturer professional identity

and commitment, managerial support, and recognition for scholarly activities, which was set against a turbulent FE background arising from the sector reforms of the 1990's. Harwood and Harwood's (2006) research, to some extent informed by Young's earlier findings, also placed emphasis on examining scholarly activity and staff development opportunities. This too was 'internal', in the sense that it was undertaken by a university to explore the roles, motivations and teaching issues of practitioners from its partner colleges.

Both Young's and the Harwoods' findings were relevant to this research approach, in helping to identify further issues to explore and as a benchmark for any comparative findings.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that both sets of analysis had their limitations; they had an 'internal action research' approach based in a single institution, with a focus on professional development and identity and did not explore more fully the practitioners' teaching experience.

In the light of the above, this area involving FHE practitioner views on working in network partnerships still remains relatively under-researched, especially their teaching experiences and the forces that have helped to shape their role.

Research sites – the University and its FE Partners

The research site consists of a network comprising three FE colleges and the university. In order to maintain anonymity the colleges have been re-named as Dukesbury, Westbridgeford and Wentworth, and the university is simple referred to as 'the University'. The FE colleges are all located in boroughs surrounding the University. The franchise partnership's roots can be traced back to the early 1990's when Westbridgeford was approached by the University with an offer to operate one of its HNDs in Business and Finance. Dukesbury and Wentworth have links with the University that go back much further which transcend the network partnership.

The University

The University is a large provider of higher education with approximately 18,000 students, of whom nearly 15,000 are full-time. It is organised into six faculties and located in four main campuses that are close to, or within, a major UK conurbation. The two most recent QAA Inspection Audits on the quality of the University's provision, both as a general institution and for its collaborative provision, awarded it a 'Broad Confidence' classification for all of its key indicators (QAA1 and QAA2).

The faculty is responsible for programmes involving the legal, business and management fields and typically selects students for entry with 240 UCAS tariff points, or higher, for most its courses. Normally it does not rely on the UCAS clearing system to achieve this, except in the case of network colleges, which rely heavily on this system for student recruitment.

The product portfolio at the Network colleges consists of the first two years of a Bachelor of Arts degree in business and management, a two- year HND in Business and Finance and a half-degree award in Marketing (one college only). Although according to HEFCE (2008) Business, Management and Administration programmes represent the largest types of franchised HE programmes (15%) this was not the prime basis for selection, instead it was the organisational attributes of the Network. Furthermore, at the time of the research, the Network was in the embryonic stage of a part-time foundation degree offer, which was not fully formed and did warrant further investigation. Once the network students had satisfactorily completed their two years at a partner college they had the option to transfer onto the final year of the degree programme at the University's main site; or in the case of HND students to enrol on the 'top-up' degree. At its main campus the University offered the Network's management degree, with an entry requirement of 180 to 240 UCAS tariff points, compared to 120 tariff points for the same course at the Network colleges or in the case of

HND students between 40 to 80 entry points.

The quality and administrative arrangements between the University and its network partners was formalised in a Memorandum of Cooperation, a five-year document endorsed by the Network's senior management. This sets out the foundation for the workings of the Network, involving the students' status, rights of partners, establishment of operational personnel, physical and financial resources and withdrawal timeframes. Allocation of student numbers, to the Network colleges was 'negotiated' on an annual basis. Included in the Memorandum was a statement that students received dual status, equal access to both institutions' facilities, for which the university top-sliced 30 per cent from the student fee income, with the remainder allocated to the individual colleges on an incremental basis. No uplift code monies (postcode premium) were re-allocated to the colleges, but the additional income from overseas students was forwarded. Curriculum and assessment design generally emanated from the University, although technically ownership was within the Network. The Network aimed to have a common framework for the launch and submission of coursework, setting of examinations, course committees and programme and exam boards. At subject level the standardisation of assessments and examinations took place between network members, on a regular basis, together with an annual staff development day as well as some ad-hoc training opportunities, such as e-learning techniques.

Dukesbury College

According to its Ofsted report (Ofsted 1) Dukesbury College is a general FE college, situated in a central town location, within close proximity to the University. It operates in an area of relatively low unemployment and little social deprivation and has approximately 2,600 full-time and 450 part-time students, nearly one-third of its students are from multi-ethnic backgrounds and 75 per cent travel into the borough for their education and training needs

(Ofsted 1). The teaching quality for its Business Studies provision was judged as ‘satisfactory’ in its recent Ofsted report, and a high proportion of its students’ progressed onto HE, but few remain at the college to achieve this.

Initially Dukesbury’s contribution to the Network’s portfolio consisted of two small HNC groups. However, as a result of the Dearing recommendations, which removed capping for sub-degree places, the University was allocated further HND student places, which facilitated Dukesbury’s entry into the Network on a full-time student basis. During the academic year 2005/06 Dukesbury had approximately 140 full-time registered network students, consisting of 80 year one and 60 year two places. This comprised of one HND group per year and five management degree students groups – the highest number of students in the Network. The rapid expansion was aided by Dukesbury’s relative proximity to the University, making it more attractive to potential students, which had caused some consternation amongst the other two colleges as they both experienced recruitment difficulties.

At Dukesbury, the HE delivery structure was identical to their FE college model. All HE classes were divided into one hour separate sessions, with two hours normally allocated per class for each study unit, not necessarily run consecutively. All core subjects were taught to individual designated classes, whilst options classes were made up of students from the two programmes. Staffing of the programmes comprised two full-time lecturers who were responsible for the majority of teaching, along with their course manager. The lecturers were contracted to teach up to 25 hours per week but normally teach about 22 hours, taking into account remission for such things as tutor activities. The two HE lecturers taught three and six units respectively, but did not see preparation time as an issue. The rest of the course was serviced by other staff from within the department or by visiting tutors. This was by far the largest of the three franchisees in terms of student numbers, consisting of a higher proportion

of BA degree to HND students. The majority of students were recruited at the 'A' Level clearing stage during late August to September, using the University's clearing systems. Both programmes were located in the Business Department and used the teaching delivery strategies as for their FE students.

Wentworth College

Wentworth's Ofsted report (Ofsted 2) classified it as tertiary college; it is situated in an out of town location, approximately 11 miles from the University's main site. Their catchment area is designated as having a low unemployment and deprivation rating (Ofsted 2), which was reflected in its student mix. It educates approximately 3,800 students per year, the majority of whom (90 per cent) are under 18 years of age, and of whom nearly 50 per cent travel into the area. Its major provision is at Level 3, which chiefly comprises of GCSE A1 and A2 Level subjects, plus some Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE). Furthermore over 80 per cent of its students progressed onto HE – but rarely stayed on at the college to do this. Its most recent Ofsted report judged the teaching quality to be 'good' or 'better' for its Business Studies subjects.

This college's HE links with the University pre-dated that of its network association, when it had its own HND and HNC courses validated by the University. The College switched to the Network in the mid-1990s, due to changes in the criteria for validation and funding requirement. The College offered three franchised programmes in total, the HND in Business and Finance (40 students), the BA Management degree (50 students), and a half degree in Marketing (10 students) which was taught in conjunction with the management degree. Core unit groups were taught to individual classes on a basis of two hours per subject, which ran consecutively (in the case of year two double core units the contact is four hours), with electives made up of classes from the whole cohort. There was one dedicated HE teacher, the

course manager, plus a second lecturer (head of year), each with a predominant HE teaching portfolio. The remainder of the teaching team was mainly acquired from the GSCE A level programmes, which resulted in a relatively large team of subject specialists. Staff contact time, at the college, was an average of 22 hours with the lecturers teaching a relatively narrower range of subjects, with more hours per class.

Westbridgeford College

Westbridgeford is a large provider of general and adult education operating from several main sites in an inner city location, approximately seven miles from the University. It has over 18,000 students many of whom live in areas classified as being socially disadvantaged, that is, associated with high levels of unemployment and social deprivation (Ofsted 3). Most students are adults, with fewer than 1000 between the ages of 16-19 years; nearly three quarters of the college's student population live in 'uplift' postcode areas and over half are from minority ethnic grouping. Compared to the other Network colleges, there is a higher propensity of vocation courses on offer, particularly at Levels 1 and 2 and a relatively small amount of GCSE A1 and A2 provision. Many of its business studies students had decided to continue their HE education at the college, mainly through 'ladder progressions' from its access courses, accounting for nearly one- third of its HE cohorts. In its most recent Ofsted report (Ofsted 3), the College's its business education programmes were judged as 'satisfactory'.

Westbridgeford joined the Network in the early 1990s, initially offering a full-time HND Business and Finance course, followed by a replacement to an existing HNC in business, and finally the degree in management studies. Its Network student numbers (2005/2006) consisted of 55 students in Year One, comprising 18 HND and 37 management degree students, who are normally taught as three separate groups for core subjects and then jointly

for options units. Year Two consists of 31 students, one HND and one degree, the relatively small second year cohort has necessitated co-teaching across the subjects (BA degree and HND students combined). Allocations of teaching time are on a basis of two hours per unit, but some subjects do have a lead lecture approach. Contractual teaching hours were similar to the other two colleges with contact hours of 24 per week. Those interviewed taught on a number of HE subjects ranging between three and six, plus a number of 'other' business subjects at Levels 2 and 3 (AVCE and Access courses).

Memorandum of Co-operation

Under the Memorandum of Cooperation (Network Agreement) each college was required to appoint a Field Director (referred to as a manager in the case) who would be responsible for the day- to- day management of their franchise programme and provide a linkage between the University and the college. In addition, each college was required to appoint an administrator to support the programmes (NVD, 2004). Curriculum management and delivery methods, beyond the assessment requirements, were left up to the individual college, which largely followed their FE teaching model. All three colleges operated on similar managerial lines, with each Franchise Programme located within a business department, with the Field Director reporting to a departmental head whose remit predominately consisted of FE courses. Moreover, no evidence existed that the Franchise programmes were treated as separate entities, by the colleges, as they were taught on the same lines their FE courses.

Similarities and differences

The three colleges had elements of both commonality and distinctiveness. These differences were due to their respective organisational cultures derived from their market positioning over time and reaction to 'local ecologies' (Steer *et al.*, 2007). Their 'commonality' relates to the requirements of the University that they follow its standard programme syllabi and

assessment processes. It was these two factors that, fundamentally, led to the decision to select these institutions to form the sample.

In respect of their HE provision, all three colleges had successfully operated within this Network for a substantial amount of time, although not necessary in the partnership form described here. From the Network perspective, the colleges' main vulnerabilities centred on HE student recruitment and retention, as well as having to compete with each other for students numbers. Each FE college had its particular strengths and weaknesses, Westbridgeford is the largest of the colleges but competed in a saturated local FE market recruiting traditional widening participation students and struggles to maintain both staff and students; Wentworth had a strong reputation as a FE provider particularly for A levels and post-16 provision; similarly Dukesbury has a good reputation and reasonable high demand for its FE courses.

All three colleges were operating under the pressures and constraints of a challenging and constantly changing FE environment, which impacted on them at national and local level (discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). They were vulnerable to various policy levers emanating from the LSC and their local LLSCs, which had been dominating their respective FE cultures for a number of years. Therefore, the extent to which a HE student experience could be replicated in these circumstances warranted investigation.

The case study approach

The research was a qualitative case study involving groups of practitioners drawn from the sample of the three colleges operating the FHE franchise network. The focus for the primary research was based upon the voice of the FHE practitioners, categorised into two groups – lecturers and their managers. Moreover, it was decided to produce a set of key vignettes (see

Research Approach) to demonstrate balance within the sample frame and reinforce the primary data.

The research stance emanates from the interpretative approach as opposed to the positivist paradigm. The rationale for this is that people have different accounts of reality and the role of social science is to record with appropriate deference, according to Beck (1979):

The purpose of social science is to understand social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape the action they take within that reality While the social sciences do not reveal ultimate truth, they do help make sense of our world. Beck (1979:26).

Therefore, it is impossible to deal in absolute facts as people are actors and much of their actions are dependent on the context in which they find themselves: as organisations change so will their experiences and opinions.

This is therefore a qualitative research methodology employing a single case study approach. In citing Schramm (1971) Yin (1994) defines the term 'case study' in relation to its exploratory role (trait) opposed to a explanatory or positivist trait:

... it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what results. Schramm, 1971 in Yin (1994:11).

Case studies are more to do with an approach rather than a method. This was a relevant strategy when dealing with context of this project, when looking at policy drivers (*why*); the impacts on the FHE sector (*how*) and impact on the practitioners (*what*). Moreover, case studies also offer the possibility of analysis of complex interactions within particular settings; that is, three individual colleges with their own set cultural values. Intrinsicly, the rationale for this approach is the context of the research site, a small group of colleges operating in a franchise partnership arrangement with a local university. The research adopted Yin's (1994) three-fold criteria for researching single case studies – criticality, uniqueness and revelatory. In terms of criticality, the argument stems from the fact that the research site was a 15-year

old established partnership model, cited as an area of good practice, and therefore warranted investigation.

With reference to the approach, the focus was upon the HE teaching experiences of practitioners only. These were large colleges where full-time HE is a relatively small part of their business; therefore, this 'narrow' approach would avoid 'vulnerability' often associated with analysing large organisations (Yin, 1994). The main unit of analysis was the practitioner lecturers, with a further smaller unit comprising their course managers. The reason for including the managers is twofold: they are significantly involved in the teaching experience they provide a contextual view of the day-to-day HE issues at play in the college and the network at large. The rationale for drawing the information from the three colleges was to provide data convergence in a 'triangulating fashion' in the form of emergent themes – see section on data collection. The success of this approach would be determined by the findings and if the sources of evidence tended to be non-convergent in its nature, then the findings would be reported via an individual college basis.

In epistemological terms, the analogous approach for this case study evolved around Wilson's (1979) generic guidelines informing the research design, which are expressed in terms of the established characteristics of being particularistic, holistic, qualitative and often longitudinal (Elliot, 1990). With reference to the type of case study, the approach could be described as an intrinsic or single case study, where the research was undertaken in order to gain insight into a particular situation for its own benefit, with no intention for generalisation beyond the particular research site (Stake, 1994).

In order to further develop the context for the case study and justify the approach, however, there are a number of issues regarding design validity, reliability and generalisation that would benefit from further exploration – the 'value-added' argument. The primary point of

scrutiny is how value-added, or benefit, is gained from the study of a single case site. In addition to Yin's (1994) three-fold criteria, discussed earlier, the value-added could be expressed in terms of learning and ability to generalise, as case studies are an analysis of organisational dynamics and, therefore always changing and difficult to benchmark against (Yin 1994). In the situation of the network case study, the value-added benefits to the reader would depend upon their respective stakeholder groupings. For the internal stakeholders, mainly consisting of the practitioners and the course managers, as well as other members of the network, benefit could derive from the opportunity to explore each other's views and experiences. In the case of the external stakeholder (the outside reader), the ability to generalise would rest upon the extent to which the reader could relate to the findings of the case to similar events in cases and/or their own experiences and in the light of public policy that is, it would be '*in the eye of the beholder*'.

The approach is further strengthened through the adoption of several tactical tools, which are applicable to the case study approach (Yin 1994), when dealing with situations involving past events and situations, which have largely been shaped by the actors and events at a particular time and not necessarily capable of replication (Wilson, 1979). The research tools employed were:

- the collection of evidence from multiple sources, in a manner encouraging convergent lines of enquiry;
- the establishment of a 'chain of evidence' procedural approach, presenting the reader with clear reference points as to the sources of evidence leading to the conclusive points;

- as part of the ethical approach, the researcher had the draft study and interview transcripts reviewed by the relevant stakeholder participants.

These three tactical tools were adopted by the researcher and their actual implementation is discussed later in this section.

Therefore, from a research design perspective, a case research strategy was the most appropriate, as it facilitated several different methods of data collection (Stoecker, 1991), comprising several types of inquiry methods (Yin, 1994) and is in an inter-organisational context (Harrison, 1987 cited in Yin, 1994).

Research strategy

The first stage in this process was the literature review, in order to place the research site in the context of the past and continuing developments within in the FE college sector. The field research was undertaken from summer 2004/2005 to summer 2005/2006. During this time the LSC's role had shifted from a predominantly planning and funding function to the business model approach (discussed in Chapter 1) which had brought further pressures to bear upon its relationship with the FE sector (Steer *et al.*, 2007; Coffield *et al.*, 2008).

In the summer of 2005 four pilot interviews were undertaken at two of the FE colleges, consisting of one part-time lecturer, two full-time and a course manager. These two approaches, in turn, helped to shape the Project's study objectives and direct the research questions towards practitioners' experiences.

On the wider level, or external to this, the literature review identified the recent and on-going changes experienced within both the FE and HE sectors. These changes had been driven by government policies aimed at increasing and widening access to HE, with an emphasis still on cost effectiveness, with the enhancement of FE in respect of this (described in detailed in

Chapter 1). In Chapter 2 a critique of the FHE environmental forces that shape the practitioners' perspective was produced, this consisted of the three key interrelating dynamics FE professional culture and college structure, student attributes, partnership relationships; which were affected by the translation of policy levers.

At the institutional level, information about the individual colleges was obtained through a documentation search, comprising college published materials, their inspection reports (Ofsted), the Network Validation and Resource documents (NVD, 2004) and, later, interviews with the course managers (referred to as Managers). Published information, obtained from the individual colleges was sourced directly and via their internet sites, but tended to be limited in scope as it mainly consisted of FE related publicity materials; nothing existed at the time (by summer 2006) on their HE strategies. The initial pilot interviews provided a wealth of information about staff teaching experiences and the issues at play within the FE environment.

Finally there was an attempt to interview the Network manager at the University to gain advice and support for the project, but this proved unsuccessful as the position became vacant before an interview could be arranged. Further investigation became time consuming as some of the 'nominated' individuals appeared reluctant to be involved.

Interviewees were identified through the Network Resources Document, an appendix to the Network Validation Document (NVD, 2004), which contained the curriculum vitae and HE teaching areas for the practitioners involved with the Network. However, when attempting to make initial contact with people listed in this document it was discovered that many no longer had any involvement with the programmes. In fact, only small sets of HE teams existed in the colleges, with the exception of Wentworth, which had a fragmented teaching team (see earlier). Initial access was established by telephone, which was normally followed

up by an ‘email confirmation’ enabling briefing of research objectives and assurances of confidentiality. A secondary approach was through a ‘snowball sampling’ strategy (Oppenheim, 2000), whereby initial interviewees were asked to introduce the researcher to other potential data subjects at the research site. Interviews took place at individual colleges and were scheduled on a ‘top down linear’ basis, i.e. the course managers were interviewed first, followed by their lecturers. The rationale for this approach was that it would support the research process in terms of having an ‘informed’ articulation of any HE franchise issues and provide an overview of the course provision. The outcome of the first interview would in turn inform the subsequent meeting with the lecturers and facilitate a greater depth of probing. The only exception to this was the omission of one course manager whom did not wish to participate in the research process and left the college shortly before the interview cycle was complete (in August 2006). In this case, details on the course provision was obtained elsewhere – namely at the lecturer interviews.

The time lapse between the data collection and its analysis has not proved to be an issue; as no major changes have occurred within the FHE spectrum, which would invalidate these research findings. Also the thesis findings have a sound context with reference to recent policy developments and research. The White Paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS, 2011) has made proposals for future FHE expansion. Here FE colleges will be able to compete for a share of 20,000 extra student places; achievable by playing to their strengths including the ability to charge lower fees and the opening up of the part-time degree market (BIS. 2011). The Coalition Government’s (2010) proposals for a student funded demand-led HE system and the recently published BIS research paper *Understanding*

Higher Education in Further Education Colleges (BIS, 2012) complements the research findings.

The course manager stakeholder group consisted of members whose responsibility involved the day-to-day running of their franchise programmes, which included timetabling, student recruitment, management of staff, plus the general duties associated with the running of their courses from both the college and Network perspective. All of the course managers had additional teaching commitments mainly on their own programmes. The lecturer stakeholder group were selected on the basis that they taught on the franchise programmes, data was recorded on the length of service, nature of appointment (fractional or full-time) and scale of HE teaching which help to present a comprehensive picture.

In terms of the sample size, this was an exhaustive survey, as many of the interviewees taught on a range of HE subjects (units) often comprising three to five units, which is indicative of the FE approach. For instance, Burkill *et al.*'s (2008) online survey of a 17 college FHE partnership network found that the majority of teaching teams have five or less staff. At Dukesbury the 'sample' consisted of the entire team, with the exception of a visiting lecturer; Wentworth presented difficulties of access (mentioned earlier), but three full-time members of the team were reached who taught the year one and two core subjects, plus a fractional lecturer. At Westbridgeford three out of a possible four data subjects were interviewed. Additionally, two interviews which were undertaken were judged to be unsuitable, due to an error in the selection process and therefore have not been included in the Project research findings, or the sample frame (Fig.3: pg. 81). Moreover, as well as being considered within the case-study institutions, the findings have been integrated with the major literatures and are reinforced by key vignettes (Chapter 4).

Figure 3: Primary Research Interviewee Sampling Frame

Area	Personnel	Sample Size
College One: Dukesbury	Course Manager (1), Full-time lecturers (2), Fractional Lecturer (1)	4
College Two: Wentworth	Course Manager (1), Full-time lecturers (2), Fractional Lecturer (1)	4
College Three: Westbridgeford	Course Manager (0), Full-time lecturers (2), Fractional Lecturer (1)	3

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to address the research questions a sample of relevant practitioners was drawn from the three colleges consisting of the Network. To maintain anonymity the names of the three colleges were changed and care was taken to disguise their location. Also mentioned previously, the sample group consisted of lecturers plus their course managers, who predominately taught HE. It was decided not to interview any of the senior managers at the FE colleges as it was unlikely that they would be able to shed any light on the teaching experience, or at best only allude to it. It was intended to provide triangulation, in the case study, through two main methods, albeit relying on interview data: firstly, laterally and secondly, at multi-level. At the lateral level this involved the comparison of the findings from the interviewees across the three colleges; and as a multi-level device the views of the course managers were added. The rationale behind this is an adaptation of Denzin's (1970)

‘typography of triangulation’ amalgamating Space Triangulation and a version of Combined Triangulation, to produce an evaluation employing Patton’s (1987) ‘*data triangulation*’ model (cited in Yin, 1994); which in this case would incorporate findings from the three case institutions, with key literature, documentation and reports.

The documentation for this section of the research has been obtained from two principal sources: documentation involving the Franchise Network documentation and materials obtained from the individual colleges. Network documentation consisted of individual inspectorate reports; two from the QAA reporting on the University, one being its recent Institutional audit and the other on its Collaborative Provision. The FE colleges’ documentation involved individual Ofsted inspection reports, which were used to gather empirical data and build a brief profile of the college. Additional documentary evidence consisted of the most recently available Network Validation (NVD, 2004) document, comprising curricular and quality arrangements between the institutions (e.g. this included staffing, Learning Resource Centre, Information Technology (IT) and general resources for individual FE partners). Additionally a generic Memorandum of Cooperation document, detailing the formalised agreement between the University and its partner colleges was utilised. The inspection reports for all four FE institutions were the most recent documents and dated from early to mid-2000s, these proved to be a valuable data source on college backgrounds, student information and quality audit.

The sequencing for the research is produced as a ‘*Linear-Analytic Structure*’ (Yin, 1994:138), where the initial research approach comprised the literature review to inform the research aims (Chapters 1 and 2). Information on the Network’s partnership agreement was obtained from two major sources, related institutional quality inspectorate reports and primary interviewee data. Following this, was the design and implementation of the research

instruments, consisting of an interview sample frame, confidentiality statement and the two discussion guides (see Appendix A and B). The interview questions were relatively open-ended, allowing the respondents to elaborate and hypothesize during the interviews (Cohen and Manion, 1994). However, they were designed to follow a 'broad thematic' approach, and were supported by both 'follow up' and 'probing' questions when deemed appropriate. Occasionally, the need arose to ask direct questions when the data subject became 'silent', required guidance on the terminology involving some of the issues, for example, the term '*special mission*' caused a degree of perplexity with some of the interviewees (Kvale, 1996).

All the interviews were audio tape-recorded and then transcribed; each one was then read at least five times (two in terms of checking the transcription and three or more times in respect of actual analysis and coding). As stated previously, the primary research took the form of in-depth face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured discussion guide; the information was then coded manually. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory approach to data analysis was adopted, as the method comprises extracting categories and/or themes arising from the data opposed to using a mantle of existing theories. The rationale for applying this theory was based upon two assumptions: firstly, the data obtained from the interviewee's responses could be 'non-standard' and required coding and theme construction. Secondly, the premise behind the qualitative epistemology is that structure is often derived from the data, or starts to unravel during the research process:

.. even though qualitative research is predominately unstructured, it is rarely so unstructured that the researcher cannot at least specify a research focus (Bryman, 2001: 317).

This required the transcripts to be analysed on a systematic line-by-line basis so common themes and patterns could be identified, classified and then linked accordingly. Minor alterations were made to some of the text quotes to maintain interviewee confidentiality and

the transcription of the spoken to written word, which Forrester (2010) describes as being the ‘semi-gloss’ approach.

The actual approach involved analysing individual transcripts to break the data into conceptual components arranged around the question themes, employing an open coding method; an extract demonstrating this is included below:

Extract 1: Data set sample extract (Interview 5: lines 2/16) – Question Area 1 ((Institutional Perspective - the student experience)

<p>Many of our students have chosen to come from an Access course on to higher education courses because they’ve identified a number of teachers that taught on the Access and are also teaching on the degree. I suppose that’s an issue about safety, feeling comfortable in the college.</p> <p>There are negative things about the student experience, because I think the type of students we have they don’t always get the best amount of contact time that they could do. What I am t trying to say that is that many of them need a lot of extra support and that comes down to the goodwill of the lectures to give that extra support to the students. That is not always recognised at departments or across the college. I think the students’ experience, in some ways, is completely different from the university’s experience because they are in smaller groups. They have often said to me, they like that because they get the opportunity to ask questions, to have clarification on issues they don’t understand.</p>	<p>Significance of Ladder progressions, facility with staff and comfortable in FE setting (linkage to WP students?).</p> <p>No formalised tutor support classes.</p> <p>- left to goodwill of lecturers</p> <p>Smaller classes</p> <p>- favoured by students</p> <p>- opportunity for class interaction, confidence to seek support</p>
---	---

The next stage involved cluster development or ‘axial coding’; here the ‘open codes’ were examined and arranged into categories of coherent concepts to form the basis of the findings. This was undertaken by transferring the open code data onto an ‘x-chart’, or data matrix sheet, with the rows comprising the resultant interview themes (question responses) and the

columns composing a list data subjects, then a mapping process was undertaken (see exemplar below). The aim was to establish the links would could be dressed into themes which could be brought together to form sets of coherent concepts. Once this process was completed, the next stage was to develop the sets and sub-sets of developmental themes, then to report them as ‘findings’ in Chapter 4. This process was used for both sets of practitioners.

Extract 2: Exemplar of the Axial coding Process (data matrix sheet)

Area One: Institutional Perspective

Respondent	Interview 3	Interview 5	Up to Interview 9
a) Student experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older HND students more motivation • Degree students younger, ‘A’ entry • Small groups more time given • Able to meet individual needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of Ladder progressions, facility with staff and comfortable in FE setting (linkage to WP students?). • No formalised tutor support classes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - left to goodwill of lecturers • Smaller classes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - favoured by students • Opportunity for class interaction, confidence to seek support 	

Ethical considerations and practical issues

As with any enquiry involving research participates, it is essential to temper the practicalities of research objectives with the ethical concerns involving stakeholder confidentiality. The nature of the case organisations was that they were part of a ‘tight fit’ FHE network and the fact that the available pool of data subjects was limited in its size, meant that even greater credence was given to these issues.

The possible ethical issues emanating from the research project were discussed with the supervisor at the earlier stages of the thesis, this was formalised in the proposal outline and mainly focused on any concerns over stakeholder anonymity. In formulating this, Denzin and

Lincoln's (2003) four generic common codes of practice, or guidelines, for directing inductive research were considered. These focused on, voluntary informed consent; avoid deception; assure privacy with confidentiality and produce accuracy.

In applying these to the research methodology, two pertinent ethical issues emerged, which centred on voluntary informed consent and privacy with confidentiality. First, the requirement that interviewees voluntarily agree to participate in the process is fundamental to this type of research process:

Voluntary informed consent is considered by many as the central norm governing the relationship between investigator and the research participant (Kimmel, 1988: 67).

In achieving this it is necessary to provide complete information on what the research is about, who is undertaking it, why it is being undertaken, how it will be disseminated (Hornsby-Smith, 1993) and the instruction that a participant has full rights to withdraw from the process at any time (Cohen and Manion, 2003). With the primary research, this normally took place at the initial contact stage, when interviews were being sought, or in some cases at the pre-interview when the confidentiality statement was reiterated. Second, the right to privacy with confidentiality in relation to participants' identity and the research location was acknowledged as being paramount to the research process. This decision was reached based upon the literature detailing the state of the stakeholder morale and power dynamics in operation in the FE college sector (Elliot, 1996; Randle and Bradley, 1997b and Shain and Gleeson, 1999), the inter-relationships that existed between the colleges and the fact the franchisor (the University) would not to be a direct part of the research process. In the light of this it was decided to adapt Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias' (1992) confidentiality techniques for allowing public access, by primarily focusing two methods:

- the 'deletion of identifiers' by the replacement with pseudonyms for the vignettes

- and coding for citations from the participants;
- through the use of ‘crude report categories’; such as disguising dates of employment, the research locations and any reference to specific inspection events.

There were two potential areas where this could have been breached; which were, indirectly through the description of the network and casual reference to its FE partners, and via the identification of the participants and/or misrepresentation of their views. Moreover, in an effort to afford greater confidentiality to stakeholder participants, great care was taken to disguise the location and names of the FE institutions involved. Such methods employed consisted of disguising empirical data through the use of time frames (opposed to exact years), and the disclosure of the ‘general’ inspectorate website address only to provide evidence that they had been sourced.

The principal concern was the maintenance of interviewee anonymity. To ensure this all participants were issued with a ‘statement’, which guaranteed confidentiality, in line with BERA’s recommendations (Institute of Education, 2006) – see Appendix B. The guarantee normally took place at two stages, in most cases at the initial contact, and then formally undertaken prior to the start of every interview, where each interviewee was provided with a signed statement by the interviewer (Appendix B). In addition to the above assurance, all the interviewees were given the opportunity to make changes, deletions or amendments to the content of their interview once it had been written up. However, only one participant exercised their option to review their transcript and then subsequently declined to make any amendments.

Chapter 4: The key issues in the FHE environment – practitioners’ and managers’ perspectives

Introduction

This chapter examines the experiences of FE practitioners working within a FHE partnership. It is argued that these types of practitioners have a major effect upon the value-added process (Edwards, et al., 2007), but their voices, for the most part, have been unheard (Chapter 3).

The findings are thus based primarily on the ‘voice of the practitioners’, those individuals who have the direct involvement of delivering these types of programme (Chapter 3) and ultimately determining the quality of the students’ experience. Moreover, the interview data is placed in context with the wider subject literature and the ‘FHE forces’ discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, enabling the identification of the appropriate associations, deviations, or otherwise.

The research themes stem from the literature research and contextual analysis, in the earlier Chapters, and have produced an analytical framework centring on the attributes of a FE special mission (pedagogic expertise, small teaching groups); the requirement of a compatible HE experience (resources and student attributes); and views on the ‘internal management’ and network relationships. This is further reinforced by a set of stakeholder vignettes, which serve to ‘characterise’ the motivations and attitudes of the interviewees within their college environment.

The ‘claims for distinctiveness’ for providing HE within FE colleges and the call for a ‘special mission’ are well established and set firmly within the public policy domain (Chapter 1), although how substantive they are is questionable (Parry *et al.*, 2004). The additional support, or special treatment, available to the FHE student encompasses; pre-entry personal

guidance and advice; localised study provision; smaller teaching groups; teaching and learning skills support; easier access to ‘teacher qualified’ subject lecturers; greater access to tutorial and pastoral support; flexible timetabling arrangements; partnership links with HE institution’s ensuring progression and academic quality (HEFCE, 2003b; Parry and Thompson, 2003; HEFCE/FEFC, 1998c and HEFCE, 1996) – all of which are, arguably, FE attributes.

In order to produce a more comprehensible approach the research findings are reported on an ‘actor’ then and ‘theme’ basis, thus are divided into two parts:

- Part 1 examines the Lecturers’ accounts and reports on the following themes: involvement of small teaching groups; comparable HE Experience; Widening Access; Learning and Teaching Resources; Staff Development Opportunities; Student Ability and Commitment; Network Partnership experiences; and the perception of the role of the college management. Three vignettes have been provided which serve to substantiate the findings, by illustrating the character and motivations of the Lecturers in the case study.
- Part 2 brings in the research findings for the course Managers, which reported on the following themes: Rational HE in FE; Special Mission and Widening Access; Student Comparative HE Experience; Lecturer Experiences, Views of the College Management and Experiences of Working in the Network. A vignette of one manager which to illustrated their motivation and frustrations of working in a FHE partnership.

The rationale for selection of these themes was based upon the three constituent elements which formed the FHE institutional environment (Fig.2: pg.46) and involved their views on the Student Experience, working within the Network and the effectiveness of their college’s HE role. These elements which were refined into discussion guide questions allocated to the Lecturer s (Part 1) and their Managers (Part 2), accordingly.

Preamble: network approach to teaching

The mode of delivery, for all three research sites, consisted of the cohorts divided into small classroom based groups of 15 to 20 students. This typically comprised a teacher- centred lesson approach, followed by either a student centred activity or assistance with their course work and assessment. This was not a unique response to student needs, but possibly related to the issue of the lack of larger rooms, the FE teaching culture, and reflective of the wider national context for FE Business franchise degree courses (HEFCE/FEFC, 1998).

Students were kept in their programme groups (i.e. HND and BA degree) for the delivery of their core unit subjects and then assigned to amalgamated option groups. The lesson format typically comprised of one two- hour block per subject unit at all of the research sites.

However, at Wentworth College all classes were separated into one-hour teaching blocks spread across the college week.

None of the colleges operated the traditional university model of a ‘lead lecture’ approach, followed by a smaller group research based seminar. This was the approach used by the University, and which focused on the HE independent learning approach (HEFCE, 1998a; HEFCE/FEFC, 1998; HEFCE, 2003a). Furthermore, at the FE colleges ‘seminar activities’ tended to involve additional work to supplement their lesson or with help on coursework assessments. This formed a part of the traditional FE paradigm, embedded in the widening access role and is a typical HE format for franchisee colleges (HCFCE, 1998a).

Part one: the lecturers’ perspectives

The lecturer sample consisted of two sub-groups of practitioners categorised into full-time or fractional teaching positions, with their length of service also varied form from one to nearly 20 years’ experience.

Small teaching groups and individual support

The opinion expressed by the Lecturers was that their ‘franchised students’ had been served well by the FE colleges due to the additional attention they had received, compared to a larger university setting.

The majority of the interviewees viewed the use of smaller class sizes, with the emphasis on teaching and learning, to be highly beneficial in enhancing student confidence, progression and qualifications. Although students received higher levels of support and assistance this slower, ‘*or school experience*’, approach was a direct contrast to the typical HE student experience (Macrae and Maguire, 2002). The lecturers went on to explain the advantages of having a small group environment, which offered a flexible approach enabling them as teachers to assess and meet the needs of individual students. For example the FE infrastructure meant lecturers were more easily identifiable and approachable by the students. The interviewees believed that their HE students were in a better position to establish a rapport with their lecturers, which helped them to develop a sense of identity and security: ‘*They (students) are able to make mistakes and not feel ashamed*’ (LP/09).

This perception of a core unique benefit provided by FE colleges is reflected by previous research findings, which were largely based on the student experience. For example, benefits of smaller group sizes (FEFC/HECFE, 1998c), high levels of support and assistance (HEFCE, 1998a; Lloyd and Griffiths, 2008); intimate atmosphere, building of their confidence in a less threatening FE environment (Opacic, 1996). This was effectively summarised by HEFCE (1998c) as:

Most students are highly supportive about their learning experience... high level of support and assistance offered. Students receive individual attention and small group teaching and many benefit from the attention given to the development of social confidence as well as intellectual skills (HEFCE/FEFC, 1998:31).

This feeling of security or a '*comfort zone*' facilitated by the teaching of small groups of HE students was further explored by the researcher. Progressively, the interviewees were asked to specify how many of their HE students were 'internal', or ladder progressions – people moving onto higher level courses at the same institution (Parry *et al.*, 2004). This was found to be common practice at Westbridgedford College, where one third of their cohort consisted of previous Access students:

We have a lot of internal progression students, who want continuity and familiarity and they feel comfortable with the college. (LP/03)

This emphasis on internal recruitment of students was not as pertinent in the other colleges, who focused on a younger 'A' level market, mainly through the UCAS clearing system.

Overall, the lecturers believed that their blend of HE delivery, to smaller student groups, was a critical success factor, often expressed as the *raison d'être* and, thus, a central focal point of their marketing efforts:

We have small classes and the students get to know the staff well which is very positive ... I would say that this is the main selling point we have. (LP/09)

The provision of individual learner support took place both on a formal timetabled and informal tutorial basis. Opinions varied as to what was actually achieved by this approach, with many of the lecturers' relating negative experiences regarding the level of student conscientiousness in availing themselves of the offers of support. For the most part, the practitioners criticised the lack of formalised system of student support (timetabled hours). Westbridgedford College lacked any formalised tutorial support system for its students, which served to create some discord amongst its lecturers. At this college the lecturers expressed firm views about the lack of recognition for their extra curriculum tutorial support activities. They commented about the lack of any 'formalised help' available from the College and that students relied on lecturer 'goodwill', which went largely unrecognised by management:

I think it is seen as a weakness that lecturers are dedicated to spending time with students when perhaps they could usefully, I don't know, do something else. (LP/02)

Both at Wentworth and Dukesbury a formal tutorial system operated on the similar basis as their FE provision, consisting of a weekly timetabled hour per group. Although individual tutor support was seen as a core attribute of the FHE culture, the effectiveness of this support mechanism was called into question by the lecturers from these two colleges. Here concerns were expressed over the poor take-up and attendance by the students and a lack of structure and monitoring at the operational level leaving much open to individual lecturer interpretation:

It depends on who your tutor is, a lot of people just use the hours for time off, or think of some excuse not to do something. (LP/05)

Other student support issues cited by the respondents from Wentworth and Dukesbury involved the lack of academic standards and approaches to fostering independent student learning. Their examples consisted of individuals given coursework extensions without a valid reason; late work often accepted without penalty, individuals 'chased-up' for their work; specific help with assignments and explicit exam revision guidelines:

Our students are well looked after, perhaps too pampered, they're chased-up for their work, etc, I don't know how they will cope when they're on their final year somewhere? (LP/08).

The lecturer interviewees believed that their typical model of having smaller teaching groups, coursework focused tutorials, teacher availability and individual support was a successful mix. On the other hand, concerns were expressed over the 'standards' in relation to academic rigour involving both staff and student commitment. This led to some lecturers believing that there was too much individual support given to their HE students, leaving them ill-equipped to undertake further studies at a university main site, which required a more independent model of self-study. These viewpoints are supported by Ecclestone and Pryor

(2003) and Torrance (2007) who looked at the impact of FE assessment strategies and student motivations. Here, they found cases where FE practitioners had an ‘instrumental’ viewpoint to the assessment process (possibly due to the pressures brought to bear over student retention and achievement targets), resulting in ‘spoon-feeding’ and failing to intellectually stretch students – who may already possess a low disposition to study:

.... transparency of objectives coupled with extensive use of coaching and practice to help meet them is in danger of removing the challenge of learning and reducing the quality and validity of outcomes achieved. Torrance (2007: 282).

Moreover, when citing GNVQ assessment systems, Ecclestone and Pryor (2003) refers to pressures on individual FE teachers to maintain the popularity of their own units and, possibly, maintain their own employment status:

One effect was particular pressures on teachers in ‘difficult’ or ‘boring’ modules to lower their demands, and general pressure on teachers to provide feedback that got students through (Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003: 480).

Such pressures and culture pervaded the HE aspects of their teaching, which was also evident in the later findings regarding Student Ability and Commitment to Study.

Comparable HE experience and widening access

Comparable HE experience focuses on the extent to which colleges could adequately replicate a university experience for its franchise students, whilst still being taught in a ‘localised’ FE environment. These concerns were brought to the forefront as an aspect of Dearing’s recommendations (NICHE, 1997); initially the Committee had two quality concerns, first; those arising from multi or serial franchising resulting in ‘burdensome bureaucracies’ (Parry and Thompson, 2002) and, second; the compatibility of the students’ experience:

The quality of the experience for the student and the standard of achievement required for an award should match that in the parent institution (NICHE, 1997: 159).

Assessing compatibility of student experience is often a complicated task (HEFCE, 1998b), primarily due to the diverse nature of the FHE students, who often have non-traditional entry qualifications, or a much lower level tariff point; coupled with the diversity in operating cultures between FE and HE institutions. In response to this issue the HEQC (1996) produced a set of recommendations on collaborate provision and comparability later discussed by HEFCE (1998b). The set of guiding principles, produced by HEQC (1996), placed the emphasis on the quality of the academic learning experience, stating that the intrinsic principle should be:

Enlarge teaching and learning opportunities without prejudice to HE standards and quality of the learning experience (HEFCE, 1998b: 29).

The HEQC (1996) guidelines placed an emphasis on the quality of the student experience in relation to curriculum and assessment balance, with little reference to the wider student experience, an approach consistent with HEFCE's (1998b) findings on collaborated HE provision. In these research findings, however, some lecturers' believed that their 'wider role' involving the student experience was an important issue and that their students were ill-served by the FHE model.

From a pedagogic perspective, all of the interviewees expressed the belief that their students had received a good HE experience at their college, albeit not equivalent to one at the University. Here their concerns focused on a lack of HE community, a lower student status and the general impact of the FE college environment on their experience.

The discussion concerning the positive aspects of the students' experiences tended to centre on the teaching provision, which echoed the earlier dialogue regarding smaller teaching groups and extra support. What was suggested by the evidence was that the older students

tended to come from a widening participation category and were less concerned about the experience offered at a main HE campus. The view, from Westbridgeford in particular, was that many of the older students' prime focus was to gain a qualification and that external interests, such as family and work commitments, took precedence over the 'non-essential' student activities:

no, coming here they have elected not to have one (compatible HE experience) or perhaps are not aware of the difference. (LP/09)

Furthermore, two lecturers (from Wentworth and Westbridgeford) commented on the fact that many of the older students were content with their educational provision and were not that concerned with the wider HE experiences on offer at the University:

Presumably students understand some sort of economics is going on, if they get more 'one to one' service then obviously we can't offer other facilities. (LP/02)

With reference to a comparable HE experience, the interviewees emphasised the negative aspects of the student experience by mainly referring to the lack of HE student amenities on offer at their individual colleges. A notable concern was their inability to provide the 'wider' university experience, in terms of social interaction, societies, entertainment and adequate research and study facilities.

When discussing the wider university experience, the interviewees expressed the opinion that their individual college students were missing out on the full university experience and the status that was offered to their main site counterparts:

We cannot offer anything beyond the basic education experience ... we are just a site and a building, most of the facilities on offer, for instance, 'Ping Pong' or occasional trips here and there don't affect the HE department at all. (LP/02)

All franchise network students had full access to the University's facilities, which included

the respective social, sporting and academic services, in accordance with the Network's Memorandum of Cooperation (formal franchise agreement). Many network students were encouraged to actively use the University's facilities, particularly its learning resources as their own colleges' were perceived to be inadequate by the lecturers: *'So we sort of push them in that direction. I suppose we delegate to the university'* (LP/01). However, physical access to the University was seen as being a problem for many students especially for those students who lived at home, or were reliant on public transport and had work and/or family commitments.

Many lecturers expressed the opinion that some students felt unhappy about having the fuller HE identity and being 'lumped in' with the FE students. Arguably with the teaching being delivered on a FE model basis along with shared facilities and resources their experience was more related to FE than HE. This caused some resentment within the HE cohorts, from the three colleges, as many students felt that they were not being treated any differently from their FE counterparts, from whom they wish to differentiate:

The FE model environment is dominant, so many of the students, in a sense, regress back to that and behave like a younger student might behave, which is fair enough. (LP/03)

An emergent theme during the interviews was that of student disquiet over their status attached to attending a FE college. Here it was reported that some of their students were unhappy about being situated in a FE college, as opposed to a University campus main site, as they missed out on greater access to facilities and the ability to mix with other HE students:

I think sometimes they feel ashamed that they are going to a college instead of actually going to university ... they have developed an inferiority complex. (LP/04)

Further negative aspects, raised by the lecturer interviewees, involved anecdotal evidence of

family and peer pressure criticising their students' choice of study location:

I had a student who said, that her mum was laughing at her at one point in time because she was back at college, when really she should be at university. (LP/05)

These issues were discussed in greater depth by the manager interviewees, who produced a more balanced viewpoint, emphasising the positive arguments reflected in the FE role of a 'special mission'.

Learning and teaching resources

The resourcing issues facing FHE partnership arrangements are well documented. These have typically involved trouble with lack of library space; provision of silent study facilities; limited access to IT equipment; poor book and journal article provision and the negative impact of FE college environments (similar to findings from Brady and Metcalfe, 1994; Opacic, 1996; Selby, 1996; HEFCE, 1998b). In order to ameliorate this situation, FE colleges have been advised to emphasise their teaching strategies and the needs of the widening participation student market (HEFCE 1998b; Parry *et al.*, 2006), whilst negotiating greater resource access with their franchisors (Selby, 1996).

At the individual colleges much of the discourse focused on resource issues, particularly those problems involving their learning resource centres, the building infrastructure (conditions of classrooms), and general day-to-day problems caused by their colleges' infrastructure. This was supplemented by comments over the lack of a 'HE ethos' due to the failure to provide a HE centre with two of the colleges. This was viewed as impairing the teaching and learning process and resulting from the low prioritisation towards HE by college senior management teams. Moreover, the findings, here, tended to concur with the earlier issues, particularly compatible student experience.

Hence the interviewees tended to paint a bleak picture involving the lack of basic HE resource provision at all of the colleges, involving shortfalls in research materials, and at one college the poor condition of teaching rooms (Westbridgeford). The lecturers mentioned the lack of books, journal articles and quiet study areas as being a major issue for their respective learning resource centres. The more negative comments tended to focus on '*library resources are poor*' *we're not geared up to it* (LP/01); '*not enough books*' (LP/07); '*shouldn't be printing for individual students*' (LP/03).

Two interviewees went further, in terms of voicing their frustrations, by highlighting the fact that they had personally provided some of the teaching materials, citing examples of purchasing the core textbooks in order to photocopy the relevant sections for their students use:

There is no provision for buying extra textbooks unless I buy them and I am rather fed up of spending my money to resource the college. (LP/03)

The Network students were afforded full access rights to all the University's student resources, which included their Learning Resource Centre, sports and leisure facilities, information communication technology, accommodation and support services. Although this went some way to mitigate matters in relation to HE resource deficiencies, it also highlighted the inherent weaknesses at the colleges regarding HE provision to their students:

Resources are limited here, especially the LRC (learning resource centre). Students travel to the main site, not always a bad thing, but it does highlight the fact that we have poor resources. (LP/02)

Additional difficulties for many students was their geographical location and their 'outside commitments', for example childcare, family, work. Issues regarding transport links were pertinent to two of the colleges, whilst Dukesbury was closer to the university. Many of the mature students faced difficulties in effectively organising their study time due to their

greater degree of external commitments. This meant that the advantage and availability of the University's resources were mainly afforded to those students who had local residence and/or their own transport. Those students who were not in this category tended to become disaffected in terms of full availability of the University's resources (discussed further in the section involving student commitment and engagement at support classes).

Regarding the teaching infrastructure, such as classrooms and social amenities, the issues raised tended to be more localised. At Westbridgeford the Lecturers focused on the poor standard of classrooms facilities and a lack of a HE centre, believing these to be a barrier to teaching and an opportunity to create a greater sense of HE identity. The Westbridgeford interviewees expressed the most negative views by citing severe resource shortfalls, ranging from poor quality rooms, limited consumer budgets and inadequate staffing levels:

The tower block is an old block; the locals call it 'Colditz Castle'. They (the students) don't want to be in the classroom, they are dying to get out of it and so are the Lecturers quite honestly. If you are not comfortable, you are not going to concentrate. (LP/09)

Although the financial resources available for students in FHE collaborations will be lower than similar provisions in HE institutions (Chapters 2 and 3), the expectation is that the FE provider will 'play to its strengths' emphasising its effective teaching approaches of greater accessibility and smaller group sizes (Abramson *et al.*, 1996). However, the feeling expressed by these lecturers was that there was a lack of the basic resources required to provide a sufficient service, especially at Westbridgeford. The interviewees highlighted these resource deficiencies as the main barrier to the establishment of a stronger HE ethos at the colleges, '*Not enough (resources), more a second rate experience than compatible*' (LP/06).

Staff and curriculum development opportunities

Observations made regarding staff development opportunities, tended to focus on issues

involving curriculum preparation and enhancing the student experience. Little reference was made to academic research that involved exploring new areas of the curriculum or research initiatives, which is similar to other research finding (for instance HEFCE 2003a and Harwood and Harwood, 2004). However, none of the lecturers were aware of any of operating college policy for HE staff development and research, which was contrary to many FHE consortia arrangements and government policy recommendations (HEFCE, 2003b).

All interviewees commented on the lack of lesson preparation time for necessary at HE level, citing their weekly contact hours and high teaching loads associated with their FE lecturer contract. The problem of lack of time to pursue scholarly activities (including lesson preparation and marking) has been a FHE issue for some time (HEFCE, 1996; Parry, 2002; Harwood and Harwood, 2004), although none of the interviewees mentioned research and publication as an aspect of this. The differential in the case seemed to be the degree of support received from colleagues at the main university campus. This mainly took the form of using their lecture presentation resources, via the University blackboard site, which was seen by both the Lecturers and managers as being a useful resource.

None of the Lecturers interviewed received any teaching remission in view of their HE teaching commitments. Most lecturers had weekly contractual contact hours of between 22 to 24 hours, which was in line with the FE sector norms and reflected the general trends in other similar FHE college settings (HEFCE, 1998c). However, what transpired as a major issue, from the FE lecturers' point of view, was the difference in staff workloads between the two types of institutions, with typical comments made about colleagues at the University having a *'lighter teaching load'* (LP/01), *'not appreciating how many hours we do here'* (LP/07). Nevertheless many of the lecturers did receive teaching remission in the light of their personal HE tutees. The only exception was Westbridgeford where no remission was

available to staff. Many of the Lecturers commented that their managers did not appreciate the amount of time required to prepare for HE classes:

No remission, management do not have a concept of the kind of work involved in delivering HE, i.e. the amount of preparation. (LP/06)

Regarding professional development and research opportunities there seemed to be little knowledge about availability and procedure; this was partly evident from the lack of response to this question. One interviewee made the point that the college's funding situation prohibited staff development opportunities:

So if I've got any issue or want to go on any training I am politely discouraged, because the time and funding is not available. (LP/02)

Much of the findings tended to reflect the lack of research activities in the sector as a whole, the focus in FE tends to be on vocational aspects of teaching, with little opportunity or a perceived need for explorative research. Staff development opportunities at the Network colleges were limited or non-existent, with some network staff development emanating from the University – also discussed by their managers (later).

Student ability and commitment to study

The lecturers' views on their student capabilities tended to be similar across the Network colleges and were expressed in terms of ability, commitment to study and cognitive approaches.

All interviewees provided a passionate response to this question, in particular when they discussed student ability and level of academic achievement. There seemed, however, to be a link between length of service and the nature of this response, with the more experienced lecturers citing an overall decline in academic standards as a root cause, whilst the newer practitioners believed there to be an issue over-recruitment.

Concerns over the perceived decline in academic standards proved to be a significant issue at all the interview sites; three prime reasons for this perception emerged from the interviewees. First, externalities such as the changes in 'A' level standards and growth in student HE numbers; second, a result of the individual college's recruitment policy '*bums on seats*' (LP/06) which prioritised student retention over academic standards; finally, a 'creaming' and 'dumping policy' an outcome of the University's student recruitment policy (see Chapter 3; also Clarke and Newman, 1997).

Those with longer length of service claimed to have observed a decline in standards over time at their own institution; this was due to the lower calibre of students entering coupled with the drivers of retention and achievement:

I remember 10 to 15 years ago we were told we were going to have to boost things here, making things more rigorous and academic because of the students who were coming out of schools, whereas in fact the opposite seems to have happened. (LP/07)

The interviewees with the least professional experience seemed more concerned about lower standards and student ability, often finding that the academic levels on their lower qualification courses was to a higher standard:

I find 'A' level higher than HE degree teaching, but not too much of a shock to the system. (LP/04)

This group also expressed concerns over a decline in academic standards and the pressures to pass students in order to facilitate good retention rates thus securing future funding:

I am sure I will be pulled up for it, because I had 13 students. In the end I only passed four, but as far as I am concerned the quality of the exam was quite poor, I just felt it as a matter of integrity in terms of marking and the standards. (LP/04)

Much of this resonates with Ecclestone and Pryor's (2003) and Torrance's (2007) findings on the FE assessment and cultural systems, discussed earlier. The more general comments typically consisted of '*standards have dropped*' (LP/08), students are '*expecting a slightly*

less academic type of degree' (LP/05). When asked to support their comments with examples, the interviewees largely commented on differential student abilities between the two programmes (HND and BA degree). Where, contrary to expectations, the HND cohorts seemed to be performing better than their counterparts on the degree programme:

.... the degree students are a little weaker than the HND, this has been reflected in the results. This year (the degree cohort) are pretty dire, quite appalling. It's been difficult to teach students who are not aware of the requirements. (LP/03)

The possible explanation given for this was that the HND cohorts consisted mainly of mature students, who in returning to study are more motivated. The older students on the non-traditional entry courses (HND) tended to be more highly motivated and, on the whole, did better than their degree counterparts. This was more apparent at Dukesbury College, which did not 'cross-teach' its cohorts and where its mature students had displayed greater levels of commitment:

The BABA groups we get here, they are much more the traditional element and a lot here are on their plan B schedule. But the HNDs, that a much wider intake, a lot more direct applications, so to speak, who are more self-motivated to get themselves qualified. (LP/06)

With the degree programme students the lecturers believed there to be issues involving levels of commitment and attendance, often linked to individual student motivation and an inability by the colleges to break the '*circle of apathy*'. Typical comments consisted of, '*students have poor attendance*' (LP/04); '*attendance is appalling here*' (LP/01):

Some of the students are very poorly motivated, it makes you think, what are they doing it for? I have worries that a proportion of the class are on the edge of it. (LP/08)

Although poor attendance and student commitment was seen as a problem at all three sites, it seemed to be prevalent with the younger students on the degree programmes. In a more

positive light, most interviewees highlighted cases of good student attendance and level of commitment:

I tend to find those who come regularly to the classes, are extremely well read, I can have a good discussion with them ... I really enjoy teaching them. (LP/08)

In summary, the lecturers' views on student ability and commitment tended to vary according to length of teaching experience, practitioners with the least professional experience commented on the lack of student ability and commitment, whilst those who had been teaching longer citing an overall decline in academic standards as the issue. Moreover, when discussing levels of student ability and commitment there was evidence of differentiation due to the age of the student and the type of HE course.

Experiences of working in a franchise network

The lecturers viewed their involvement in the Network to be a positive experience, which reflected the majority of literature on the area that discusses the merits of being in HE partnership (Abramson *et al.*, 1996; Young 2002; Bridge *et al.*, 2003; Harwood and Harwood, 2004; Garrod and Macfarlane, 2006). Three strands evolved from this discussion area: communication experiences within the Network; views on the use of centralised teaching materials and, the 'cultural divide' between the University and its FE partners.

The lecturer interviewees reported that their experience of communicating directly with the University on the whole was very good. Most found their colleagues at the University to be supportive although not necessarily appreciative of the differences in their respective cultures:

Excellent, colleagues are supportive and helpful. At the university site, perhaps, I don't think they fully appreciate the type of student that we deal with here. (LP/03)

Some interviewees did comment that the communication process tended to be one way and mainly administrative, leaving little scope for any curriculum development input from the FE

colleges. Viewed as a positive outcome, it was noted that all curriculum materials, such as unit handbooks, assignments, assessments details, submission dates, examination details, were produced centrally and made available, via the university's Blackboard site:

Good paperwork, paper trail is good. Production of unit handbooks, administrative documents, etc, good. Students are well informed from the module handbooks and the Blackboard Platform. (LP/06)

Most curriculum meetings focused on the marking and standardisation process which normally took place at the University main site. All the interviewees viewed this strategy of commonality as an example of good practice. On commenting on their lack of input to curriculum development, only a few practitioners viewed this as being an issue, citing their heavy workloads as a mitigating factor:

We do not have the time to negotiate or change assignments or come up with new ideas, it tends to be centralised at module leader level. (LP/02)

In relating to their teaching loads, the interviewees highlighted their inability to adequately commit themselves to subject and curriculum development. This is exemplified by the fact that a typical lecturer has three to five separated disciplines to teach, in addition to their FE teaching requirements (HCFCE, 1998c; Doyle, 2001). Those who predominately taught on FE courses found that a disproportional amount of their time was spent on their HE teaching commitments. Brenda's 'story' (below) was a typical reaction to the teaching workloads and the demands of the student within the Network:

Brenda: Full-time Lecturer

Brenda is a subject specialist and possessed the appropriate qualification for her field, but no formal teaching qualification. It was in her second year teaching at the college and her first experience of teaching on higher education courses. She commented in depth over issues of standards, her experience on the transition between FE and HE classes, as well as staff and student expectations. She was contracted to work up to 25 hours per week but in reality it averaged out at a 22 hour week, of which four hours was dedicated to teaching two subject groups on the degree and HND. Preparation and marking was described as being '*an enormous amount*', with an estimate of eight

hours per week solely on her HE commitments. Shortly after the final round of interviews I was informed she had left the college

Therefore, most of the lecturers found that their teaching loads acted as a barrier to building network relationships, which was not necessarily appreciated by their university colleagues:

Staff are spread across a range of programmes and levels, therefore we don't have the time to develop any network relationships with our (the University) counterparts. (LP/06)

This lack of time to move beyond the teaching function was also provided as a prime reason for not engaging more fully with the FE college network: *Communication with other network colleges – very little, don't have time* (LP/09). Furthermore, attempts to create communication chains tended to fail quite quickly, almost as if the barriers were cultural:

Within the Network colleges we don't seem to communicate ... you email and email but don't really get any response from them. (LP/08)

The 'commonality strategy', for curriculum provision and assessment, was implemented via the University's virtual learning platform (Blackboard). Teaching materials, such as PowerPoint slides, seminar and other 'learning materials' were normally provided by the unit leader from the University and made available to rest of the Network's lecturers. Most of the interviewees viewed this in a positive light, as it gave access to centralised teaching materials which enhanced their own teaching experiences, helped to elevate their lectures and alleviate their preparation workloads.

Blackboard has made teaching easier, I use the materials in the classroom it prompts me up a gear when it comes to academic theories. (LP/02)

At Westbridgeford, some of the interviewees mentioned that they had been instructed to rely solely on the University's centralised materials; which was this was met with mixed reactions

from the practitioners:

I have been told on occasions “well, why do you need to prepare?” You only have slides and just have to deliver those, but they need to be supplemented with additional material, requires time, energy and goodwill. (LP/03)

The positive aspects were similar to the ones discussed earlier and involved access to the standard sets of materials. On the negative side, however, there were concerns over their suitability for use in a FE college environment. These issues involved the appropriateness of their academic content, actual availability of the materials and a lack of audio-visual resources and equipment (discussed below):

I’ve been told to use the materials provided (Blackboard); however, some of my original stuff was in more depth and better. (LP/08)

There were further concerns expressed by the lecturers across the Network’s colleges, particularly Westbridgeford and Wentworth, about the physical resources needed to effectively deliver these ‘centralised’ teaching resources. Issues highlighted involved the lack of audio visual equipment, access to the appropriate rooms, availability of information communication technology equipment, and the problem of the time involved in organising the delivery and addressing matters when things went wrong:

Most of my lectures are just given in a room and very often no projector so I’ve got to organise a laptop and projector. Book it and hope it turns up; sometimes it turns up 20 minutes late. (LP/05)

To the disappointment of some of the lecturers, not all units provided Blackboard teaching materials, as the extent of the unit development was left to the discretion of the subject leader at the University:

As for my first year of teaching I was thrown into the deep end and was told that all the materials are prepared on my behalf by the university. All I needed was to go

through it an hour before and just go and deliver it, actually nothing was prepared. (LP/09)

On the whole, the provision of centralised unit materials was viewed in a positive light by most lecturer interviewees, although few reasons were provided in doing so beyond that of ease of workload management. Most related their network experiences to coursework standardisation meetings with other network colleagues at the University and the opportunity to meet and discuss matters at the annual network development day. Otherwise, there seemed to be little time for curriculum development discussions beyond this. The availability of electronic teaching notes and the ‘commonality strategy’, employed by the University, served to alleviate the Lecturers comparative heavier workload and multi-disciplined subject delivery. Little was present, however, to indicate that the Lecturers were actively engaged in a ‘fuller HE experience’ at their colleges or were employing coping strategies and methods to effectively manage their workloads.

Lecturers’ views on managers

The interviewees made few comments regarding the role of management in the FHE process at their respective colleges. Across the three colleges the general feeling was one of marginal improvements over time, consisting of upgrading of the physical infrastructure (centralised location), personnel support (administrators) and recruitment of HE lecturers:

The college management is finally opening their eyes to it, because it is a great revenue stream. (LP/06)

A less positive aspect, was as the common viewpoint that the colleges lacked sufficient experienced teaching staff to deliver an adequate HE experience to their students: *‘We don’t have the facilities especially trained manpower to deliver the course’* (LP/09).

Overall, there was little reflection on the role of senior management, either at the strategic or operational level. When probed, the interviewees reverted back to issues involving resource constraints, discussed earlier. Moreover, the lack of emphasis by interviewees, in this area, may be due to the organisational structures and cultures at play at the individual colleges. There seemed to be little HE identity in the colleges, as the programmes were annexed to larger 'business departments' and subverted by their dominant FE institutional culture.

Summary: the lecturers' experiences

The lecturers provided the impression of being conscientious and committed to enhancing the students' educational experience, as well as valuing the opportunity to teach on the Network courses. These responses were to be expected and are in line with those from previous research literature ranging from Abramson *et al.* (1996) to Lloyd and Griffiths (2008).

Their positive experiences involved the FHE teaching approach, which involved teaching to small groups of HE students (a recurrent theme), enabling greater contact and the identification of individual learner needs. Widening access students particularly benefited from this pedagogic approach, with evidence provided by one college of a high level recruitment from Access courses. Again, this finding was in line with previous literatures, finding congruence with more recent works including Lloyd and Griffiths', (2008) study of FHE widening participation delivery strategies; and Parry *et al.* (2006) guidance on higher education management in the FE sector. The Lecturers believed that the students received a compatible HE experience in relation to the academic profile of the University (teaching, assessments), but were disadvantaged in relation to the provision of recreational and social amenities provided at the University's campus.

Most of the Lecturers valued working within the HE network, citing the centrally produced teaching materials as being beneficial, particularly by those who taught in multi-discipline

subject areas. Such claims involving the degree of support and cooperation is in line with other cited successful aspects of FHE partnership workings (HEFCE, 2003a; Harwood and Harwood, 2004; Lloyd and Griffiths, 2008). Moreover, the interviewees acknowledged the fact that senior management had implemented improvements in HE resource provision, but this had been a marginal process and not necessarily designated solely for HE use.

The lecturers' negative experiences involved shortfalls in teaching and learning resources, concerns over cultural divides, declining academic standards and student commitment. Here, resources were perceived as the key issue, as the franchise courses provided less revenue compared to FE funded programmes, especially as the University took a top-slice (see Chapter 3). The lack of adequate funding was viewed as having an adverse effect upon teaching and learning processes, including learning resource centre provision, access to fuller learning resources, sport, social amenities, and a lack of 'HE community' or ethos. Many of these resource concerns were not new to the FHE relationship and are well documented in past studies (Brady and Metcalfe, 1994; Opacic, 1996; Selby, 1996; HEFCE, 1998b) together with methods to ameliorate the weaknesses (Parry *et al.*, 2006; Lloyd and Griffiths, 2008). However, the extent and scope of these resource pressures is poignant, particularly at Westbridgeford, and suggests either a lack of priority planning, or revenue milking, by the colleges' senior management teams (also discussed in the managers' experiences). This is also indicative of a FE culture dominating the colleges' FHE provision and is detrimental to the HE student experience.

Although the provision of smaller teaching groups was viewed as being their major attribute, there were issues over the appropriateness and feasibility of support classes – particularly at two colleges. What was discussed was not an issue of availability help and support but a question over student demand and motivation, linked to major concerns over the low

academic standards at the Network colleges. These ‘quality’ issues involved level of student commitment, lower entry grade requirements, the perception of weaker calibre degree students, plus pressures on the assessment process to maintain college pass rates.

The staff development issues involved lack of subject preparation time and opportunities to develop any subject specialisation, which would be expected at HE level and was contrary to models operating in some other FHE paradigms (HEFCE, 2003b; Macfarlane et al. 2007).

These issues are explored and developed in the findings from the manager interviews.

Vignettes: the lecturer practitioners

To illustrate the themes, two vignettes have been produced, which serve to characterise the motivations and attitudes of the lecturer stakeholders.

Vaz’s story is one of a highly experienced practitioner who had an instrumental, or pragmatic, approach to his teaching on FHE programmes, recognising the limitations, which were placed upon him by the FE college environment.

Vaz’s story: the Disillusioned Pragmatist

Vaz was in his early forties. He had taught on FHE courses for over 14 years, including two years at his current college (since September 2003) with the remainder spent at another college teaching similar students on comparable courses. His route into higher education began as an FE student studying for a BTEC diploma, he then went on to obtain a first degree in Economics and, after a three year period as a partner in ‘*small business management*’, again studied full-time for a Certificate in Education. At the time of the interview Vaz stated he was also planning to enrol on a part-time masters degree.

Vaz’s first full-time teaching position was as a generalist business studies lecturer. He then became a course tutor for the part-time level 3 and 4 business courses and progressed to a year tutor role for the HND programme. Furthermore, at his old college, he had spent two periods as the temporary Course Director on the HE programme providing cover for a colleague on a sabbatical management position. His current job entailed teaching a variety of HE subjects at the college, where he was also the tutor for all year one network students. Vaz was contracted to teach 25 hours per week, but with

tutor remission taught 19 to 20 hours per week, covering five subjects over four disciplines. He estimated that subject preparation consisted of approximately one hour per week per taught unit, totalling five hours per week. This was revised up from an original estimate of one hour per week, and consisted mainly of photocopying materials for seminar work. This comparative short amount of time spent on preparation was explained due to his *'experience'* and availability from the University's Blackboard site:

A lot of stuff I can do quite quickly, also the preparation is reduced slightly because of Blackboard access, so I might one week, actually, just use the material from the University to present.

Additionally he estimated that, on average, he would spend two hours per week on marking assessments and exams. He envisaged that the marking load would decrease with the advent of multiple choice questions, electronic marking and online assessments being introduced by the University *'so the marking whittles down'*.

In discussing the students experiences, Vaz, produced two classifications; firstly, a small group of mature students studying for the HND whom he identified as widening participation candidates with the attributes of good attendance, effort and commitment to the course; *'I would say a good ten to fifteen are older, more obvious widening participation type of student self-motivated'*. Secondly, the remainder of the cohort, primarily located on the BA degree course, were traditional entrants whom had not attained the grades necessary to enter the University directly *'here on their plan B schedule'*. Vaz had a vacillating attitude towards student attendance and commitment, but tended to focus his attention on those students who attended classes. When he discussed tutorial support he added:

the good ones attend and if they are always here they get the assistance, some younger ones don't attend, that allows for more time.

Vaz expressed a major concern over the lack of a college 'HE identity', due to HE students being located within the FE structure, in relation to class rooming, time-tabling blocks, lack HE of facilities, notice boards, general lack of student involvement, insufficient study space and learning materials. This issue of 'student identity', he believed, was proving to be detrimental to the student experience;

The FE environment is dominant here, so many of the students (HE) in a sense regress back to that and behave like a younger student might behave, which is fair enough.

However, he felt that the college policy towards HE was beginning to change and that resources would follow through in the coming years. If this occurred then he envisaged it would result in greater staffing levels, some administrative support and improved physical resources.

His experiences in the network tended to focus on the pragmatic aspects of delivery and were on the whole positive. He particularly liked the 'commonality' across the network, in terms of centrally produced module handbooks, assessments, exams and teaching materials via the Blackboard system.

A year after this interview, Vaz resigned from his full-time position at the college to take up a fractional teaching post in a HE institution outside of the network.

Ibrahim had the least experience of teaching on the network programmes, having started as a part-time lecturer in the autumn of 2005, before later obtaining a permanent fractional post. He tended to present a more 'idealistic' approach to his FHE teaching, expressing concerns about student motivations, aptitudes to study whilst battling against the college structure.

Ibrahim's Story: the Idealist

Ibrahim was in his mid-to late-thirties, he was articulate and passionate about the opportunities provided through education, but seemed alarmed at some of the things he had experienced whilst working at the college. He was in his first year of teaching there, having previously worked in the Information Technology field, which he had combined with part-time studies and some ad hoc teaching. He was not a qualified teacher, but had gained a masters degree in Information Technology and was currently researching a PhD. Once this was completed he intended to move to a HE institution to continue his teaching career, stating: *'I want to move onto HE teaching after I finish my PhD ... make teaching my career'*. He had started as a visiting lecturer at the beginning of the academic year and was made up to a permanent point 0.6 fractional post by the following January. This resulted in 14 hours contact per week, comprising of five HE subjects on the HND and degree programmes. On average, Ibrahim would spend '*at least*' an additional 14 hours per week on preparation and marking for these five subjects.

Ibrahim felt aggrieved about the lack of support he received in terms of information from the network, concerning subject materials and the general lack of college resources. On his appointment to the role his initial impression was that the teaching materials, such as lecture slides and cases, were to be provided by the University. However, this turned out to be a misconception, which had left him somewhat distraught in terms of subject competence and his own professionalism:

Now, bearing in mind that I am not a specialist in [withheld], it is very unfair for me to be pushed into these kind of subjects without actually having those lessons prepared for me I had to make up my own lessons, I had to make up my own material, and I didn't know whether I was going too deep or too broad.

Additionally he was perturbed by the level of resources on the HE courses and for the college in general. He spoke with passion about his concerns over the teaching and learning environment in relation to the condition of classrooms, lack of audio visual equipment, poor physical environment; as well as the impact of budgetary constraints on consumables; for example, his inability to provide photocopying for students.

He viewed his experiences with the students from a positive standpoint; of being able to make a difference to their lives, and in terms of widening participation and confidence building:

This particular lady who comes from a very education-deprived background, who lives on an estate, none of her family members are educated, they have no idea. But she came into education and she could see herself changing from her immediate family, her thinking is broader, and outlook on life is broader, her experiences are broader and she is talking about things, and coming across things that she would otherwise never come across. And this is what higher education is doing for her.

However, he expressed concerns over entry qualifications and the gaps in his students' prior knowledge, particularly when it came to their written and mathematical abilities, and complained about the fact that he had to spend time covering the basics, stating: '*I cannot move on until I have taught them the basic mathematics*'. Ibrahim had more to say about lack of communication in the network, poor teaching resources and student ability; however, he valued the experience of working on the network programme and believed he made a valuable contribution.

Part Two: the managers' perspectives

Two managers from the three sites agreed to participate in the research exercise. The third from Westbridgeford College had only recently been appointed and declined to participate in the research, without giving a reason. In light of this, a separate strategy was employed to gauge a 'management perspective' for Westbridgeford (discussed in Chapter 3), which chiefly involved using appropriate data from the Lecturer interviews.

The managers were accorded field director status within the network. Their role involved coordinating their respective programmes at college level, a dual responsibility to both the University and their college's senior management team (NVD, 2004), plus teaching commitments. Adopting Briggs' (2003) five-fold typography (corporate agent, implementer, staff manager, liaison and leader) classification, places them in a middle management role, with emphasis both on the FE values, curriculum quality management and resource efficiency.

The manager from Wentworth had a slightly wider role than his counterpart from Dukesbury College (see Chapter 3). Both had extensive experience of teaching HE and managing courses citing five and fourteen years of experience, accordingly. These managers held a distinct set of views, to that of their lectures and, therefore, it was decided to report their views separately, although similar discussion guides were used (see Appendix A).

The managers' perspective tended to produce a more 'balanced viewpoint', in the sense that they put forward both sides of the argument which provided a greater insight into the working of the network. Both could be described as being career managers, as the evidence illustrated they had moved along the management chain at their respective organisations and were pursuing their next career move.

Rationale for HE in FE

This section of the interview was intended to serve as a preamble, or introduction. The basis for this line of questioning was to establish a framework to place their own college 'in context' regarding their HE role, for example the concept of a special mission and widening participation.

The managers were familiar with policy and HE developments in the FE sector. However, they were less conversant with the actual policy drivers, documents, names and dates; for instance, the White Paper *Future of HE* (DES, 2003b) with its emphasis on the role of Foundation degrees. This lack of specific reference to key policy drivers and detail was typical response, as most FE professional identities and management structures tend to be rooted in their teaching and, as a result, slightly inward looking (Young, 2002; HECFE, 2003; Harwood and Harwood, 2004) with focus often on the effect of levers and local environmental issues (Spours *et al.*, 2007; Steer *et al.*, 2007; Chapter 2).

They believed that the initial development of the HE Network had resulted from the University's expansion strategy and the 'Capacity Constraints' it had experienced during the late 1980s (Parry, 2006; Chapter 1). Later this arrangement was to become more 'enhanced' due to the colleges natural widening participation status, as the University repositioned 'its mission' to become more inclusive. Here the colleges had the advantages of geographical positioning, student internal progression attributes and lower entry grade requirements, resulting in them recruiting from a more diverse student mix – prior to any widening participation ticket:

Since 1992 we were a vehicle for the HE provider to increase numbers, later it became a WP (widening participation) initiative, via the colleges, as the profile of our students does vary from that of the main campus. (MP/01)

From their own college perspective, the drivers for being a part of a franchise network were twofold; first, they needed a HE partner for validation purposes if they were to deliver within the Dearing framework: '*because of government legislation we were compelled to find a HE provider to validate the package*' (MP/01) and, second; it provided a staff development opportunity:

We liked to have HE provision, because it provides variety for our staff and an opportunity for them to teach at a higher level than they otherwise might have. (MP/02)

Special mission and widening participation

Neither of the interviewees were familiar with the term 'special mission', but were conversant with the characteristics of widening participation, involving students groups who are under-represented in HE. Here, they focused on providing a sound description of their student profiles and the issues faced from both the college's and the students' perspective; placing emphasis of the experiences of their mature students. In general, they discussed the

issues of the 'student life-cycle', but stopped short of citing the HEFCE's six-stage model in HEFCE (2001b).

Their cohort profiles consisted of students from widening participation student profiles, with many being 'local', living at home and predominately from ethnic minority backgrounds and residing in the 'uplift' postal code districts. This profile particularly fitted the students at Westbridgford, whereas Dukesbury and Wentworth had slightly less of this type of student mix. For the most part, the students' parental background was classified as unskilled or semi-skilled; with the vast majority of their children being the first member of their family to attend a higher education institution:

Our students have a different profile from the mainstream, for example, lots live locally, some are mature, lots from ethnic backgrounds. (MP/01)

On the degree programme, however, a significant number of their students had opted to go to a network college purely as the third year entry route to the University: based on a strategic choice arising from lower than expected 'A' level grades. At Wentworth and Dukesbury there was anecdotal evidence of an increase in the 'A' level entrants from the middle social-economic group backgrounds, which would support national trends of equality drift in access to HE (Blanden and Machin, 2004):

We have a number of students who have not succeeded at 'A' level and get a second chance at the university ... plus a number of weak middle class students. (MP/01)

In commenting about their experiences of mature students, the managers cited two particular concerns over the recruitment and retention. First, there were problems over student recruitment, where the manager from Dukesbury College noted that there had been a noticeable decline in their mature student numbers over the years (at Wentworth and Westbridgford no comparisons were made). This decline was perceived to be a result of

competitors' actions, who were adopting a strategic focus on the non-traditional student entry market, indicating the possibility that FE colleges were beginning to occupy a third tier in the HE market:

We have fewer mature students; many of them are going directly to other HE providers' main sites, because they are opening their access to such students. (MP/01)

Asked if there was evidence to show that the decline in their mature student market was due to students being 'debt adverse', for example, as a result of financial reforms and the introduction student fees elements (1998-1999) and the replacement of the grants system with means tested loans (1999-2000), neither manager, or the lecturer interviewees (in the case of Westbridgeford College) had seen any evidence to support this rationale. This is indicative of findings on the complexity of student debt and widening participation in HE (Pennell, 2005), and would require further research and profile analysis.

At Wentworth College, the manager believed that the course structure, which was delivered along FE lines, impeded the progression and achievement of their mature students. Here the principal concern was the fragmented nature of their teaching timetable, as their 'FE approach' meant that the one-hour sessions were spread throughout the week with lectures split amongst different days. This presented a particular obstacle to their older students, who had family and work commitments and had to dropout due to this reason:

The course we offer is just so impossible for people who are coming back to study with families for example, because of the volume of group work and the way it is structured ... we only have two mature students out of the six mentioned earlier. (MP/02)

There were differential approaches, however, between the colleges with Westbridgeford and Dukesbury having a tradition of catering for non-traditional entrants with a more cohesive and sympathetic timetabling approach.

In summary, neither interviewee was aware of the term 'special mission' in relation to their role. However, they were conversant with the concept of widening participation and its enshrinement in policy objectives and FE's philosophical stance. Those students whom they classified as having a widening participation background were predominately on the HND courses and mainly mature entry with few of the formal entry qualifications.

Comparative HE experiences

The Dearing report (NCIHE, 1997) recommended that the FE sector adopt a leading role in the future of HE expansion and widening participation, focusing on its traditional strengths of sub-degree provision, coupled with enhanced partnership collaboration (Parry, 2006). This was coupled with an assertion that these FE based students should receive a comparable HE experience relating to the quality of the award and that the overall student experience:

The quality of the experience for the student, and the standard of achievement required for an award should match that of the parent institution (NICHE, 1997: 159).

Within the network this was interpreted as being an identical student experience as opposed to the emphasis on the compatible academic quality. How this came about was not clear, but appeared to be an issue emanating from the University and viewed as unachievable by the managers. Their observation was based upon availability of resources, the culture of their respective colleges and the explicit needs of their HE cohorts. However, they did believe that the positive issues, especially revolving around the high level of student academic support, outweighed any participation in a fuller HE experience. Furthermore, the presumption that their students should receive an identical experience regarding academic and social amenities which was met with a degree of derision by both managers:

There is an increasing perspective from the University point of view that the experience the student should get here, at the college, be the same as that of any student taking the same qualification at the business school, in my opinion that is ludicrous.
(MP/02)

The managers believed the replication of a full student experience was neither desirable nor possible. In citing the barriers to this, they commented on the dominant FE teaching infrastructure and lack of designated HE resources (for example, HE centres).

However, they believed that the strengths of the FHE student experience offset these inherent weaknesses, in particular the special attention the students received through the FE style of teaching, small classes and academic support. This viewpoint, on the student teaching experience, was similar to the perceptions of the lecturers discussed in Part One. Referring to teaching provision and strategies, the general consensus across the colleges was that the students had a particular profile that was being better served by their 'FE approach'. The evidence suggested that this was recognised to some extent by the students:

They may be stuck in a further education college but, at the same time, have recognised that they are a special group within this college, because they get preferential treatment. (MP/01)

The emphasis at the FE colleges was, therefore, not one of comparability but suitability for the type of student they catered for. This was based upon a rationale that encompassed a much lower tariff entry points for the network programme degrees (half of the requirement for the University's main campus), but where the students were expected to attain the identical learning outcomes based upon same content delivery. In the opinion of the managers, as described earlier, this was only attainable through an FE type of delivery model, with its focus on small teaching groups, centralised teaching rooms and qualified teachers:

The whole point of them being here in a FE college is to help them be successful on that same level of qualification from a lower standpoint. (MP/02)

Furthermore, the managers' supported their position over 'the FE approach' by citing the experiences of their returning ex-students who had realised the differences in learning expectations between the two types of institutions. These students discovered that the University offered limited opportunity for personal contact with their lecturers, large group sizes and the expectation of greater student independence in their research and learning approaches:

... anecdotal evidence, they appreciate what they have lost when they do their top-up year at the main site, or elsewhere, find themselves in large lecture theatres, two to three hundred, seminars of forty, less personal contact and recognition as students, I suppose to go from being a big fish to little fish (MP/02).

This supports the views held by the Lecturers and much of the literature on the benefits and claims for distinctiveness of FHE partnerships with their widening participation roles, echoing other general perspectives such as Abramson et al. 1996; HEFCE, 2003a; Parry 2006. However, there is a disparity between this and the diluting of the HE experience, through the application of over-supportive FE teaching techniques, for example explicit help with coursework and examination guidance (Torrance, 2007).

Managers' views on the lecturers' experience

The managers presented a fuller account of the experiences, issues and concerns regarding teaching delivery, which augmented the Lecturer findings, in Part One. Three discussion areas were developed here: institutional culture clashes, college resourcing issues, and the Lecturers' teaching experiences.

The distinctive cultures of the University and its network partners had led to clashes between colleagues, each unaware of the diverse environments in operation at their respective institutions. Conflicts tended to arise from communication problems and inconsistencies in their respective pedagogic approaches: '*our teaching priorities are not always shared,*

sometimes there's lack of collaboration and confusion' (MP/01). One major problem stemmed from the centralised approach to the teaching delivery, which was often cited as good practice in collaborative arrangements (HEFCE, 2003b). Here the University aimed to produce a standardised approach for the delivery of its programme units, involving teaching materials and formative assessment process (including online) via its virtual learning platform (Blackboard). It was reported, however, that this had caused some degree of conflict between staff and their HE counterparts who were not aware of the teaching approach necessary to support the level of student ability, especially on the HND courses:

The HND classes are exclusively people from the bottom 20 per cent of the 'A' level class. Now if you try to teach them in a 'high- fluting' way like the university might want us to, they are going to have no chance of success bearing in mind they are struggling in a more traditional format i.e. small classes. (MP/02)

Managers cited the curriculum development and delivery system as an issue from the FE subject teacher perspective. Decisions were made about individual subjects by the University's unit leaders, where the delivery structure comprised the traditional university model, consisting of a lead lecture and formulised separate seminars based on pre-reading. These methods were not considered a suitable teaching structure at the FE colleges, with its smaller classes, emphasis on differentiated learning, and individual student help; creating a disparity between the institutional teaching approaches:

Having to conform to university central methods of delivery they (lecturers) resent the interference from the university regarding how they deliver the course. Often they feel they have a better understanding of the demands of their students. (MP/02)

The views on HE resourcing priorities were similar to ones held by the lecturers. With concerns expressed over insufficient learning resources, shortfalls in IT equipment, poor condition of classrooms, as well as lack of a centralised HE study area. Criticism over the condition of classrooms and face the day-to-day problems with the FE students emanated

from all three college sites. There were also complaints over lesson disruptions, untidy classrooms, damaged equipment and a general feeling of ‘unease’ by some HE students over the atmosphere at the college:

We have priority on the timetable, but we share and therefore have to wait and sometimes clear-up after the groups who are less conscientious about the classroom, plus the equipment. (MP/01)

Additional evidence was sought from the managers on their lecturers’ perceptions on student commitment and ability, coupled with their own teaching experiences. They acknowledged the concerns of the teaching staff over student ability and academic attainment:

Staff overestimate the level of HND and degree students ... they expect a higher level from HE students which is not always the case. (MP/02)

The managers’ views on student capabilities were similar to those of the lecturer group, focusing on the low levels of student commitment particularly on the degree courses. Irrespective of the programme (HND or degree) those staff who also taught on the ‘A’ level courses at the Dukesbury and Wentworth sites found the transition from FE to HE teaching to be difficult. According to the Managers this dissonance occurred due the misconception that the students would have higher level of previous attainment:

‘A’ levels the students are a lot brighter, so they are more advanced than some of the students we get on HE courses, they are teaching students who have a reasonable chance of getting to Oxbridge entry, Durham, or one of the better business schools. Then (they) come to HE classes teaching students who got 80 points at A level, not bright enough or had not taken the responsibility of being a student seriously and are continuing in the same vein. (MP/01)

They believed this misinterpretation of students’ ability arose from the newer members of staff who benchmarked against their ‘A’ level teaching experiences. Those who had been lecturing for some time, had adopted a more pragmatic approach and had adjusted to the

student level accordingly and, perhaps, were more embedded into the FE approach to learning practices (Torrance, 2007); or according to one manager:

A lot of our staff, who come to teach the HND and degree, have only a limited experience of it, coming from an A level class, for example. It seems they perceive they will be teaching to a higher level, more pleasurable, this is really not the case. (MP/02)

At Westbridgeford, however, no comparison between their student ability and 'A' level groups were made. At this college staff were involved with teaching on Access courses, AVCE, and/or BTEC programmes, which largely consisted of students from widening participation groups.

Relating to their students' abilities, the Managers broadly classified their cohorts into widening participation (HNDs) and low 'A' level achievers (degree based). In respect of widening participation (as discussed earlier) those on the HND programmes were viewed as more motivated but in need of greater support, whilst some of the degree students were lacking sufficient levels of motivation:

Similar profiles (student cohorts) but different abilities; there are some who have got the ability but are idle and some who haven't got the ability. (MP/02)

This opinion was shared with the managers from both Dukesbury and Wentworth, which had a significant amount of 'A' level provision, whereas at Westbridgeford no such 'A' level cohorts existed.

The views held by the managers regarding the positive experiences of their teaching teams tended to reflect staff development opportunities, which have parallels with earlier research by Brady and Metcalfe, 1994; HEFCE, 1998; Young, 2002. These included an opportunity to teach to greater subject depth, networking within the university and other FE college colleagues, access to university teaching and research materials. Young (2002) found this to

be the case in her single case action research study where her data subjects valued their HE teaching roles despite working in a FE sector which had left them feeling widely demoralised.

The opportunity, however, to engage at a greater depth with their subject was not necessarily cited by all lecturer interviews as a positive factor (see previous section). In fact many of the more experienced staff tended to take a more instrumental view of their preparation obligation (relying on old notes, and the University's Blackboard materials).

Views on their management's involvement

Their observations tended to focus onto resource issues, together with concerns over lack of any HE strategic intent, or clarity of mission. The managers repeated their concerns over adequacy of staffing, support infrastructure and allocation of rooms and materials.

The major concern involving staffing was the lack of recognition for the additional work needed at HE level (Garrod and Macfarlane, 2006) as none of the colleges provided any teaching remission in respect of this.

Comments over lack of adequate physical resources were similar to that of the lecturers and involved discussions over the sufficiency and adequacy of learning resource centres, IT provision and poor classrooms facilities. At Wentworth, the inappropriate timetabling arrangements and the effect on mature students was also re-articulated by the manager interviewee.

All three colleges operated a centrally administered timetabling model designed to meet their FE related needs of curriculum and teaching patterns, but were deemed unsuitable for the needs of the HE students, for reasons of outside commitments work and family obligations. These concerns had been raised with their senior management but to no avail. Wentworth

which had adopted the one hour teaching blocks system (mentioned earlier) were particularly aggrieved by the lack of senior management support.

Furthermore, there were issues over the equality of the resource allocation process and the possibility that the revenues from the HE programmes were being 'milked', although no examples were provided by the managers beyond having to share HE resources. At

Wentworth evidence was provided illustrating the inequalities of a two-tier pastoral support system operating at the college:

Everyone here has two hours tutorial per week, apart from HE students who have either one or none, silly idea bearing in mind that many HE students have just as much a range of support needs as FE students and probably in terms of their private studies potentially more, for example, moving away from home, financial pressures and stuff like that (MP/02).

The students from Westbridgeford were provided with longer two hour teaching slots, which were reported as working in the students favour. Dukesbury seemed to have the most liberal allocation of teaching hours plus a pastoral support system (see the lecturers views on this), but not necessary at the most appropriate times, as their manager stated:

We get the priority over rooms but not the teacher, as we are on a module 'A' level system, thus 'A' levels gets priority we get them (the lecturers) second, leads to unfriendly timetables. (MP/01)

In a positive light, Dukesbury College had recently opened a new HE centre, with Wentworth expecting one to be established in the near future (in the planning stage), consisting of IT and silent study facilities. However, both managers complained that neither resource would be exclusively HE student use. With one manager noting that it was: '*paucity: resources are watered down because of the sharing with the 16 to 19 year olds*', (MP/01). At

Westbridgeford there were no designated HE resources for their network students, at the time this field research took place.

In response to further questioning on their management strategic intentions regarding the future development of their programmes, both managers felt there was little scope for further expansion. Their opinions were based on the fact that the Franchise programmes represented a relatively small revenue stream for their colleges (less than one per cent of total revenue) and not as profitable as LSC funded work: '*Strategically, in my opinion, the college is probably moving away from its enthusiasm for HE*' (MP/01).

In summary, in the light of the shortcomings in resource allocation and infrastructure development, the managers viewed their own senior management's commitment to HE development as superficial. This seemed to be implicit throughout most of their responses, which re-focused on lack of investment in staff expertise, shortfalls in the support infrastructure, poor allocation of physical resources and possible funding inequities. Conversely, this could be indicative of their senior management's focus on the FE market as HE only plays a small part in the overall college business.

Experiences of working within the Network

The views expressed by the managers tended to be in alignment with the lecturers assertions, emphasising problems over communication and institutional cultural clashes - much of which has been discussed previously. The managers did, however, provide more detail concerning interactions with the University managerial activities (see Chapter 3) and other network support issues.

It was commented that there was no longer a Network manager at the University and that the role had been subsumed by a more senior person, which often brought them into conflict of

interest situations. Furthermore, this lack of coordination had served as a catalyst to create further cultural divides, as communication was often viewed as a one-way process:

Sometimes my colleagues claim that the university staff are high handed and arrogant in their approach. There is some anecdotal evidence that some of our colleagues are less than democratic in their management of their modules. (MP/01)

When asked to comment on clashes of interest and resolving professional disputes, there seemed to be no apparent mechanism to address these. One of the managers did believe there was a Network code of conduct involving communication and subject liaison, but this had never been implemented. However, at the time of field research the managers did conclude this had now become a priority for the University due to its forthcoming review by the QAA; leading this one manager to comment - *'We seem to be getting everything we've asked for recently'* (MP/02).

Regarding the University's Blackboard communication portal the managers shared a similar perspective to those of the lecturers. They believed the portal as highly beneficial, both as a communication and teaching tool providing access to centrally produced teaching materials: *'I can link to my Blackboard site, download the lecture slides directly and show the sideshow there'* (MP/01). They believed that their lecturers were unable to be involved in the development of the learning portal due to their overwhelming FE work commitments. What appeared to be happening was an 'off-the-shelf' approach to teaching preparation, involving lecturers who did not necessarily possess a high degree of subject expertise; a strategy which had also been embraced by the managers.

Although the managers spoke at length about the negative aspects of their role this was not to be misinterpreted as indicative of major flaws in their course operation and management, but more a reflection of the issues and challenges they faced within the network.

Summary: the managers' experiences

From the managers' perspective the positive elements of their FHE relationship was in-house, mainly involving their practitioners' teaching ability and areas of a value-added achieved through smaller inter-active teaching groups. Furthermore, the managers emphasised the open access which was facilitated by lecturers for students. This 'open door' culture was considered part of the FE paradigm, involving the continuous help, support and advice provided to students on an informal and ad-hoc basis:

The informal thing, I think this comes much more as a by-product of people as opposed to an actual planned activity. (MP/02)

Moreover, the special attention afforded to their FHE students, who had weaker academic profiles, was viewed as a major strength as the colleges strived to achieve identical qualification outcomes as the University. Much of this is in concurrence with research finding in this area generated by Opacic, 1996, HEFCE, 1998b; HEFCE, 1998c; Lloyd and Griffiths, 2008.

The managers believed that their lecturing teams valued the opportunity to teach on the HE programmes, as it provided staff development opportunities associated with subject research, networking and access to the university's HE resources. Again, this is in accordance with much of the research on the FHE experience (Brady and Metcalfe, 1994; HEFCE 1998a; Young, 2002). However, they also thought that some lecturers had more of an instrumental, or minimalist, approach to their role; which supports the findings and the practitioner vignettes. This is understandable considering their broad range of subjects taught by the lecturers, and has parallels with HEQC's (1993) past concerns that the FE lecturers: *'have traditionally been interpreters of subject matter and modifiers of curricula rather than originators'* HEQC (1993: 20).

There was evidence of their senior management's commitment to invest further in the programmes at two of the colleges, with the development of HE centres at some sites (discussed earlier). However, the managers from the two colleges believed the designated resources were insufficient, due to having to share with the FE student cohorts and the unlikelihood of any further future resourcing. Moreover, there was little evidence of any specific HE student amenities for social and leisure activities at any of the colleges; which was similar to the Lecturer findings.

Regarding interactions within the network, the most positive comments focused on the virtual learning environment (Blackboard), a portal operated and maintained by the University that provided access to materials for both teaching staff and students. Furthermore, Blackboard proved a useful teaching resource, allowing for the joint provision of lecture slides/hand-outs and online assessments. Again, this view fitted with the lecturers' views, who perceived this as an aid to expedite their daily teaching loads.

At two of the colleges, Wentworth and Dukesbury, there was evidence that the number of widening participation students was on the decline, although Westbridgeford still had a significant number in its cohorts. At Wentworth the course delivery structure, with its fragmented teaching week, was viewed as a barrier to widening access as no priority was given to their HE students, in the light of this. At all colleges, the foci of their widening participation strategy involved a traditional pedagogic approach; revolving around access to lecturers and small class sizes. Neither manager spoke further about the broader support available to widening participation students, such as matters over employment issues, childcare facilities/support, financial hardships and health problems all of which are deemed to have a detrimental effect on study motivation, and have been discussed in other studies, for example, HEFCE, 2003a; Parry, 2006; Golding, 2008.

Cultural clashes between colleagues at the three colleges and the University staff was a cause of concern to the managers, who conveyed a belief that the University staff had little appreciation of the differences in their institutional teaching pressures, which Macfarlane et al. (2007:15) describes as a '*lack of shared vision*'. The FE lecturers' job involved longer teaching hours and the generalist/multi-subject approach (Young, 2002), compared to a HE practitioner role which had a single subject research-based discipline focus (Parry et al. 2006; Macfarlane *et al.*, 2007). This mismatch between the two types of cultures led to complaints, from both managers and their lecturers over the high-handedness of the University's lecturers, for example the production of centralised lecture and seminar materials unsuitable for the needs of the network student. In concluding their paper on duality (merged FE and HE institutions) and an inability to achieve fully harmonised FHE experience, Macfarlane *et al.* (2007:16) stated;

It appears that the significant issue facing manager-academics in this particular dual-sector institution is one of creating harmony between two different organisational cultures, now pursuing common institutional goals.

Vignette: Manager practitioner

Martyn's story (below) has parallels with that of the second Manager interviewee, as both possessed similar motivations and points of view on the benefits and frustrations of working in a FHE network relationship. Martyn's story is one of a career manager who had progressed into middle management, although he was exercising this role with due diligence his ambition was to move out of FE.

Martyn's Story: the Competent Manager

Martyn was in his early fifties; he had worked for the college since the late 1980s, where he had followed a typical career path through the FE academic route. He had a first degree in economics and had successfully studied part-time for his Certificate in Education, as well as a higher degree. His initial appointment was as a general

Business Studies lecturer, quickly progressing onto the lecturer II scale as a course tutor on the part-time Level 3 business studies courses. He continued with this role until 1992/93 when he was promoted to Senior Lecturer with responsibility for the HNC and year one tutor for the HND cohort. Following this he became the Course Director, during 1996, for the whole of the college's network programmes. In addition to his 15 hours teaching per week, he claimed to be "*clocking-up*" an additional 35 hours per week for managerial duties. From this brief profile, plus the interview transcript, Martyn could be classified as a 'competent manager'. However, his aspirations were to teach in HE, possibly at a new university and he had been gaining experience to this end, including roles as a Quality Assurance Agency and FEFC Inspector, university external examiner and part-time university lecturer. He was also involved in a limited capacity in research and publication. Martyn had also applied for managerial jobs within the FE college sector, including his own college, which would have moved him on from this particular HE role. Obviously at the time of the interview these ambitions were yet to be realised, he seemed keen to move onto something different; exclaiming '*I don't want to be doing this when I'm sixty*'.

Martyn's responses to the interview questions were positive, comprehensive and quite candid. This may have been due in part to his personality, or to the fact that he knew he was shortly due to leave the college. However, he did request that some of his interview comments not be reported by the researcher, which was duly observed.

On being asked to explain the rationale behind the policy initiatives of FHE expansion and an enhanced role for FE colleges, Martyn provided an insightful description of the HE expansion policies, widening participation initiatives and the role of the FE sector college: '*We are instrumental in increasing access and the numbers of students involved in higher education.*'

He spoke positively about his and other colleagues' roles in widening participation, which was partially achieved through greater individual student contact, smaller class sizes, tutorial support and skills workshops - much of which is discussed later in this chapter. The more negative aspects from his perspective, and most likely to impact on his motivation and action, revolved around his experience with the college's senior management and interactions with the University. In terms of the internal management structure, he expressed concerns about resources for classrooms, the Learning Resource Centre, staffing availability, together with a view that his courses were being '*milked*' or '*watered down*' to support other FE priorities, for example the HE monies were being used to support less viable FE courses. Moreover, he expressed concerns about the future development of network courses and, possibly the future of his own position, as the '*college is probably moving away from its enthusiasm for HE*'. On interactions with the University, he cited poor communication and fractious relationships developing between colleagues and their counterparts across the sites, citing '*poor communication*', '*different structures and cultures*', and '*different priorities*' as the principal reasons. However, the management of recruitment and allocation of student numbers by the University was an area where Martyn choose to '*vent his spleen*'. He found the post 'A' level period, late August to September, when

the majority of network students are recruited to be an increasingly difficult and stressful time in terms of recruiting suitable students. He felt this was exacerbated by the fact that additional student numbers had been allocated to a more 'popular' network college without consultation and an assessment of the wider impact on the other network providers:

I also think that within the network there is a lot of internal competition between the colleges who are recruiting students and I don't believe the centre (the University) has managed that as well as they might and therefore this has had a negative effect on the relationship between some of the colleges.

Very shortly after this interview Martyn resigned from the college to take up a teaching post in a HE institution outside of the network.

Summary: the voice of the practitioners

The practitioners' accounts tended to focus on observations, concerns and issues associated with the workings of their own particular college and its relationship with the University. The findings painted a picture of a group of individuals dedicated to the ideal of widening access to HE, via FHE relationships, but found their actions were impeded by their own college's infrastructure thus reducing their ability to replicate an adequate HE experience.

Most of the lecturers mentioned their teaching approach as the major piece of added value brought to the FHE relationship, here they emphasised the focus on greater contact with students and the provision of much needed support. Their negative viewpoints addressed shortfalls in resourcing and lack of priority planning, for HE, by their own senior management. Also there was an indication that they felt pressured to pass the less motivated and able students, which was due to the funding methodology. Generally the Lecturers dealt with the issues by adopting two broad approaches, as illustrated by the vignettes, they could attempt to ameliorate the situation (Ibrahim: the Idealist) or adopt a more passive role (Vaz: Disillusioned Pragmatist).

The managers held similar views to those of the Lecturers when it came to their college's role in widening participation and its special mission attributes: including teaching ability, benefits of small class sizes and individual student support. The more negative comments tied- in with issues concerning the college structure and culture, here they emphasised concerns over time-tabling blocks, classroom facilities, resource prioritisation and the barriers to creating an 'HE ethos' due to their senior management's intransigence. Comments involving the network partnership centred on the lack of consultation by the University and the occasional clashes amongst staff, from both institutions, arising from misunderstandings over teaching priorities and delivery methods. Both Managers produced a balanced view about the constraints and compromising of operating HE courses in a FE environment and regarded their college's FHE role as positive experience - as illustrated in Martyn's vignette. Despite this, however, both managers left their colleges shortly after they were interviewed, with one taking up a lecturing position at a HE institution (as stated earlier) and the other moving back into industry.

Chapter 5: The dynamics of the FHE partnership

A historical summary

In chapter one the diversity within the HE landscape was described and the important role played by the FE colleges was discussed. The aim of the research has been to examine FE practitioners' experiences of teaching on HE franchised courses and to assess the extent to which they can produce a comparable HE student experience. The research shows that the impact of the policy levers, coupled with the intricacies of the local FE college environment, created a set of circumstances which hindered the development of a successful FHE experience, hence the assertion that the result has not been a HE experience, but an extension of FE practices.

The Conservative Government's post-compulsory education strategies in the early 1990s involved the use of a new funding mechanism as their primary policy lever to achieve low cost expansion in both the FE and HE sectors. In the context of FE, these levers proved to be powerful tools, which achieved their aims of low cost expansion, on a standardised cost base (convergence) and a national qualification framework (HMSO, 1991). However, the policy steering process also produced a set of unintended consequences as many FE colleges experienced financial difficulties and stakeholder group conflicts (Longhurst, 1996; FEFC, 1997b and Randle and Brady, 1997b), cumulating in a general feeling of a 'damaged' profession (Elliot and Crossley, 1992; Bradley, 1996; Shain and Gleeson, 1999; Ainley and Allen, 2010).

The HE sector found itself in a healthier financial situation having achieved significant expansion in its student numbers (Watson and Bowen, 1999) at a reduced funding level (Williams, 1996), with many post-1992 universities expanding through franchising to local FE colleges (Smith and Boccock, 1999). By 1993/94 the Conservative Government realised

that further growth, in both sectors, was financially unsustainable and expansion of post-compulsory education was effectively halted (Spours and Lucas, 1996; Hodgson and Spours, 2000).

The Labour Government's (1997-2010) commitment to educational investment led to a return to growth in post-compulsory education (Parry and Thompson, 2002). Labour's HE strategy similarly rested on a widening access platform, where FE colleges were to play a greater role in educating students from the under-represented social-economic groups (HEFCE, 2003a; Lewis, 2002; Archer *et al.*, 2003). Based upon the Dearing recommendations (NICHE, 1997) Labour encouraged the development of FHE partnerships as a cost effective method for HE expansion (HECFE, 2000a), increasing widening participation and enhancing vocational qualifications (HEFCE, 1996; Parry and Thompson, 2002); which would include the introduction of the Foundation degree to help achieve their fifty per-cent HE participation target 2010 (Parry, 2012). Although Labour's use of policy steering still rested on the use of financial levers, they also attempted to secure a greater degree of local responsiveness through the use of multi-agency partnership approaches (Cardina, 2006; Steer *et al.*, 2007). These reforms were subject to a number of policy shifts, for instance the serial restructuring of the LSC from 2001 to 2007 (Coffield *et al.*, 2008), which created tensions within the FE sector as it attempted to accommodate these serial revisions in line with the demands of its 'local ecology' stakeholder groups (Spours *et al.*, 2007).

Throughout this 20- year period the use of policy levers resulted in a series of significant change in the post-compulsory sectors, where the greatest impact was on the FE sector. This placed many FE's practitioners under immense pressure as they coped with relentless changes in their work environment, whilst having to integrate relatively marginal students into the framework and according to Feather (2010):

They (lecturers) cannot make sense of their environment, because it is always in a state of flux due to the changes it has to go through (especially FE), and they are never given time to implement one policy before another comes along. Feather (2010:193)

Earlier it was argued that teaching practitioners provide a fundamental mediating effect on the quality of the student experience and as the last link in the policy process this warrants investigation into their role in FHE partnerships.

The research and theoretical approach

Thus, the research examined the realities of this FHE partnership arrangement from the practitioners' perspective, in the light of policy mechanisms and the wider college environment. The methodological approach involved a small-scale case study based upon a discrete and limited population, involving three FE colleges and a university that formed a FHE network. Although all three colleges provided the same HE course, as part of the University's franchise agreement, their local environments produced different operating cultures which were mainly derived from their location, size and student geo-demographic profiles. The similarities and differences in the college operating environments provided a further opportunity to triangulate the findings and to produce a critical framework (model) to inform the analysis.

The model (Fig.2: pg. 46), was established from the literature to demonstrate the forces that constitute a college's FHE institutional environment to illustrate how they are shaped by policy levers and aspects of the wider FE college environment. The relationship between the model's components was described in Chapter 2. They comprise of three elements (FE professional culture and college structure, FHE student attributes and Partnership relationship) that shape the practitioners' perspective of FHE partnerships. In turn, these 'forces' are a function of a combination of powerful policy levers which have penetrated their respective organisations to influence its behaviour. In doing so, they are mediated by

practitioners in accordance to the demands made from their immediate environment.

The FHE relationship – underlying forces

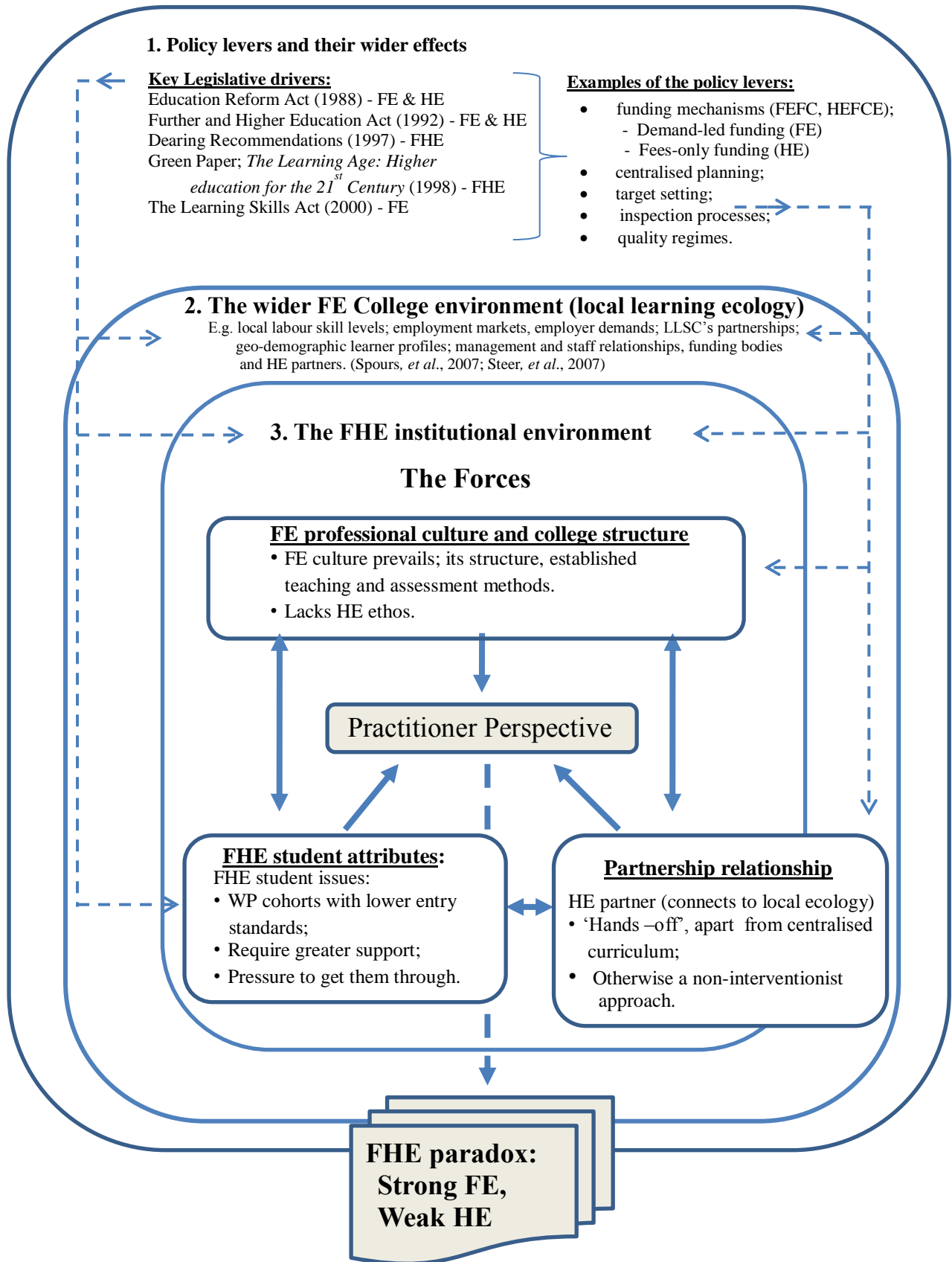
The key research findings, from the case study, have been integrated into the ‘Composite forces’ model developed in Chapter 2 to illustrate the dynamics at work in and around the FHE partnership. The model from Chapter 2 has been ‘populated’ by the key research findings to illustrate the dynamics and ‘underlying forces’ in more detail (see Fig.4: pg. 140). This model is organised into three levels to illustrate the effects of policy levers as they interact with local and institutional environments that have governed the FE and HE sectors (Level One) and have shaped the FE colleges and their local ecologies (Level Two) which, in turn, determine the nature of the network colleges’ FHE Institutional environments (Level Three). The role of levels One and Two (in the model) were found to be principally descriptive and contextual, although the combination and dynamics of these forces did help shape the practitioners’ perspectives of their FHE partnership relationship they were not discussed by them during the interviews.

Level One: Policy levers and their wider effects

Level One represents the environment by which policy is translated through to the FHE system and is characterised by the series of directional lines consisting of the key legislative drivers and their policy levers. At each level the impact of the policy process is mediated by the various stakeholder groups as they react to their other organisational and local ecology demands which take precedence.

The impact of the key legislative drivers and their levers, in the model, was discussed in the earlier chapters. It was argued that as these levers worked their way through the FE and HE operating environments they created a raft of unintended consequences, particularly in the FE system where these levers were used extensively. At the FE interface the effects of the

Figure 4: Dynamics of the FHE partnership



demand-led funding element and the convergence mechanism created considerable cost pressures at individual colleges (Longhurst, 1996; Randle and Brady, 1997b; Ainley and Allan, 2010). FE college lecturers had to come to terms with significant changes in their work practices as their managers restructured their work environments to meet the dual objectives of cost containment and market expansion, whilst balancing the needs of other stakeholder groups. These measures involved cuts in course hours, increased contact time and individual performance measurement involving lesson inspection, student retention and achievement measurement all of which proved to have a detrimental effect on FE work practices and industrial relations (Shain and Gleeson, 1999, James and Biesta, 2007). In his work on the FHE cultural divide operating in FE colleges Feather (2011:15) describes the influence of managerialism in FE as *'painting a very dark picture of HE in FE'*, as its influence was not solely limited to the FE provision.

The lecturer practitioners' knowledge of policy development and its issues was limited to widening participation debate, which was possibly an outcome of their general FE environment. Although the manager practitioners had a deeper grasp of the key legislative drivers involving FHE relationships they still focused on their colleges' widening access role. It would seem that the 'general FE policy levers' had the greatest impact on the practitioners' perspective on their FHE relationship. This was reflected in their statements which demonstrated an inability to differentiate between FE and FHE, which was highlighted when problems associated with their own colleges took precedence over the Network issues; for example their discussions on resourcing, transient management attitudes and classroom management challenges where all equally weighted FE issues. Turner *et al.* (2009) came to the same conclusion in their work on emerging FHE professional identities also there is a similarity with Feather's (2011, 2012a, 2012b) research on HE cultures and scholarly activities in FE colleges.

Policy steering, however, should not be viewed in isolation as there are a number of other inter-relating factors which form complex relationships, or local ecologies, that shape individual colleges. In Chapter 2 it was argued that the policy process becomes re-contextualised when its levers collide with the multiple forces that form the wider FE local learning environment this would also include FHE partnerships.

Level Two: The wider FE College environment

This section of the model represents the forces that consist of local stakeholder groupings that have different levels of interest and power relationships with their respective FE colleges. Here, it was argued, FE colleges operate within local ecologies and have to prioritise to take into account their stakeholders' comparative political strengths (i.e. levels of power and interest), which often distracts from the original policy intention (Spours *et al.*, 2007; Coffield *et al.*, 2008). In the case study several clashes in stakeholder group expectations were identified, which in turn impacted on the practitioners' perspective of their FHE relationships. Principally this focussed on the conflicting aims related to the key FHE drivers for widening student participation and the requirement for comparable HE experience in the FE colleges; the quality levers involved in funding HE partnerships and the difficulties encountered in teaching students from a different geo-demographic learner profile (FHE student attributes); or the funding pressures in the FE college to ensure the students successfully pass the course. These were not unique to the case study as similar findings were later presented in the research by Griffiths and Lloyd (2009); Turner *et al.* (2009) and Feather (2010; 2011; 2012a; 2012b). Although not explicitly referred to by the practitioner interviewees, it was found that the FE colleges were balancing the needs of their various stakeholder groups according to their level of influence, and thus in a FE dominated landscape the needs of its HE partners seemed to have a lower managerial priority.

The impact of these ecologies on the FE sector resulted in sets of local colleges with their own distinct characteristics (Parry *et al.*, 2006) or cultures (Robson, 1998, Feather, 2011), and where policy was translated to fit professional practice. In the case study it was discovered that all three FE colleges were operating in different contexts which had produced dissimilar cultural characteristics, although there was commonality in their 'HE approach' and the network issues.

Dukesbury's local environmental factors had helped it forge a sound academic reputation, ensuring it selected many of its FE students, who chose to travel into area to study. The College had expanded its HE provision rapidly due to its close proximity to the University, utilising its existing partnership links and academic reputation. Wentworth's local ecological factors were similar to that of Dukesbury's, but it was a larger tertiary college catering for an affluent geo-demographic student group whom secured university place outside of the network. Its employer links were weaker, compared to Dukesbury, but with a stronger relationship with its LEA and LLSC owing to its 'sixth form college' role. Due to its location Wentworth's ties to the University were looser and it faced difficulties in recruiting students onto its two franchise courses.

Westbridgeford was the largest college in the case study, enrolling three times as many FE students as the other two colleges combined. The size of the college, along with the fact it was on three sites, meant that numerous sets of subcultures existed amongst its practitioner groups together with a more complex relationship within its local learning ecology. The majority of its FE student stakeholders were from areas of social deprivation and high unemployment, a high proportion of these students were studying for Level 1 and 2 type qualifications. This required different levels of staffing expertise and teaching approaches compared to the other two partner colleges. Owing to its geographical location and cultural

dynamics Westbridgeford also had loose ties with the University and furthermore had problems recruiting students onto the franchise programmes.

The University's quality assurance system for the network focused on the standardisation of curriculum and assessment procedures, but developed a devolved approach in all other dealings with its FE partners. Inevitably this meant that their partners were left with weak HE identities as they had to look 'inwards' for their 'HE approach'. This situation was compounded by the practitioners themselves who were located in business studies departments which possessed weak vocational traditions resulting from a lack of shared professional identity (Coffield *et al.*, 2008), and catering for weaker performing students (Reay *et al.*, 2009, Feather, 2011). This leads to the proposition that although FE colleges reproduced a HE student experience, thus satisfying some policy aims, the culture of a FE college prohibited the full development of a comparable HE experience. In the research findings the practitioners often focused on the 'internal issues' at their colleges, frequently citing problems concerning resourcing and leadership, was a generalisation of their colleges' character shaped by national policy opposed to FHE driven perspective. The main dynamics of this process is summarised in the next section, where the model has been populated with the key practitioner research findings.

Level Three: The FHE institutional environment

Central to the model is the concept of a FHE institutional environment (level 3 in Figure 4: pg.140); a product of the exercise of policy levers and is a subset of the wider environment of the FE college. This level consisted of three inter-related forces (partnership relationship, FHE student attributes and FE professional culture and college structure) which act to shape the practitioner perspective on delivering their HE programmes.

The partnership relationship in the case study in the model resembles Trim's (2001) of 'FE

collaborative model' criteria as it demonstrated clarity of objectives, formulation of a relationship based on a financial arrangement; with further characteristics obtained from Bird's (1996) 'franchising relationship' as the university adopted a 'top down approach' using 'standardise curricula' as its main quality mechanism whilst exercising little control over their FE colleges' teaching methods. Although the partnership relationship acted as an 'internal force' in shaping practitioners perspectives, it was also an element of the wider FE college environment, or local learning ecology, and therefore straddles the wider FE college and FHE boundary.

The research findings indicate that the University exerted little influence over the network colleges beyond the allocation of student numbers and the provision of a curriculum and assessment bank, therefore it tended to tell its partner colleges what to teach, but not how to teach (NVD, 2004).

The practitioners viewed their experience of the partnership relationship mainly in a positive light, citing the opportunity to teach on HE programmes and the support materials available from their HE colleagues as particularly beneficial. Nevertheless, the existing cultural and structural barriers resulting from different pedagogies and lack of inter-site communication pre-empted the development of a strong academic community across the network. The absence of any directive support, from the University, meant that most practitioners (lecturers and managers) looked to their own professional experience and college teaching approach as the principal method to meeting the needs of their particular type of HE student.

The other two elements, in the model, FHE student attributes and FE professional culture and college structure were found to be the overriding factors in forming the Practitioner Perspective on their FHE approach as they had been shaped by the overriding FE levers.

In the case study the FE college network was successful in attracting a high number of students with the 'FHE attributes' of having widening access backgrounds, principally comprising of mature entry routes or those students with non-standard entry qualifications. Additionally, many of their students had chosen to study at the network colleges as their 'fall-back option', due to a combination of weak entry grades and low HE aspirations. Consequently their FHE students required high levels of individual support, including explicit one-to-one help with their assessments and extensive individual contact with staff. Some of the practitioners viewed this in a negative light, by indicating declining academic standards and poor network recruitment practices and managerial pressures to ensure students succeeded. On the whole, their approach to teaching HE classes paralleled the standard pedagogic approach operating within the colleges, which meant that it followed the traditional FE approach of a classroom teacher-led learning environment. Other studies on HE approaches and student needs in FE environments have produced similar findings, for instance Reay *et al.*, 2009; Turner *et al.*, 2009 and Feather (2011) concluded:

think HE in an FE environment is an extension, rightly or wrongly of A level, in a way it is delivered in a very FE style, only teach no research activity, could be seen as 'dumbing' down degrees, so that students can pass qualifications easier. Interview: 4 (Feather, 2011:17)

This is in contrast to the typical HE pedagogic approach involving the development of independent student learning styles; with emphasis on pre-reading skills, lead lectures, student-led seminars and a research focus, delivered by vocational academics with strong subject and research backgrounds (see Jones, 2006; Feather 2012a). According to some of the lecturers their FE approach was tantamount to 'over-pampering' of students, leaving them ill prepared for their final year at a university main site or, or the world of work. The practitioners believed there to be a relatively low student commitment and achievement which was connected to the lower entry qualifications, adding to the pressure to ensure

students successfully passed their course.

The limited interaction between the colleges and the University, due to geographical and social cultural barriers, meant the FHE cultural identity was largely drawn from within the FE colleges themselves (Reay *et al.*, 2009). Earlier it was argued that FE colleges are complex organisations and that have their own unique cultures (Parry *et al.*, 2006), with sets of sub-cultures operating at departmental level (Tipton 1973 in Robson, 1998 and Feather, 2011). FE practitioners have a relatively low level of collective professional identity - a consequence of their employment backgrounds and FE colleges' organisational structures (James and Biesta, 2007; Feather, 2012b). The case study research involved assessing whether the FHE institutional environment had its own sub-culture with a HE ethos, or was pulled into the general FE paradigm. The research illustrated that the colleges' senior management viewed their HE franchised programmes as additional revenue streams and were resourced on FE lines, which was not conducive to the creation of an HE ethos. In fact the FE culture, evident in the case study, was so strong it has dictated the FHE practice in the FE colleges producing a diluted HE experience for their students.

The policy driver of widening student access to HE through encouraging FHE partnership arrangements have had success in terms of increased student numbers (HEFCE 2007b; HEFCE 2009a). However, the extent to which the student experience was comparable to that of a HE institution is questionable, as this research has shown there to be little differentiation in their HE teaching approach, or targeted resourcing to create more of a HE ethos.

Conclusion: the FHE paradox

The research findings illustrate the immense difficulties and pressures that practitioners faced when undertaking their day-to-day HE teaching duties. This was often articulated in terms of their dissatisfaction over the colleges' lack of a HE focus, inadequate resourcing and a

general inability to meet the needs of their HE students. These responses were a product of three major factors (Fig. 2: pg. 46) - national policy levers which were used extensively in the FE sector, the impact of its stakeholder local ecologies and the particular sub-culture in the FE institution.

Strong FE orientation

The characteristics of their FHE students resulted in the development of a teaching culture of overwhelming support (Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003), for example, explicit assessment guidance, excessive one-to-one help, exam preparation techniques, photocopying out of the core textbook. This approach may have emanated from vocational teaching methods often employed in FE for Levels 1 to 3 (see Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003; Torrance, 2007), but when reproduced at HE level could hamper student development and progression (Turner *et al.*, 2009; Feather, 2010)

Although FE has a long history of providing HE, its roots remain firmly in vocational training and general education, this has driven professional cultures to be very different from those institutions in the university sector whose emphasis is on single subject and research based expertise. The HE programmes at the case sites were all located in large FE college departments, where the focus was on their FE courses rather than HE which was afforded greater strategic importance by senior management. The network colleges delivered their HE programmes mainly along FE lines, due to their pre-existing organisational structures, timetabling methods, teaching contracts, pedagogic expertise and physical resource constraints. The lecturer interviewees normally had multi-disciplinary teaching responsibilities; often teaching three to five separate HE subjects across a number of disciplines (Vaz, Ibrahim and Brenda's vignettes – Chapter 4). Additionally, the majority of these practitioners had FE teaching commitments at Levels 2 and 3, as well as a multiple of

other duties which Guile and Lucas (1999) describe as having a ‘holistic approach’ (Chapter 2), with no shared vocational background. The managers’ also had significant teaching responsibilities although teaching remission was provided in *lieu* of their managerial duties and they taught on a range of HE subjects only (Martyn’s story, Chapter 4). This meant that neither group of practitioners had sufficient time to develop subject expertise or research interests, which Feather (2012b:337) claims as being:

‘reading to teach’ in some instances (the lecturers’) are just a chapter in front of the students in the designated core text.

The research revealed that none of the practitioners had any significant teaching experience from a HE institution. Those who had qualified teacher status had originally trained in schools, or at a FE college, which was the type of teaching methods they adopted with their HE classes.

FE ‘value-added’ strategies

According to the practitioners, the value added by colleges to HE involved the provision of smaller teaching groups, interactive classroom situation, and provision of high levels of individual student support: the same as their FE approach – which is seen as the bedrock to FE’s contribution to HE (King and Widdowson, 2012 ; Parry, 2012). From the lecturers’ perspective this approach to HE had proved to be a beneficial model, as it helped students with their assessments and tailored lesson planning to meet particular curriculum objectives. In combining these factors a picture emerged of the network colleges generally lacking a strong HE ethos due to their organisational structural and professional cultural approaches.

HE ethos

The issue over lack of an HE identity, or ethos, surfaced during the practitioner discussions over meaningful scholarly activity and staff development opportunities. Here, most

practitioners interpreted this as preparation time and re-articulated that the main issue was a lack of sufficient time to prepare for their HE classes. The practitioners cited high teaching loads, number of contact hours and, in many cases, spread of subject disciplines as the main reasons for lack of available time for preparation. In an attempt to alleviate pressure on HE preparation and workloads many practitioners employed an 'off-the-shelf' strategy, by adopting the on-line teaching materials made available from colleagues at the University. The lecturers were actively encouraged by their managers to use the University's online materials for their teaching (Ibrahim's story, Chapter 3), which according to Feather (2010) is indicative of a facilitator not an academic subject specialist, whose role involves a strong emphasis on scholarly activities. No contact hour remission was provided in respect of their HE teaching commitments, with complaints made that management did not appreciate that there should grounds for this. The amount of time spent on preparation and marking varied according to the interviewee, but generally the more experienced people spent less time on this activity (see Vaz's story compared to Ibrahim's experience). Professional development opportunities were limited to a yearly staff development day at the University, beyond this there was little liaison with network partners. At college level there was no funding available for HE staff development, also it was questionable as to whether an active demand existed amongst the majority of the lecturer interviewees.

The research findings support this assertion of lack of 'HE mission' at the Colleges, either due to a failure of senior management to prioritise, or effect of the lower resource levels, or a combination of both. This, again, points towards a failure to differentiate between the FE and HE provision at the individual colleges and adds weight to the hypothesis that FE colleges had not bridged the gap between themselves and HE institutions. This is further illustrated by Jones' (2006) model on the core characteristics that help to define HE ethos within FE,

which consists of; firstly, the learning and teaching dimensions that encourage the self-directed aspect of student study; secondly, the symbolic aspects of a HE experience (ceremonies, demarcation of HE study space and signage reinforcing the dual levels); thirdly, physical infrastructure and adequate resourcing and fourthly; fuller student engagement in the HE experience (extra-curricular activities). All of which exposes the fact that the 'HE practitioners' in the case study were on the periphery of HE, in the sense that they were not part of a HE community with reference to research, teaching approaches, subject expertise and the a general access to adequate resourcing to enrich the student experience.

Cultural identities

In their discussions concerning the experiences of the network a second view emerged from the managers of distinctive cultures operating at the network colleges compared to the University, with each having different teaching pressures within distinct operating environments and management structures (Scot, 2009). The University had a predominantly 'hands-off' approach to its partnership relationship particularly in relation to the way colleges delivered their programmes (NVD, 2004). However, the commonality in the curricular had led to delivery problems within the network as the units were designed for student centred teaching approaches, involving the independent learning pedagogies associated with lead lectures and formularised seminars based upon pre-reading. Seemingly, none of these activities would dovetail with the teacher-centred 'FE approach' involving classroom structure and student support mechanisms operating as standard at the network colleges. This differentiation in teaching approaches was also indicative of the lack of opportunities for the FE practitioner to be involved in the curriculum development framework, as well as other scholarly activities associated with single subject specialism. Furthermore, the collective complaints (both groups of practitioners) concerning insufficient teaching and learning

resources could be viewed as symptomatic of their management's strategic direction, to focus on its FE business.

To conclude, in relation to the policy strategies the FE sector has been successful in attracting sets of educationally marginalised students and achieving the academic throughput. It has not, however, provided them with the fuller HE experience, involving the self-development skills achieved through independent study and guided by the academic rigour of subject specialists. FE's pedagogic strengths work well for those courses at Levels 1 to 3, but its effects begin to dissipate when applied to Level 4 programmes, especially when taught and assessed in parallel with those at a HE institution. The research explored a group of practitioners who seemed to be on the 'outer fringes' of HE in larger FE dominated colleges. These practitioners felt isolated from the wider HE community and with no other reference point reverted to FE methods and norms in their teaching approaches, which was in line with their existing colleges' cultural practices.

But was it a successful HE experience? The pre-conceived notion that FE colleges would be able to provide an adequate HE experience based upon its existing characteristics in fact proved paradoxical, as the strengths of FE colleges appeared only to produce weaknesses when they were applied to a HE partnership model. This raises questions regarding implications for this FHE relationship and what could be initiated to improve professional practice.

Implication for policy and professional practice

Encouraging the further development of FHE network partnerships to help groups of educationally disenfranchised students enter into HE would appear to be an equitable solution towards the creation of greater social mobility and widening access. Furthermore, the idea of paying the universities to facilitate this based on their successful past performance in low cost

student expansion and curriculum quality assurance expertise would at first light appear to be an effective model. However, there is a requirement for this to be adequately managed, and whilst the University has the quality remit it has no influence on the delivery methods for its franchisee students, which often leads to sets of undergraduates receiving a diluted HE experience.

The evidence points to a situation where colleges in the FHE relationship have marketed their HE provision on the positive aspects of greater individual student support, small teaching groups and flexible learning approaches, thus embracing Dearing's 'special mission' (Parry, *et al.*, 2012). This is effectively the FE college's cultural and pedagogic approach to teaching and learning, anyway, which has worked well with their mature 'return to study' students, whose aspirations may be limited due to their widening participation backgrounds and a possible lack of forethought. However, the younger students who are mainly located on their degree programmes wanted the wider university experience, which cannot be provided in a FE environment and may account for the attendance issues at the colleges. There appears to be a chronic shortage of appropriate and suitable resources, particularly involving staff expertise and time, which reflects the limited revenue stream available to the network colleges. Nor do the network colleges have the same economies of scale advantages as the University, which (at the time of the field research) took a 30 per cent top-slice' from the student fees prior to their reallocation to the individual institutions (NVD, 2004). Resource constraints will continue to remain an issue over time, although there was no evidence about the impact of variable fees at the time of the research. Thus, what direction could the case colleges take and what are the lessons for institutions in similar circumstances?

The Foster Report (LSDA, 2005) heralded an era of differentiation and specialism in skills provision for the FE sector, as colleges were encouraged to 'play to their strengths' by establishing themselves as specialist skill providers, such as gaining Centres for Vocational

Excellence status. Moreover, the establishment of the Lifelong Learning Network system, at the time, was intended to help facilitate this, by reducing the impact of undue competition at regional level and targeting skills deficiencies through fostering links with industry and producing a new skills sector (HEFCE, 2004).

All FE colleges have been encouraged to develop distinct provisions and as a result many have ‘divided down’, by establishing specific centres to best support the student learning experience at the various levels and types of programmes. These include mainly the 14-16 year old centres (Increased Flexibility Programme); centres for ‘A’ programmes, Information Technology. This approach could be adopted by the FE colleges through the introduction of designated HE centres, which may well serve to deliver them from the ‘FE mind-set’ presently influencing the practitioners’ behaviour (Jones, 2006; Feather, 2011). In 2008 the Labour Government did attempt to introduce designated HE centres in FE colleges with its ‘University Challenge’ initiative (HEFCE, 2009b), however only 19 centres were completed and the process now seems to have stalled.

The policies of the Coalition Government (since May 2010) involving the future roles of FE and HE, point towards the pursuit of a greater degree of collaboration between the two sectors: *‘the line between further and higher education should be a permeable membrane, not an iron curtain’* Hayes, (2010: 2). Here the drivers will be cost constraints and teaching effectiveness, with the idea muted that HE institutions could develop their roles as external examiners, akin to the public examination system, enabling a more flexible approach to degree production throughout the education sector:

‘I do think it’s possible to provide good quality HE in an institution that doesn’t award its own degrees and institutions may find it cheaper and more efficient as well.’ Willets, (2010b:5).

These views are sustained in the White Paper: *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the*

System (BIS, 2011) which envisages an expanded role for the FE college sector in terms of its student numbers and the nature of its HE provision, by loosening the hold of the universities in respect of their degree awarding powers and ‘franchising out’ of their student places.

To create greater price competition between HE providers the Coalition Government introduced the ‘core and margin’ system. In 2012/13 those FE colleges and universities who set fees below the £7,500 mark were able to bid for a share of the 20,000 extra student places (the ‘margin’), of which 10,354 were allocated to the FE colleges (Parry, 2012). However, the number of ‘margin’ places is scaled down to 5,000 for period 2013-14 and the indication is that few colleges will be seeking taught degree powers. Therefore, further growth in FHE provision, at FE colleges, will be incremental, with indirectly funded partnerships still forming the dominant model in the ‘top-up’ and sub-degree market (Parry *et al.*, 2012).

The rise of the non-traditional HE institution, if it were to happen, would envisage a greater and more flexible role for the FE college sector, as they would necessarily be tied to the universities for their products, or student funding. However, these research findings illustrate that there are serious questions about FE ability to deliver a quality HE experience for its students, particularly when they may be paying in excess of £7,000 for the opportunity. If this is to be the case then the role of practitioners, who the first line of contact with students and have a fundamental mediating effect, should be looked at more closely and their voices heard more clearly.

References

- Abramson, M., Bird, J. and Stennett, A. (eds.) (1996). *Further and higher education partnerships: the future for collaboration*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Ainley, P. and Allen, M. (2010). *Lost Generation? New Strategies for youth and Education*. London: Continnum.
- Archer, L., Hutching, M. and Ross, A. (2003). *Higher Education and Social Class Issues of exclusion and inclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Baker, K. (1989). *Further Education. A new strategy*. Speech to the annual conference of the Association of Colleges of Further and Higher Education, 15 February 1989. London: HMSO.
- Bathmaker, A.M. and Avis, J. (2005). Becoming a lecturer in further education in England: the construction of professional identity and the role of communities of practice. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 31, 1, pp. 1-17.
- Beck, R.N. (1979). Handbook in Social Philosophy in Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (2003) *Research Methods in Education*, 5th ed. London: Routledge
- Belfield, C., Bullock, A., Rikowski, G and Thomas, H. (2000). Franchising and the Funding Methodology in the FE Sector. *Journal of Education and Work*, 13 (1), pp. 25-39.
- Bird, J. (1996). Further and Higher Education Partnerships: the Evolution of a National Policy Framework in Abramson, M., Bird, J. and Stennett, A. (eds.) (1996). *Further and higher education partnerships: the future for collaboration*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Bird, J.; Crawley, G., and Sheibani, A. (1993). *Franchising and access to higher education: a study of HE/FE collaboration*, Bristol: University of West England.
- Blair, T. (1999). *The Learning Habit*. Romanes Lecture, University of Oxford, 2 December 1999. Source: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page1739.asp.html>, accessed 30 November 2008.
- Blanden, J. and Machin, S. (2004). Educational Inequality and the Expansion of UK Higher Education in Greenbank, P. (2006). The Evolution of Government Policy on Widening Participation, *Higher Education Quarterly*, 60 (2), pp. 141-166.
- Blunkett, D. (2000). *Modernising Higher Education – Facing the Global Challenge*. Speech on Higher Education, University of Greenwich, 15 February 2000. Source: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dfes-speeches/150200/index.html>, accessed 30 November 2008.

- Bottery, M. (1996). The Challenge to Professionals from the New Public Management implications for the teaching profession, *Oxford Review of Education*, 22 (2), pp. 179-198.
- Bowe, R., Ball, S. and Gold, A. (1992). *Reforming Education and Changing Schools*, London: Routledge.
- Bradley, D. (1996). Who Dares Wins. Intended and Unintended Consequences of the Further Education Funding Council Methodology, *Educational Management & Administration*, 24 (4), pp. 379-388.
- Brady, D. and Metcalfe, A. (1994). Staff and student perception of franchising, *Journal of Access Studies*, 9 (2), pp. 271-7.
- Briggs, A. R. J. (2003). Finding the Balance Exploring the Organic and Mechanical Dimensions of Middle Manager Roles in English Further Education Colleges, *Education Management & Administration*, 32(4), pp. 421-436.
- Briggs, A.R.J. (2004). Middles managers in further education colleges, The “New Professionals” , *Journal of Educational Administration*, 42(5), pp. 586-600.
- Bridge, F., Fisher, R. and Webb, K. (2003). From Franchise Network to Consortium: the evolution and operation of a new kind of further and higher education partnership, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 55 (3), pp. 301-318.
- Brown, R. (2005). Education, education, education – but will government policies produce ‘an excellent higher education system’? *Higher Education Review*, 38 (1) pp. 3-31.
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burkill, S., Rodway-Dyer, S. and Stone, M. (2008) Lecturing in higher education in further education settings, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 32 (4), pp. 321 -331.
- Cable, V. (2011). HEFCE Annual Conference 2011, speech made at Aston University, 6 April 2011. Source : www.bis.gov.uk/news/speeches/vince-cable-hefce-conference-2011. Accessed 14 April 2011.
- Callender, C. (2003). Attitudes to Debt: School Leavers and Further Education Students Attitudes to Debt and Their impact on Participation in Education, in Pennell, H. and West, A. (2005). The Impact of Increased Fees on Participation in Higher Education in England. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 59 (2), pp. 127 – 137.
- Cardini, A. (2006). An analysis of the rhetoric and practice of educational partnerships in the UK: an arena of complexities, tensions and power, *Journal of Educational Policy*, 21(4), pp. 393-415.
- Clarke, J. and Newman, J. (1997). *The managerial state: power, politics and ideology in the remaking of social welfare*, London: SAGE.

- Clegg, S. and McNulty, K. (2002). Partnership working in delivering social inclusion: organisational and gender dynamics, *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(5), pp. 587 – 602.
- Coffield, F., Edward, S., Finlay, I., Hodgson, A., Spours, K. and Steer, R. (2008). *Improving Learning, Skills and Inclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (2003). *Research Methods in Education*, 5th Ed, London: Routledge
- Colley, H., James, D. and Diment, K. (2007). ‘Unbecoming tutors? Towards a more dynamic notion of professional participation’, *Journal of Education Policy* 22(2), pp. 173 – 193.
- Connolly, M., Jones, C and Jones, N. (2007). Managing collaboration across further and higher education: a case in practice. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 31(2), pp. 159-169.
- Connor, H. (2001) Deciding For or Against Participation in Higher Education: the Views of Young People from Lower Social Class Backgrounds. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 55(2), pp. 204-224.
- Cooper, D. (2007). *The South London Lifelong Network: An Overview*. Conference Paper presented at St Mary’s University College, Twickenham on 13 September 2007.
- Davies, B. and Hentschke, G.C. (2006). Public-private partnerships in education: insights from the field, *School Leadership and Management*, 26 (3), pp. 205-226.
- Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good Research Guide for small scale-scale social research projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Denzin, N.K. (1970). *The Research Act in Sociology: A Theoretical Induction to Sociological Method*. London: Butterworth.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) (2003) *The Landscape of Qualitative Research Theories and Issues*, 2nd Ed. London: SAGE.
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) (2011). *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*. Source: www. BIS.gov.uk , accessed 23 January 2012.
- _____ (2012) *Understanding Higher Education in Further Education Colleges*. Research paper number 69, June 2012. Source: www. BIS.gov.uk, accessed 17 July 2012.
- Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (1998) *The learning age. Higher education for the 21st Century. Response to the Dearing report*. London: HMSO/DfEE.
- _____ (1999a) *Participation in Education and Training by 16-18 year olds 1988-1998* Statistical First Release 13/99 London: in DfEE in Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (2000) opt cit pg. 297.

- ____ (1999b) *Learning to Succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning*, Cm 6939, London: HMSO.
- ____ (2000) *Foundation Degrees, Consultation Paper* London: DfEE/HMSO.
- Department for Education and Science (DES) (1966) *A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges*. London: HMSO
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (1985) *The development of Higher Education into the 1990s*, London: HMSO.
- ____ (1987a) *Managing Colleges Efficiently*. London: HMSO.
- ____ (1987b) *Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge*, Cmnd. 114. London: HMSO.
- ____ (1991a) *Higher Education: A New Framework*. London: HMSO.
- ____ (1991b) Department of Education and Science, Department of Employment and Welsh Office (1991b). *Education and Training for 21st Century*, Vols 1 and 2 (Comnd 1536, May 1991), London: HMSO.
- ____ (1992) Higher education in further education colleges. Franchising and other forms of collaboration with polytechnics. A report by HM Inspectorate, no 228/91, London: HMSO/ DES.
- ____ (2003a) *Success for All: Reforming Further Education and Training*. (London: HMSO).
- ____ (2003b) *The Future of Higher Education*. London: HMSO/DfES.
- Dhillon, J.K. (2005). The rhetoric and reality of partnership working, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 29 (3), pp. 211-219.
- Downie, R.S. (1990). Professions and Professionalism, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 24 (2), pp. 147-159.
- Doyle, M. (2000). Higher Education, Regional Partnerships and Progression: A Case Study in Collaboration. *Journal of Access and Credit Studies*, 2(!) pp. 124-131. Source: www.fehe.salford.ac.uk accessed on 23 August 2007.
- Doyle, M. (2001). Challenges to FE/HE collaboration in implementing a widening participation strategy, *Education Through Partnership*, 5(1), pp. 7-34.
- Dunleavy, P. and Hood, C. (1994). From Old Public Administration to New Public Management, *Public Money & Management*, 14 (3), pp. 9-16.
- Ecclestone, K. and Pryor, J. (2003). 'Learning Careers' or 'Assessment Careers'? The Impact of Assessment Systems on Learning, *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(4), pp. 471-488.

- Edward, S., Coffield, F., Steer, R. and Gregson, M. (2007). Endless change in the learning and skills sector: the impact on teaching staff, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 59 (2), pp. 155-173.
- Elliot, G. (1996). Education Management and the Crisis of Reform in Further Education. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 48 (1) ,pp.5-24.
- Elliot, G. and Crossley, M. (1997). Contested Values in Further Education. Findings from a Case Study of the Management of Change, *Education Management and Administration*, 25(1), pp. 79-92.
- Evans, E. (2002). Did I Sign Up for This? Comments on the New Higher Education in Hayes, D and Wynyard, R. (eds) (2002), *The McDonaldization of Higher Education*. USA: Information Age Publishing Incorporated.
- Feather, D. (2010). A whisper of academic identity: an HE in FE perspective. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 15(2), pp. 189-204.
- Feather, D. (2011). Culture of HE in FE – exclave or enclave? *Educational Review*, 59(4), pp. 243-261.
- Feather, D. (2012a). Oh to be a scholar – an HE in FE perspective. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 36(2), pp. 243-261.
- Feather, D. (2012b). Do lecturers delivering higher education in further education desire to conduct research? *Research in Post-compulsory Education*, 17(3), pp. 335-347.
- Fielding, J. (1993). Coding and managing data, in Gilbert, N. (ed) (1993). *Researching Social Life* London: SAGE.
- Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), (1997a). *Council News*, 30 May 1997, Circular Number 39. Coventry: FEFC.
- _____ (1997b) *Learning Works: widening participation in further education*. Coventry: FEFC.
- Forrester, M. A. (2010). *Doing Qualitative Research in Psychology. A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.
- Frankfort-Nachmias, C. and Nachmias, D. (1992) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 4th Ed, Edward Arnold: Bristol.
- Fryer, R. H. (1997). *Learning in the 21st century: first report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning*. National Advisory Group for continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, Sheffield: England.
- Garrod, N. and Macfarlane, B. (2006). *Scoping the duals*, paper presented at the Society for Research in Higher Education Annual Conference, 12 -14 December, 2006, Brighton: England.
- Gleeson, D. and Mardle, G. (1980). *Further Education or Training? A Case Study in Theory and Practice of Day Release Education*, London: Routledge.

- Green, A. (1997). *Education, Globalization and the Nation State*. London: Macmillan Press
- Greenwood, J.R. and Pyper, R. (2002) *New Public Administration in Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Griffiths, C. and Lloyd, M. G. (2009). Degree of success? A review of delivering BSc Honours degrees in an FE college. *Journal of further and higher education*, 33(4), pp. 483 -492.
- Guile, D. and Lucas, N. (1999). Rethinking Initial Teacher Education and professional Development in Further Education: Towards the Learning Professional in Green, A and Lucas, N. (eds) *FE and Lifelong Learning: Realigning the Sector for the Twenty-first Century*. Bedford Way Papers, Institute of Education, University of London.
- Hall, S. (2003). 'New Labour's double shuffle', Soundings. Source: www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/articles/nov.03.html. Accessed on 8 January 2010.
- Hall, V. (1994). *Further Education in the United Kingdom*, 2nd ed. London: Harper Collins.
- Harrison, M.L. (1987). Diagnosing organizations in Yin, R.K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE.
- Harwood, J. and Harwood, D. (2004). Higher Education in Further Education: delivering higher education in a further education context – a study of five South West colleges. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28(2), pp. 153-164.
- Hayes, J. (2010). Speech: City and Islington College, 17 June 2010. Source: www.bis.gov.uk/news/speeches/john-hayes. Accessed 6 July 2010.
- Hayes, D and Wynyard, R. (eds) (2002), *The McDonaldization of Higher Education*. USA: Information Age Publishing Incorporated.
- (HEFCE), (1995). *Higher Education in Further in Education Colleges, the Funding Relationship*. Bristol: HCFCE.
- _____ (1996). *Higher education in further education colleges: a future funding approach*. Bristol: HEFCE.
- _____ (1998a). *Funding higher education in further education colleges*. Report 98/59, Bristol: HEFCE.
- _____ (1998b). *The nature of higher and further education sub-contractual partnerships*. Report 98/58, Bristol: HEFCE.
- _____ (1998c). *Study of the relative costs of HE provision in FE colleges and HE institutions*. Further Education Funding Council/Higher Education Funding Council for England and KPMG. Report 98/57. Bristol: HEFCE.
- _____ (1999a). *Higher education in further education colleges. Guidance for colleges on funding options*. Report 99/36. Bristol: HEFCE.

- ____ (1999b). *Improving provision for disabled students*. Report 99/08. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2000a). *Costs of higher education provision in further education colleges*. Report 00/16. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2000b). *Higher education in further education colleges. Development fund for learning and teaching*. Report 00/09. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2000c). *Foundation degree prospectus*, Report 00/27. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2001a). *Supply and Demand in Higher Education*, 01/62. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2001b). *Strategies for widening participation in Higher Education – A Guide to Good Practice*. Report 01/36. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2003a). *Supporting higher education in further education colleges. A guide for tutors and lecturers*. Report 05/03. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2003b). *Supporting HE in FE Colleges: policy practice and prospects*. Report 03/16. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2003c). *Review of indirect funding agreements and arrangements between higher education institutions and further education colleges*. Report 03/57. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2004). *Lifelong Learning Networks, Joint Letter from HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council*, Circular Letter, 3 June, 2004. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2007a). *Foundation degrees Key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07*. Report 07/03. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2007b). *Students registered at one institution but taught by another 2006 -07*, Report 08/42. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2008). *Students registered at one institution but taught by another 2005 -06*, Report 07/07. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2009a). *Supporting HE in FE Colleges: policy practice and prospects*. March 2009/05,. Bristol: HEFCE.
- ____ (2009b). *A new ‘University Challenge’: proposals for higher education centres*. March 2009/07. Bristol: HEFCE.

Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC), (1993). *Some Aspects of Higher Education Programmes in Further Education Institutions*. London: HEQC.

- ____ (1996). *Guidelines on Quality Assurance in HEFCE*, (1998). Study of the relative costs of HE provision in FE colleges and HE institutions. Further Education Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for England and KPMG. Report 98/57 Bristol: HEFCE.

- Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (1988) *Education Reform Act 1988*, Ch.40. London: HMSO.
- ____ (1992) *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*, Ch.13. London: HMSO.
- Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (2000). Expanding Higher Education in the UK: From 'System Slowdown' to 'System Acceleration', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 54(4), pp. 295 – 322.
- Holloway, D.G. (1998). Accounting for the Audit Commission. An Assessment of the Contribution of the Audit Commission to Educational Change. *Educational Management and Administration*, 26(1), pp. 49-56.
- Hood, C. (1991). A Public Management for all seasons? *Public Administration*, 69(1), pp. 3-19.
- Hornsby-Smith, M. (1993). Gaining Access, in Gilbert, N. (ed) (1993). *Researching Social Life*. London: SAGE
- Huddleston, P. and Unwin, L. (2008). *Teaching and Learning in Further Education. Diversity and Change*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- Hudson, A. (2002). From Power Plays to Market Moves: The Standard in Higher Education in Hayes, D and Wynyard, R. (eds) (2002), *The McDonaldization of Higher Education*. USA: Information Age Publishing Incorporated.
- Hudson, R. (2004). 'Analysing Network Partnership', *Public Management Review*, 6(1), pp. 13-29.
- Hyland, T. (1992). Reconstruction and Reform in Further Education, *Education Management and Administration*, 20(2), pp.106-110.
- Institute of Education, (2006). *Research Governance and Ethics*. Codes of Practice for Research Degree, Appendix 4. University of London: Institute of Education.
- James, D. and Biesta, G. (2007). *Improving Learning Cultures in Further Education*, London: Routledge.
- Johnstone, D. (2003a). *Partnerships: benefits, limitations and doing it better*. LSDA unpublished paper in Stanton, G and Fletcher, M (2006) op cit pg. 15.
- Johnstone, D. (2003b). *Partnerships: benefits, limitations and doing it better*. LSDA unpublished paper in Watters, K. (2005) *More than the sum: partnership for adult learning and skills*. London: LSDA (2005).
- Jones, R. (2006). A Higher Education Ethos – A review of information and literature relating to the creation of an ethos of HE in the context of FE. Source: [http://www.ics.heacademy.ac.uk /HE in FE/documents/ A_Higher_Education_Ethos.doc](http://www.ics.heacademy.ac.uk/HE%20in%20FE/documents/A_Higher_Education_Ethos.doc), accessed on 6 June 2013.

- Kimmel, J. (1988). *Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research*. Applied Social Research Methods Series Volume 12, London: SAGE.
- King, M. and Widdowson, J. (2012). *Inspiring Individuals: teaching higher education in a further education college. Exploring the pedagogy of HE delivered in an FE setting*. Source: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/heinfe/Inspiring_Individuals_HE_in_FE_MEG3.pdf, accessed on 6 June 2013.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: SAGE.
- Leitch, Sir S. (2006). *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills: final Report*. London: Stationery Office.
- Lewis, B. (2002). Widening Participation in Higher Education: The HEFCE Perspective on Policy and Progress. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 56 (2), pp. 204-219.
- Longhurst, R.J. (1996). Education as a Commodity: The Political Economy of the New Further Education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 20(2), pp. 49-66.
- Lowndes, V and Skelcher, C (1998). The dynamics of multi-organisational partnership on analysis of changing mode of governance. *Public Administration*, 76 (2), pp. 313-333.
- Learning Skills Council. (2005). *Planning for Success*. Learning Skills Council, Coventry: England
- Learning Skills Development Agency, (2005). *Realising the Potential. The Review of the future role of FE colleges*. Sir Alan Foster, November 2005, London: LSDA.
- Lucas, N., Betts, D., Derrick, J., Evans, D., Guile, D., Spours, K. and Macwhinnie, I. (1997). *Policy and Management Issues for Incorporated Colleges*. March 1997, Working Paper Number 21. London: Institute of Education.
- Leney, T., Lucas, N. and Taubman, D. (1998) *Learning Funding: The impact of FEFC Funding, Evidence from Twelve FE Colleges*. London: Institute of Education.
- Lloyd, M. and Griffiths, C. (2008). A review of the methods of delivering HE programmes in an FE college and an evaluation of the impact this will have on learning outcomes and student progression. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 32(1), pp. 15-25.
- Lumby, J. and Morrison, M. (2006) Partnership, Conflict and gaming. *Journal of Education Policy*, 21(3), pp. 323-341.
- Macfarlane, B., Filippakou, O., Halford, E. and Saraswat, A. (2007). Managing Duality: the role of manager-academics working in a dual sector institution. *Higher Education Annual Conference: Engaging Students in Higher Education*, 3 – 5 July, 2007, Harrogate.

- Macrae, S. and Maguire, M. (2002). Getting In and Getting On: Choosing the Best in Hayton, A. and Paczuska, A. (eds) (2002) *Access, Participation and Higher Education*, London: Kogan Press.
- McTavish, D. (2006). Further Education and Management Strategy and Policy Institutional and Public Management Dimensions. *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*, 34(3), pp. 411 – 428.
- National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE), (1997). *Higher Education in the Learning Society: Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education*. London: HMSO.
- National Economic Development Office/Manpower Services Commission (NEDO/MS), (1984). *Competence and competition: education and training in the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States and Japan*. London: MSC.
- Network Validation Document (NVD) (2004) An in-house set of documents, produced by the University, detailing curricula, quality procedures, partner resources and the regulations governing the operation of the Franchise Network. For reasons of confidentiality precise details are withheld.
- Newman, J. (2000) Beyond new public management? Modernising public services, in Cardini, A. (2006). An analysis of the rhetoric and practice of educational partnerships in the UK: an arena of complexities, tensions and power, *Journal of Educational Policy*, 21(4), pp. 393-415.
- Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) Ofsted 1: The recent Adult Learning Inspectorate report for this institution. Source: www.ofsted.gov.uk, accessed on 22 September 2007.
- Ofsted 2: The recent Adult Learning Inspectorate report for this institution. For reasons of confidentiality precise details are withheld. Source: www.ofsted.gov.uk, accessed on 22 September 2007.
- Ofsted 3: The recent Adult Learning Inspectorate report for this institution. For reasons of confidentiality precise details are withheld. Source: www.ofsted.gov.uk, accessed on 22 September 2007.
- Opaci, S. (1996). The Students' Experience of Franchising in Abramson, M., Bird, J. and Stennett, A. (eds) . *Further and higher education partnerships: the future for collaboration*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Oppenheim, A.N. (2000). *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement*. 2nd ed. London: Heinemann
- Parry, G. (2006). Policy-Participation Trajectories in English Higher Education , *Higher Education Quarterly*, 60(4), pp. 392-412.
- Parry, G. (2012). Higher education in further education colleges. A primer. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 16(4), pp. 118 – 122.

- Parry, G., Davies, P. and Williams, J. (2004). *Difference, diversity and distinctiveness, Higher education in the learning and skills sector*. London: LSDA.
- Parry, G. and Thompson, A. (2002). *Closer by degrees the past, present and future of higher education in further education colleges*. London: LSDA.
- Parry, G., Thompson, A. and Blackie, P. (2006). *Managing Higher Education in Colleges*. London: Continuum.
- Pattern, M.Q. (1987). *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation* in Yin, R.K. (1994) *Case Study Research Design and Methods* 2nd Ed. London: SAGE.
- Pennell, H. (2005). The Impact of Increased Fees on Participation in Higher Education in England. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 59 (2), pp. 127 -137.
- Perry, A. and Simpson, M. (2006). *Delivering quality and choice: how performance indicators help and how performance indicators hinder*, London: LSDA.
- Phillips, D. and Ochs, K. (2003). Processes of Policy Borrowing in Education: some explanatory and analytical devices, *Comparative Education*, 39(4), pp. 451-461.
- Pratt, J. (1999). Policy and policymaking in the unification of higher education, *Journal Education Policy*, 14 (3) pp. 257 –269.
- Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit (PMSU), (2006). *The UK Government’s Approach to Public Sector Reform – a discussion paper* in Coffield, F., Edward, S., Finlay, I., Hodgson, A., Spours, K. and Steer, R. (2008). *Improving Learning, Skills and Inclusion*. London: Routledge .
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) 1: The recent QAA Inspection Report for this institution, for reasons of confidentiality precise details are withheld. Source www.qaa.ac.uk, accessed on 20 September 2007.
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) QAA 2: The recent QAA Inspection Report on its Collaborative Provision for this institution, for reasons of confidentiality precise details are withheld. Source www.qaa.ac.uk, accessed on 20 September 2007.
- Randle, K. and Brady, N. (1997a). Further Education and the New Managerialism. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 21(2), pp. 229-240.
- Randle, K. and Brady, N. (1997b). Managerialism and Professionalism in the ‘Cinderella Service’. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 49(1), pp. 121 -140.
- Reay, D., Crozier, G. and Clayton, J. (2009). ‘Fitting in’ or ‘standing out’: working-class students in UK higher education. *British Educational Research Journal*, iFirst Article, pp1-18.
- Reeves, F (1995). *The Modernity of Further Education*. Wolverhampton: Bilston College Publications and Education Now

- Robson, J. (1998). A profession in Crisis: status, culture and identity in the further education college. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 50(4), pp. 585 -608.
- Ross, R. (2003). Higher Education and social access: to the Robbins Report in Archer, L., Hutching, M. and Ross, A. (2003). *Higher Education and Social Class Issues of exclusion and inclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Scot, P. (2009). On the Margins or Moving into the Mainstream? Higher Education in Further Education in England. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 63(4), pp. 402-418.
- Smith, D. and Bocock, J. (1999). Participation and progression in mass higher education: policy and the FHE interface, *Journal Education Policy*, 14(3), pp. 283-299.
- Selby, J. (1996). Finance: The Bedrock of Good Partnerships in Abramson, M., Bird, J. and Stennett, A. (eds.) (1996). *Further and higher education partnerships: the future for collaboration*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Shain, F. and Gleeson, D. (1999). Under new management: changing conceptions of teacher professionalism and policy in the further education sector. *Journal of Education Policy*, 14(4), pp. 445-462.
- Spours, K., Coffield, F. and Gregson, M. (2007). Mediation, translation and local ecologies: understanding the impact of policy levers on FE colleges, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 59(2), pp. 193-211.
- Spours, K. and Lucas, N. (1996). *The Formation of a National Sector of Incorporated Colleges: Beyond the FEFC Model*. Working Paper Number 19. London: Institute of Education.
- Stanton, G. and Fletcher, M. (2006) 14-19 Institutional Arrangements in England: A Research Perspective on Collaboration, Competition and Patterns of Post -16 Provision. *Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training*. Working Paper 38, September 2006. Source: <http://www.14-19review.org.uk/files/documents128-l.pdf> ,accessed on 20 October 2010.
- Steer, R., Spours, K., Hodgson, A., Finlay, I., Coffield, F., Edward, S. and Gregson, M. (2007). "Modernisation" and the role of policy levers in the learning and skills sector', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 59 (2), pp. 175-192.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. London: SAGE.
- Tett, L., Crowther, J. and O'Hara, P. (2003). Collaborative partnership in community education, *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(1), pp. 37-51.
- Thomas, L. (2002). Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17 (4), pp. 423-442.

- Torrance, H. (2007). Assessment as learning? How the use of explicit learning objectives, assessment criteria and feedback in post-secondary education and training can come to dominate learning. *Assessment in Education* , 14(3), pp. 281-294.
- Trim, P. R. J. (2001). An Analysis of a Partnership Arrangement between an Institution of Further Education and an Institution of Higher Education, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 25(1), pp.107-116.
- Tunbridge, I. and Shobrook, S. (2005). Mapping collaborative and directly funded HE in FE *Journal of Access Policy and Practice*, 3(1), pp. 56 -69.
- Turner, R., McKenzie, L. and Stone, M. (2009). ‘Square peg – round hole’: the emerging professional identities of HE in FE lecturers working in a partner college network in south-west England. *Research in post-compulsory education*, 14(4), pp.355 – 368.
- Watson, D. and Bowen, R. (1999). Why did they do it?: The Conservatives and mass higher education, 1979-97, *Journal Education Policy*,14(3), pp. 243-256.
- Watters, K. (2005). *More than the sum: partnership for adult learning and skills*. London: LSDA (2005).
- Willetts, D. (2010a). *HECFE Annual Conference*, made at Royal College of Physicians, London, 21 October 2010. Source: www.bis.gov.uk/news/speeches/david-willetts, accessed 20 January 2011.
- Willetts, D. (2010b). ‘*University Challenge*’, speech made at Oxford Brooks University, 10 June 2010. Source : www.bis.gov.uk/news/speeches/david-willetts, accessed 6 July 2010.
- Willetts, D. (2011) ‘Universities UK Spring Conference, 2011’, speech made Woburn House, London, 25 February 2011. Source : www.bis.gov.uk/news/speeches/david-willetts, accessed 3 March 2011.
- Williams, G. L. (1996). The Many Faces of Privatisation. *Higher Education Management*, 8(3), pp. 39-58.
- Yin, R.K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE.
- York Consulting Ltd (2004). *Evaluation of Post-16 Learning Arrangements, Final Report*, London: DfES.
- Young, M., Lucas, N., Sharp, G. and Cunningham, B. (1995). *Teacher Education for the Further Education Sector: training the lecturer of the future*. London: Institute of Education.
- Young, P. (2002). Scholarship is the word that dare not speak its name: lecturers’ experiences of teaching on a HE in a FE college, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 26(3), pp.273 – 286.

Appendix Materials

<u>Contents:</u>	Page
A: Example of Discussion Guides	170
B: Example of Confidentiality Statement	182

Appendix A: Example of Discussion Guides

Discussion Guide – FE Manager Version

Individual Interviews

Brief Introduction

Personal Introductions

Reasons for Research – Thesis Interview to inform research project

Assurances on Respondent Confidentiality

Availability of transcript for changes, additions or deletion

Possibility of a second interview

The purpose of this interview is to discuss your views on issues of managing and delivery of HE courses in a FE cultural environment.

DISCUSSION AREAS

Area 1: About Your Role and Programme Responsibilities

- What are your responsibilities in HE programme management?
 - (i)
 - (ii)

- How long have you been managing HE programme(s)? _____ years .
- What proportion of your time is spent on HE managerial duties in an average week?
_____ hrs .
- Do you teach on these programme(s) you manage? Y or N
If so, to what extent? E.g. number of hours, number of subjects?
_____ .

- Roughly, how much of your weekly time is spent on HE managerial duties?
_____.

Other: What qualifications do you have?

Past Work Experience?

Area 2: About Your Course Provision

- Please briefly describe the nature of the HE provision at your college, in terms of Business, Marketing and Managerial courses?

i.e. In terms of HE Institutional Partnerships;

Number of programmes;

Number of students;

Types of students – educational backgrounds, etc

Area 3: FHE Partnerships in general

- What do you understand to be the main drivers* for locating higher education courses in further education colleges?

*** Prompts**

- In terms of national policy perspectives?
- Widening participation function?
- FE colleges special/claims for distinctiveness:
 - i.e. - smaller group class sizes;
 - more classroom contact;
 - local access orientation;
 - basis for progression.

- What do you believe is the FE sector's 'Special Mission'* (added value) to deliver HE?
(NB. I appreciate there may be some repetition here with the previous question)

***Prompts**

- Widening Participation;
- Delivery modes that suit non-traditional learners;
- Specialist Vocational Ladder (traditional closeness to world of work; employer partnerships);
i.e. FE's role in Foundation degree provision
- Attracting local students who may not have considered HE

Area 4: Institutional Perspective

- In terms of delivering on HE courses, what do you believe to be the main issues facing your college, from

a) The Students' Experiences:

- Do you believe the students receive a comparable HE experience to that at a university institution?
- Do you believe that aspects of your college's physical and cultural environment have an impact on HE students'
 - Learning experience;
 - Their general HE experience (social, sport, societies, etc)?

Please Qualify in terms of:

 - the positive experiences
 - any negative experiences.
- Do you have an indication of the proportion of your HE students are '1st generation to HE'?

Do they receive additional support, at your college compared to a HE environment?

b) Your Perception of the Teacher Experience:

- i. What are your experiences of teaching at different levels, i.e. switching form FE to HE?

PROBE:

- The Positive experiences;
- The Negative aspects.

- ii. Do you think teaching levels between HE and FE are very distinct?

IF SO, WHY?

- iii. What are your experiences of working within a franchised network, for instance;

Firstly, with colleagues from the university;
Secondly, with colleagues from other FE partners?

PROVIDE EXAMPLES

c) In terms of your College's Management Perspectives?

For instance:

Allocation of resources;

Administrative support;

Dedicated HE staffing;

Contractual obligations – e.g. annualised hours, remission.

Area 5: Delivery of the HE Programme

- In relation to your college, which do you believe to be the most successful aspects **or practices** for delivery of your HE provision?

Prompt if Necessary

Recruitment profiles;

Teacher/tutor support expertise;

Network (University) support;

Inter-college support (network).

- In relation to your college, which do you believe to be the least successful aspects (**or identified practices and policies**), in your delivery of HE?

Prompt if Necessary

Student involvement and commitment;

HE resource allotment;

Support to students;

Support by management.

Area 6: Network Perspective

- What do you believe to be the major issue of operating within a HE network?

Prompts:

Why?

What else?

Area 7: Future Developments

- In relation to the FE sector, what areas need to be developed, or introduced to improve the student HE experience, at:
 - a) In general, at FE sector colleges;
 - b) At national policy level?

Prompts:

Why?

Anything else?

Area 8: Is there anything else you would like to comment on/add to?

END

Thank you very much for your time. If you wish, a transcript of this interview will be sent to you for your approval, please feel free to make any amendments, corrections or deletions accordingly.

Yes/No

Contact Details

Discussion Guide – FE Lecturer Version

Individual Interviews

Brief Introduction

Personal Introductions

Reasons for Research – Thesis Interview to inform research project

Assurances on Respondent Confidentiality

Availability of transcript for changes, additions or deletion

Possibility of a second interview

The purpose of this interview is to discuss your views on issues of managing and delivery of HE courses in a FE cultural environment.

DISCUSSION AREAS

Area 1: About Your Role as a Lecturer

- How long have you been teaching on HE programmes? _____ years .
- Which type of programme(s) do you teach on (FT; PT, both)? _____ .
- Do you teach on more than one HE Subject? Y or N

If Yes: How many _____ .

- In terms of your current teaching timetable, what proportion (%) of your time is allocated to HE courses in an average/typical week? _____ (or actual hours).
- Of you average weekly time allocated to preparation and marking, what proportion (%) is for HE subject(s)? _____ (or actual hours) .

- Do you allocate more time on preparation for HE teaching, than ‘other’ subjects?

Yes or

No

If so how much extra (%) _____ (or actual hours) .

- Are you provided with any remission/soft contact time for teaching on HE? Y or N
- If so, how much time? _____ hours

Other: What Qualifications do you have?

Past Work Experience?

Area 2: Institutional Perspective

- In terms of delivering on HE courses, what do you believe to be the main issues facing your college, from the:
 - a) The Students’ Experience
 - i. Do you believe the students receive a compatible HE experience to that in a university?
 - ii. Do you believe that aspects of your college’s physical and cultural environment have an impact on the student HE experience?

Please qualify in terms of:

Firstly; their positive experiences;
Secondly, any negative experiences.
 - iii. Do you have an indication of the proportion of your HE students are ‘1st generation to HE’?

b) Your experiences as a Teacher

- i. What are your experiences of teaching at different levels?
i.e. **switching from FE to HE**
- ii. What is your perception of any differences in the teaching levels between HE and FE?

Why?

What else?

- iii. What are your experiences of working within a franchised network, for instance:
 - a) with colleagues from the university;
 - b) with colleagues from the other colleges?

c) In terms of your College's Management Perspective?

For instance:

- Allocation of resources;
- Administrative support;
- Dedicated HE staffing – remission, etc.

Area 3: FHE Partnerships in general

- What do you understand to be the main reasons* for including the provisions of HE in FE sector colleges?

*** Prompts**

- In terms of national policy perspectives?

- Widening participation function?
 - FE colleges special/claims for distinctiveness:
 - i.e. - smaller group class sizes;
 - more classroom contact;
 - local access orientation;
 - basis for progression?
- What do you believe is the FE sector's 'Special Mission'* (added value) to deliver HE?

(NB. I appreciate there may be some repetition here with the previous question)

***Prompts**

- Widening Participation;
- Delivery modes that suit non-traditional learners;
- Specialist Vocational Ladder (traditional closeness to world of work; employer partnerships);
 - i.e. FE's role in Foundation degree provision
- Attracting local students who may not have considered HE

Area 4: Delivery of the HE Programme

- In relation to your college, which do you believe to be the most successful aspects **or practices** for delivery of your HE provision?

Prompt if Necessary

- Recruitment profiles;
- Teacher/tutor support expertise;
- Network (University) support;
- Inter-college support (network).

- In relation to your college, which do you believe to be the least successful aspects (**or identified practices and policies**), in your delivery of HE?

Prompt if Necessary

- Student involvement and commitment;
- HE resource allotment;
- Support to students;
- Support by management.

Area 5: Future Developments

In relation to the FE sector, what areas need to be developed, or introduced to improve the student HE experience, at:

- c) In general, at FE sector colleges;
- d) At national policy level?

Prompts:

Why?

Anything else?

Area 6: Is there anything else you would like to comment on/add to?

END

Thank you very much for your time. If you wish, a transcript of this interview will be sent to you for your approval, please feel free to make any amendments, corrections or deletions accordingly.

Yes/No

Contact Details:

Appendix B: Example of Confidentiality Statement

Copy of the Written Statement regarding Interviewee Confidentially:

To

1. All participants will remain anonymous
2. All information will be treated with the strictest confidentiality
3. Participants will receive a copy of their transcript prior inviting them to make any additions, corrections or deletions before their observations are to be used in the analysis
4. The research is to be assessed by the Institute of Education, University of London, for examination purposes only. It **is not for publication** and will not be brought into the public domain, nor will any individuals or their institutions be identified in the research.
5. The project will attempt to explore educational management practice only and will not be made available for any other purpose(s).

(Adapted from Bell: 1993)

Signed.....

Date: